



SENDTHEFIRE.CA

**theme:** Christ and Lord of All (Luke 1:1 - 2:20)

**materials:** Bibles, news story, 5 candles, lighter

## welcome

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What did your childhood experiences teach you to think about Christmas?

*Bring in a news item about your neighbourhood, city, country or world that you can discuss with the cell. Where do you see God in this story? Ask other members of cell to bring in stories to discuss in subsequent weeks.*

## worship

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This is the fifth week of Advent. The word *Advent* means “Coming”, and it comes from the Greek word *parousia*, which refers to the Second Coming of Christ. This week, we are going to read the entire story of the nativity in Luke, from Luke 1:1 until Luke 2:20. Spread out the reading amongst everyone, and when you have finished reading, light the five candles. Thank the Lord for the gift of his Son Jesus, who is both Christ and Lord, Saviour and King. Thank him for your salvation, and commit to serving Jesus as Lord. At the end of your prayers, sing *O Come All Ye Faithful*: [http://www.carols.org.uk/o\\_come\\_all\\_ye\\_faithful.htm](http://www.carols.org.uk/o_come_all_ye_faithful.htm)

## word

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Based solely on these first two chapters, what do you think the rest of Luke and Acts will be about?

What is Jesus’ identity as it is described in the first two chapters of Luke’s Gospel? Who is he, and what is he destined to do?

Why is it important that Jesus is recognised as both Christ and Lord even at (and before) his birth?

(Read *Acts 2:36* and see how this identity is carried through and confirmed by the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus)

How is the birth of Jesus bringing about the Kingdom of God? What is the Kingdom of God?

What does it mean for you to call Jesus “Saviour”? What does it mean for you to call him “Lord”?

What role do you see the Holy Spirit playing in these two chapters?

How does the knowledge that Jesus is Christ and Lord affect the way you celebrate Christmas?

## witness

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Continue reading through the entire books of Luke and Acts with one other person. If the other person is a fellow believer, read them through in a public place, like a café (not yelling it out or anything, just reading it to one another). Make a regular time to come in and read together, and more likely than not someone will eventually ask you what you are reading and why.

If the other person is not a fellow-believer, perhaps choose a less public place to read, but again set regular times, daily if possible, to get together and read the Gospel. You don’t have to read it all at once. Read two to three chapters at a time, and then meet another day to read some more.



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## action points

Arrange a time of carolling with your cell. Find a convenient street corner, go wandering down streets, or stand by a Salvation Army Kettle and sing the praises of Jesus as Christ and Lord. Proclaim the remembrance of his coming to earth, and the expectation of his glorious return.

The Salvation Army sponsors children around the world who are living in circumstances of poverty and oppression. Any offerings given at cell meetings go towards covering the costs of these sponsorships. Please challenge your cell to bring loose offerings each week, and bring a container to collect any such offerings that are given. Cell is also a great time to bring your cartridges or tithes to the Church.

## leader's guide

Two major themes (amongst others) come across in the book of Luke-Acts: 1. The advance of the Kingdom of God, and 2. The identity of Jesus as Saviour, Christ and Lord.

The first theme is seen in the opening chapters of Luke in the sense that God is sending his Son into enemy territory (it all belongs to God, but Satan is active and corrupting even amongst the people of God) and is establishing his active and obvious rule through him. The Kingdom of God means "the active rule of the King, who is God". Thus, where Jesus is, there is the Kingdom. There is a conflict described throughout Luke-Acts between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan, (highlighted by events such as the temptation in the desert). One important lens through which to read Luke-Acts is this conflict, and to see the actions of Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, as ones that both *announce* the gospel and that *act it out* in a hostile environment. Jesus will be proclaiming the rule of God, and then setting people free from the bondage and suffering of Satan, calling them to repentance, and forgiving sins so that they may become free to serve God and to enjoy Him. It is the demon-possessed who first recognise who Jesus is, and one of Jesus' main activities later will be healing and exorcising the demon-possessed (his followers also take this up). Satan is not mentioned in the first two chapters of Luke, but the idea of God's salvation becoming present on earth through his Son is very clear, and the notion of God saving his people from their enemies is apparent in Mary and Zechariah's songs. The connection of Jesus' birth with the line and town of David is also meant to evoke thoughts of kingship and the salvation plan of God.

The second theme - that of the identity of Jesus as Christ and Lord - is related to the first theme. This theme is seen in the first two chapters as Jesus is prophesied and heralded by the angels, and as various characters are inspired by the Holy Spirit to catch a glimpse of who this baby is. It is vitally important to recognise that this baby, fully human, is also being described right from the start as Saviour, Christ and Lord. John the Baptist, for instance, is described as a prophet, one who will prepare the way, and as a very important character in the story. There is the danger of seeing Jesus as just another prophet, equivalent to John. But this option is not given to us by Luke's text, which makes it quite clear that Jesus is different. John will prepare the way for Jesus, but Jesus will be the bringer of forgiveness, the bringer of light (salvation) to those in darkness, the one who is called the Son of God. Some would have us think that Jesus was merely human when born, that his description as the Son of God had more to do with his role than his nature, and that he only became Christ and Lord upon his resurrection, or perhaps upon his ascension into heaven. But this is to dismiss the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' conception, to ignore Elisabeth's inspired proclamation that Mary was carrying her "Lord", and to forget about the angels heralding the baby Jesus as the Saviour, Christ the Lord. Luke is very definitely making the point here that this is who Jesus was from the beginning, and he develops over the course of his Gospel and Acts what it means to call Jesus Christ and Lord. These were extremely loaded and important titles,



and we see them repeated again and again in the book of Acts, as the followers of Jesus try to communicate to the Jews and Gentiles their understanding of Jesus' identity.

The first two chapters therefore give us a view of a longing for the Lord's Christ to appear, and shows us the fulfillment of that desire, a fulfillment grasped so far by only a very few people and by the angels in heaven. In calling Jesus the Christ and Lord, Luke was announcing that he was the ruler of God's people, the Saviour who would deal with Satan and accomplish the forgiveness of sins, the Lord in relation to humans, and one who was rightly called the Son of God, not just by role, but by his very nature. All of this, wrapped in the fragile human flesh of a baby, born in a manger. This is the picture given to us of Jesus by Luke right at the beginning of his story, so that we can hold onto it as a clue to what is going on in the rest of the story.

As mentioned earlier, one of the first to call Jesus "Lord", even before his birth, was Elisabeth, the mother of John. This she did under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who plays a big role in Jesus' nativity story and in the rest of Luke-Acts. The Spirit "overshadows" Mary to conceive Jesus, John is filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb (and so is able to recognise Christ the Lord), and Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit to prophesy. Later we will see a great deal more interaction between Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and then between the Spirit and Jesus' followers.