

# GOING DEEPER

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

May 11, 2014



# Discussion Guide

## The hole in our gospel

*Luke 4.14-21*

### Connecting:

45 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a way of connecting with one another so that you might partner in the work God is doing in your lives.)

- In what ways did God move in your life this week? In what ways did you respond to him?
- What was your biggest challenge this week? In what ways, if any, did you invite God into this challenge?
- How honest have you been with us? (Graciously thank group members for their honesty if they answer that they have held back.)

### Getting Started:

10 minutes

- In your opinion, what is the role of the Church with regard to community issues? What might this look like? Could you elaborate?

### Diving Into the Text:

60 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Use the notes to set the scene and to explain the context for Luke 4.14-21 and the term “gospel.”

- Read Luke 4.14-21 aloud slowly, seeking to experience and imagine the scene unfolding. Pause and read Luke 4.14-21 aloud slowly once more, seeking to be present and to experience the scene as if you were actually hearing Jesus.
- In this text, we have a record of one of Jesus’ first “gospel” messages. According to Jesus, what are the elements of the gospel?
- In your mind, what are the practical applications implied in Jesus’ message?
- In what ways does the Church define the gospel today? What are the practical applications implied in this definition?
- What are the similarities and dissimilarities between Jesus’ and the Church’s definition of the gospel? Where might these come from?
- In what ways have you heard the role of the Church with respect to the gospel described?
- Read John 20.21 and 1 John 2.6 aloud, slowly.
- In what ways, if any, do these statements impact your understanding of what the role of the Church is with respect to the gospel?
- What might carrying forth the gospel with Jesus as our model look like? Does this seem easy or difficult? Would you elaborate?
- What could happen if a Church caught the vision of carrying forth the gospel as Jesus did?
- Conclude your time by praying for your group and for Union Center.

## Context and Background

### *Gospel*

So what is the gospel, really? The average church-going person might answer this question in a number of ways, but a common theme would have something to do with Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection. Simply put, for the average person, the gospel is the story of Jesus. While this might be how the modern church-attendeer might define the gospel, the first followers of Jesus would claim that this encapsulates only a portion of the gospel. The term "gospel" is a word which literally means "good news." In Jesus' time, a "gospel" was an announcement, usually made by a herald about something great that had happened. This great event might be the birth of an important child, a great victory won in battle, or a message of peace from a neighboring community. To hear a "gospel message" was to hear something that was important and encouraging.

When Jesus began his ministry, he described his ministry in terms of a gospel message; that is, he claimed he was announcing good news. The clearest example of this is Mark 1.14-15: After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee proclaiming the good news (gospel) of God. "The time has come," he said. "The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news! (gospel)." In these two verses, the term "gospel" appears twice, once upon the lips of Jesus and once from Mark's pen as he explained what Jesus was doing. Jesus and Mark both claimed that Jesus had an important announcement, but this announcement was not about Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection. Both Jesus and Mark defined the "gospel" as the coming Kingdom of God. For Jesus' audience, the Kingdom of God stood for the realm where God's will was done, his effective reign. Thus, Jesus' gospel message was that God was showing up to take charge. This involved the life of Jesus but it was bigger than this. The gospel message is the message that God is showing up to bring the earth under his full control so that his will is done.

The implications of this message would have elicited a huge response from Jesus' audience, for it was a message that proclaimed that God was moving to make things right. These very real implications can be seen in Jesus' message at Nazareth, a sermon in which Jesus addressed the righting of present and real issues in his day (Luke 4.14-21) as practical applications of the gospel (Luke 4.18).

The definition of the gospel as the movement of God to establish his effective reign in practical ways is important for the modern Church. The Church stands as the God-ordained institution which continues to herald the gospel. However, the gospel is more than the story of Jesus, though it certainly includes as much. The gospel which the Church is to proclaim is the message that God has moved and is moving to establish his effective reign upon the earth, a reign that has present and visible applications and outworkings.

## The Text

### *Luke 4.14-21: The Full Gospel*

The episode which begins in Luke 4.14 is one of the earliest recorded messages of Jesus. Jesus began his ministry shortly after his baptism by John in the Jordan River and his subsequent temptation in the wilderness (Luke 3.21-23; 4.1-13). His earliest words are recorded by Mark as, "The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1.15). This was Jesus' gospel message, a message about the physical establishment of God's reign upon the Earth. (See Gospel.) However, it is Luke who records Jesus' understanding of what this coming reign of God looks like in practical terms (Luke 4.14-29).

Jesus chose to begin his ministry in Galilee, the area in which he was raised. His ministry was marked by the power of the Holy Spirit, and word quickly spread with praise being the most common reaction to Jesus.

When Jesus' ministry journey brought him to Nazareth, he was given the opportunity to teach within that village's synagogue, an opportunity which seems to have been Jesus' earliest ministry platform in the villages of Galilee. The scroll which was given to Jesus was that of the prophet Isaiah. This may reflect a practice in the history of the synagogue of selected readings, but more likely what we have is evidence of a reading from the prophets which was probably also coupled with a reading from the Law and the Writings (Psalms). Any qualified male who stood was allowed to comment (teach) upon these readings.

While Jesus was given the scroll containing Isaiah, he chose his own passage, choosing to read from Isaiah 61. Isaiah 61 is a Servant Song-like passage in which the prophet speaks of a day in which God would break into time to right and restore life. This righting and restoration was to take practical forms as this spiritual movement of God could not be separated from physical reality. The physical implications of God's movement included a victory announcement (Gospel) to the poor, the release of prisoners, the healing of the blind, the salvation of the oppressed, and the release of the bondage of debt (Year of the Lord's favor which was the Year of Jubilee, Leviticus 25). Jesus took his seat, which was the common teaching position, and began his sermon with a powerful statement. The words he had just read had been fulfilled in the presence of his audience; that is, Jesus was the fulfillment of these words. He was God's physical movement to establish his reign, and in him his audience would see the practical outworkings of this gospel message.

## Application:

What is the gospel? The most common answer involves a retelling of the life of Jesus and a call to respond to this story. Is this all there is to the gospel? It seems that Jesus understood the gospel to be the very real in-breaking of God to establish his reign, a reign that righted the world in real-time ways through his very person. Therefore, is proclaiming the gospel simply taking this fuller message to the world? It would seem so, except for these sneaky sayings like Jesus' call to engage in his mission as he had done (John 20.21) or John's note that to be Jesus' follower involves living as Jesus did (1 John 2.6). If we take these, and a few other sneaky sayings for what they say, then suddenly proclaiming the gospel takes on a whole new meaning. Proclaiming the gospel does begin with a clear statement that God has and is breaking into the world in the person of Jesus so that he might reign, but it is not enough to proclaim. The proclamation of the gospel includes a sure demonstration of this reign in and through the life and ministry of the one who proclaims it. Simply put, to proclaim the message that God is about the business of righting the world is to join him in this process. It is to say, "Today, this saying is fulfilled in your hearing." It is to model one's life on Jesus' words in Luke 4.18.

Want to know how this looks in real life? Check out Blake's blog at [BlakeShipp.blogspot.com](http://BlakeShipp.blogspot.com)



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