



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 7:18-27**

To understand that doubt affects everyone.

## Doubt Comes For Everyone

Doubt is often seen as an enemy that leads non-believers further away from the truth in Christian circles. However, we would be foolish to assume that it isn't also present within our own camp. In a 2017 survey, nearly two thirds of Christians interviewed admitted they struggle with doubt from time to time, although the majority also said they were able to work through it. Doubt takes no account for who it attaches itself to; no one is exempt from it. Read that again: "*No one* is exempt from it." Ok, ok, *apart from Jesus...* no one is exempt from doubt.

In Luke 7:18-35, Luke revisits John the Baptist, and recalls an interaction between John and Jesus, and then a follow-up teaching of Jesus regarding John. In Jesus' view, John is the greatest humanity has to offer (Lk. 7:28). He is the bridge between worlds, the link between the old covenant and the new covenant. He is a prophet, but so much more than a prophet (Lk. 7:26). And yet, *he still had doubt*. In Luke 7:18-19, John called two of his disciples to go and ask Jesus, "Are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for another?" This is a marked departure from his words just a few chapters ago: "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Lk. 3:16-17). John seemed to have no doubt that Jesus was the coming Messiah, but now in prison, he is asking whether or not Jesus really is the Messiah.

This should come as a great relief to us; if we doubt, we share in our doubting with the forerunner to the Messiah Himself.

## The Report

John commissions two of his disciples to go and ask Jesus: “Are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for another” (Lk. 7:18-19). That John chooses two disciples to go indicates his commitment to the Torah with regard to a witness: “Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established” (Deut. 19:15). The reference to “the One who is to come” is also steeped in Old Testament thought (Is. 40:10; Zech. 14:5; Mal. 3:1). Upon receiving the message from John’s emissaries, Jesus doesn’t initially respond but instead demonstrates His messianic power: “In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight” (Lk. 7:21). Then, Jesus responded with a message that ties together much of Isaiah’s words together, with one notable difference. Below is a breakdown of each of the phrases, and where they are found.

### ***THE BLIND RECEIVE THEIR SIGHT (LK. 7:22; ISAIAH 29:18)***

The first thing Jesus says comes from Isaiah 35, “the blind will receive sight.” This occurred with the blind man sitting on the road as Jesus was approaching Jericho in Luke 18:35-43.

### ***THE LAME WALK (LK. 7:22; ISAIAH 35:6)***

The second detail that Jesus mentions is the healing of the lame man, which occurred in Luke 5:17-26 with the paralytic lying in his bed. Jesus first forgives his sins, and when questioned by the Pharisees, Jesus heals him totally and completely to prove His authority.

### ***THE LEPERS ARE CLEANSED (LK. 7:22; ISAIAH 35:6)***

The third detail is the cleansing of the leper, which Jesus accomplished in Luke 5:12-16.

### ***THE DEAF HEAR (LK. 7:22; ISAIAH 35:5)***

The fourth detail concerns deaf people being able to hear. In Mark 7:31-37, a man is brought to Him who was deaf and had a speech impediment and Jesus heals him.

### ***THE DEAD ARE RAISED (LK. 7:22; ISAIAH 26:19)***

Jesus declaration that “the dead are raised,” recalls the resurrection He performed of the widow’s son in just the passage prior to this one, Luke 7:11-17.

### ***THE POOR RECEIVE THE GOSPEL (LK. 7:22; ISAIAH 61:1)***

The final detail is the one that likely would have been the most interesting to John. Jesus says, “the poor have the good news preached to them.” This is no doubt a nod to Isaiah 61:1, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted.” This is demonstrated in so much of Jesus’ ministry. No doubt, Jesus’ target is the sick, not the healthy (Matt. 9:12). However, there is one notable aspect of this passage from Isaiah 61:1 that Jesus did not include...

### ***THE CAPTIVES SET FREE (ISAIAH 61:1)***

The final portion of Isaiah 61:1 says, “To proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.” Why would John be interested in this part of the verse? He was in prison! Which begs the question: Why didn’t Jesus include this part of Isaiah 61:1 in His quote? Because John would die in prison, and Jesus knew it. You can almost imagine John hanging on to every word of Jesus’ message back to him, waiting to hear Him indicate that his freedom was near, and yet it was notably left out. John’s role was to usher in the Messiah, and that role had been fulfilled.

## The Greatest

After the disciples had left, Jesus turned to the crowds and began to teach them about John. He asks a series of questions that may seem confusing at first, but actually make a lot of sense. Below is a breakdown of each.

### **A REED**

He asks them, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see” (Lk. 7:24). The wilderness is where John had conducted his ministry, and so he is asking them essentially, “When you came to see John, what were you expecting to see?” He first suggests, “a reed shaken by the wind” (Lk. 7:24). This is an absurd answer that surely no one had in mind. Why would anyone make the journey into the wilderness to see such an insignificant and commonplace thing?

### **A MAN DRESSED IN SOFT CLOTHING**

Jesus then suggests a second reason verse 25: “What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing?” Again, there is an anticipated reaction to such an absurd suggestion. One would not likely ever find a man dressed in soft clothing in the wilderness, but rather, “in kings’ courts” (Lk. 7:25).

### **A PROPHET**

Finally Jesus makes a third suggestion in verse 26: “A prophet?” The reason the crowd He was addressing had traveled into the wilderness in the past was to see a prophet, and they were not wrong to do so. John the Baptist was a prophet, but more than a prophet: “Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’” Jesus quotes Malachi 3:1, and indicates two things: 1. That John the Baptist is the messenger who will prepare the way, and 2. That Jesus is the “Lord whom you seek” who “will suddenly come to His temple.” This means that John is more than a prophet because he is not only a prophet; John is the penultimate prophet before the final and greatest prophet, Jesus. He is the forerunner to the Messiah and the bridge between covenants. He is the one who will announce to the world that the Messiah is here! And how has the world received him? By not listening to him, and imprisoning him.

## What About Now?

One of the most obvious applications is that doubt comes for everyone. John the Baptist was sure of who Jesus was, and he was more than just an ordinary prophet, and yet he still had doubt. He still needed to send two of his disciples to make sure that Jesus really was the Messiah. It didn’t make sense to John that he was in prison and that the Jewish kingdom had not been re-established under the Messiah’s leadership, and it’s because even his anticipation of what the Messiah would be like was skewed. Perhaps, then, another takeaway is that when we have doubt, it’s not because God has failed to deliver meaningful reason to believe, but because we’ve failed to understand what He’s said properly.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 7:18-19. What things did the disciples of John report to him? What did John ask his disciples to ask Jesus?

---

---

2. Read Luke 7:20. What did the men ask Jesus when they met Him?
- 
- 

### Day Two

1. Read Luke 7:21. What did Jesus do before He answered them? How do we know that it took place then? What phrasing in this verse indicates the time?  

---

---
2. Read Luke 7:22. How does Jesus respond to John's disciples? What passages from Isaiah does He quote? (Hint: See above notes) What is notably missing?  

---

---

### Day Three

1. Read Luke 7:23. Who is blessed, according to Jesus? Why do you think He includes this?  

---

---
2. Read Luke 7:24. After John's messengers had left, who did Jesus begin to address? What does He ask them first? What is the significance of "the reed shaken by the wind?"  

---

---

### Day Four

1. Read Luke 7:25. What is the second question that He asks them? What is the significance of "those who are dressed in splendid clothing?"  

---

---
2. Read Luke 7:26-27. What does it mean that John is "more than a prophet?" What verse does Jesus quote? Why is this verse significant? Who does John represent in the verse? Who does Jesus represent in the verse?  

---

---

## Week 27 Discussion: Doubt

In Luke 7:18-27, we encounter a doubtful John the Baptist. Even though he was "more than a prophet," he still apparently wasn't totally convinced that Jesus really was the Messiah, and thus sent messengers to ask Him some questions. Talk as a group about how doubt affects you, and how you work through it.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever struggled with doubt since you became a Christian?
2. Why do you think doubt is seen as almost "shameful" in the church?
3. What do you need from people in your life when you face doubt? What helps?

4. If doubt is ignored, does it go away or get worse for you?
5. How does community help war against doubt?
6. How can the church speak to doubt in a more helpful manner?

## Takeaways:

1. John's messengers ask Jesus whether He really is the Messiah, and He answers in the affirmative with Scripture.
2. Jesus reveals that John is not only a prophet, but more than a prophet since he is the one who is the forerunner of the Messiah.