



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 4:31-44**

To understand the authority Jesus had to cast out demons, heal, and preach the Gospel.

## Get the Message

In *Character Forged from Conflict*, Gary Preston told a story about a job opening for a Morse code operator several decades ago that illustrates the importance of decoding non-verbal messages.

"When the telegraph was the fastest means of long-distance communication, a young man applied for a job as a Morse code operator. Answering an ad in the newspaper, he went to the address that was listed. When he arrived, he entered a large, noisy office. In the background a telegraph clacked away. A sign on the receptionist's counter instructed job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to enter the inner office. The young man completed his form and sat down with seven other applicants. After a few minutes, the young man stood up, crossed the room to the door of the inner office, and walked right in. The other applicants perked up, wondering what was going on. Why had this man been so bold? They muttered among themselves that they hadn't heard any summons yet. They took more than a little satisfaction in assuming the young man who went into the office would be reprimanded for his presumption and summarily disqualified for the job. Within a few minutes the young man emerged from the inner office escorted by the interviewer, who announced to the other applicants, "Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has been filled by this young man." The other applicants began grumbling. Then one spoke up saying, "Wait a minute — I don't understand something. He was the last one to come in, and we never even got a chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That's not fair." The employer said, "I'm sorry, but all the time you've been sitting here, the telegraph has been ticking out the following message in Morse code: 'If you understand this

message, then come right in. The job is yours.’ None of you heard it or understood it. This young man did. So the job is his.”

Sometimes messages are sent by means other than words, and it is incumbent of us to recognize the code if we are going to receive the message. This was certainly true in Jesus’ ministry. While Jesus’ primary means of communicating was verbal (through preaching and teaching), He did also send messages by way of His actions, specifically His miracles. In this week’s study, we will see the authority of Christ reflected not only in His word, but through casting out demons and healing as well.

## Who Recognizes Jesus?

Verse 31 begins with, “And he went down to Capernaum.” Sometimes directional words like up and down, and even east and west, have significant meaning beyond simple direction. However, Capernaum is approximately 695 feet below sea level, and thus it stands to reason that wherever Jesus was coming from, he would have been headed down! The setting is given in 31 as well: “on the Sabbath.” Jesus is found in the synagogue teaching: “And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word possessed authority” (Lk. 4:32). This should not surprise us for several reasons. For one, it’s hopefully not unknown to you by now that Jesus is no mere human being, but the Divine God-Son with both a fully human nature and a fully divine nature. He is God in the flesh, the second person of the Trinity, and the very source and subject of Scripture. It makes sense that He teaches with profound authority.

The interesting part of this story follows in verses 33 and 34: “And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, “Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” Throughout all of the Gospels, Jesus is regularly misidentified. The Jews think of Him as a good teacher, a rabbi, a rabble-rouser, a revolutionary, a king, and anything in between. They never can seem to discern His actual identity as the Son of God, the Holy One of God, or the Messiah. What is ironic, then, is that other non-Jews seem to have no issue figuring this out, and this is one of those examples — a demon even rightly recognizes Him!

Jesus, however, will have none of it from the unclean spirit: “But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm” (Lk. 4:35). Jesus with very little effort expunges the demon from the man without the man sustaining any lasting damage. One interesting aspect of this story is Jesus’ words: “Be silent!” Why does He not permit the demon to speak? At first glance it seems as if Jesus is just expediting the conversation because He doesn’t have time to debate with a demon, but verse 41 perhaps gives some further insight. After casting out many more demons, and them also rightly identifying Him as the “Son of God,” it says, “But He rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew He was the Christ” (Lk. 4:41). This is sometimes referred to as the *Messianic Secret* (a motif most often seen in the Gospel According to Mark). Jesus’ ministry is just beginning, and many things must unfold on God’s timetable, and thus His true identity could not be made known yet. Though the demons knew who Jesus was, He forbade them speak of it, *and they listened*. Jesus authority is not simply that He can cast out demons, but that He has total authority over them and their actions.

## A Married Apostle

One smaller but fascinating detail is regarding the marital status of the apostle Peter. It's common (I think) to imagine the apostles as mostly being single men with no familial constraints to keep them from living radically for the kingdom. However, this isn't true for all of them. In verse 38 it says, "And he (Jesus) arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's *mother-in-law* was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf." If Simon Peter has a mother-in-law, that means he has a wife! These simple details challenge assumptions we have regarding these biblical characters. This illustrates why reading *all* of the text *slowly and carefully* is so important. This would be an issue detail to gloss over, and yet it shapes how we should read Peter throughout the Gospels.

## Preach the Word

Verse 43 reveals the purpose for which Jesus was sent: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." Jesus, upon leaving Capernaum, is followed by people who want Him to stay, and it is in this context that He tells them that He must go to preach in other places as well. This is also a core purpose for Christ followers. Paul tells young Timothy, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:1-2). While Jesus brings healing, exorcisms, and a whole host of other supernatural displays of divine power and authority, His purpose is still the verbal communication of good news.

## What About Now?

One major takeaway is the fundamental importance of preaching the Word of God. It is endemic to the Christian faith and the very purpose for which Jesus came. It is also central to the commands of the New Testament on all believers, but especially pastors and preachers/teachers. Whenever the church moves away from emphasizing the task of rightly dividing and proclaiming the truth of God's Word, the church moves into error. Another takeaway is how signs and wonders were never meant to be an end to themselves, but they were a means to an end, which was ultimately proclaiming the Gospel.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 4:31-32. Where did Jesus go, and what city was it a part of? When was He teaching, and how did the people respond? Why?

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2. Read Luke 4:33-34. Who did Jesus interact with, and where was this interaction? What did the unclean Spirit say to Jesus?

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### Day Two

1. Read Luke 4:35-37. How did Jesus respond? What was the result of the exorcism? How did the crowd respond, and what did they say to one another? Did the news of these events spread?

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2. Read Luke 4:38-39. From where did Jesus leave, and where did He go? Who did Jesus heal? How did He heal her?

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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 4:40. During what time of day did this verse take place? Who all was brought to Jesus and for what purpose? What did He do to them?

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2. Read Luke 4:41. What did the demons say as they were being exorcised? Why did Jesus command them not to speak?

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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 4:42-43. During what time of day did this verse take place? Where did Jesus go? What did the people say to Him as He was leaving, and how did He respond?

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2. Read Luke 4:44. Where was Jesus preaching?

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## Week 15 Discussion: Preach the Word

One of the foundational texts of pastoral ministry in the New Testament is 2 Timothy 4:1-2, where Paul says to young Timothy, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: *preach the word*; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." The word preach is in the imperative mood, meaning it's a command: "Preach the word!" Why? Because the proclamation of Scripture is imperative to the vitality of the Christian experience. While Jesus and His apostles demonstrated supernatural power, it was always done to underline the force of God's Word. Talk as a group about the importance of the Word in your life, and how often you share it with other people.

1. Icebreaker: Based on how often you study Scripture, how important is the Word of God to you?
2. Is it difficult to share your love for Scripture with other people? Why or why not?

3. Do you regularly attend a worship service on Sunday morning? If not, why not? If so, do you take notes or highlight passages in your Bible based on the sermon? If not, why not?
4. Why do you think the Scripture is so important in the ministry of Jesus and the early church?
5. Share with the group your favorite verse of Scripture, and why it matters to you.
6. How can the church highlight the importance of Scripture, practically speaking?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus came to preach in the synagogues in Capernaum, a city of Galilee.
2. Jesus performed exorcisms and healings as a means to give strength to His preaching.
3. Jesus heals Simon Peter's mother-in-law, indicating that Simon Peter was married.