



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Best Seller / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

## BOTTOM LINE

Context makes things clearer.

## GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students see a bigger picture for the Bible than just an old, boring book. And to begin encouraging them to approach it with some curiosity instead of dread.

## SCRIPTURE

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4 NIV).*

### CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

Luke isn't just storytelling off the top of his head. For Luke, writing about the life of Jesus was a matter of investigative research. Scholars agree that Luke was an educated man and did his homework. And Luke's detailed research gives his account reliability and credibility. Luke shared his detailed account so that Theophilus would know the "certainty" of what he'd been taught. His careful research can also give us more certainty today.

## TEACHING OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

I'm going to list some items, and you guess what they all have in common. They're all bestsellers!

The Bible is the number-one bestseller of all time too. Who knew?

### TENSION

Even if the Bible sits at the top of the bestseller list, it isn't always at the top of our list of things to read, right?

You probably already know what's in the Bible because your parents or your SGL have already told you the important stuff.

You don't really WANT to know what's in there, because then you might have to make some real changes in your life.



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Best Seller / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

## TEACHING OUTLINE

How do we know that this collection of 66 documents written over 1,500 years by dozens of authors on three different continents is even TRUE?

### TRUTH

The truth is, people spend years researching and thinking and asking questions, trying to figure out all of the evidence that exists for the Bible.

A bunch of people tried to write down all the things that happened when Jesus was around.

It's fascinating how careful people would be when they were copying New Testament documents.

Luke was one of the people who took it on himself to write a detailed account of Jesus' life. Luke says that he wasn't just writing down stories. He was recording what eyewitnesses to Jesus' life said about Him. These were people who knew the truth about Jesus.

Luke spent time and energy and effort making sure that he got it right. He did that so that his friend—and so that we—

can be certain that what is said about Jesus and what Jesus said about God is trustworthy.

What happened with Jesus was so extraordinary that Luke had to write it down very carefully to make sure that his reader understood that this was the real deal.

### APPLICATION

And Luke is just one author inside this collection of documents that we call the Bible. And my challenge to you is to discover more about it.

First, be curious. Then start with context. Because context makes things clearer.

A great way to do this—to read the Bible with some context—is to get a version with some assistance.

### LANDING

As you leave today, think about this: What if it *is* true? What if the story of Jesus—His death and being brought back to life—what if *that's* true?

## INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this message happens during the Introduction. Put these items in a bag or on a table on your stage: a bag of M&M's, Adele's album, 21, a Nokia 1100 (brick) phone, the movie Avatar, Candy Crush (just show it on your phone), and the novel Don Quixote De La Mancha. Have

you students guess what all of these items have in common. The answer? They're all best sellers in their category.

If finding or purchasing these items isn't a possibility, simply show a slide with the items and have your students guess.



# TEACHING SCRIPT

Best Seller / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

## BOTTOM LINE

CONTEXT MAKES THINGS CLEARER.

## INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

Okay, let's start with a game. I'm going to list some items, and you guess what they all have in common:



### INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this message happens right here in the script. Check out the Communicator Guide that precedes this script to find out what to do here.

- A bag of M&M's
- Adele's album, *21*
- A Nokia 1100 (brick) phone
- The movie *Avatar*
- Candy Crush (if you're using physical objects, just show it on your phone)
- The novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha*

So go for it. What do they have in common? That's right. They're the bestsellers in their category. M&M's is the bestselling candy of all time. I'm not sure how they beat out Snickers, but it's true. And the bestselling movie? Not *Rogue One*. Not *Titanic*. It was *Avatar*. The one with the blue people. Weird. And that last one, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*? (*Communicator Note: It's pronounced dOhn key-ho-tay.*) It's number one on the lists of bestselling books. Bet you didn't see that one coming, right? It's sold over 500 million copies. That's almost five times as many as the first *Harry Potter* book, which makes it the bestselling book of all time<sup>1</sup>.

Except that it's not.

<sup>1</sup> <http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/arts/literature/21-best-sellers.htm>

# TEACHING SCRIPT

---



Even though *Don Quixote* has sold 500 million copies, it's estimated that the Bible has sold multiple BILLIONS. It blows everything else out of the water. Along with some other religious books, it's left off most of the lists because copies were sold long before there was an accurate way to keep count of them. Still, there's no doubt that the Bible is the number one bestseller of all time. Who knew?

And, here are a few other things you may not have known about this world's-all-time-best-selling-book.

- It's not *actually* a book. It's a *collection* of documents. Some are letters, some are poems, some are history books, and some are prophecies.
- There are 66 documents that have been combined together to create the Bible.
- It was written by dozens of different people.
- It wasn't written all at once. It was written over the course of more than 1,500 years.

So I'm sure all of those facts make you want to end tonight early so you can go home and read your Bible cover-to-cover, right? Well, maybe not.

---

## TENSION

2 MINUTES

**Even if the Bible sits at the top of the bestseller list, it isn't always at the top of our list of things to read, right?** And there are a bunch of reasons for that.

- The Bible is old.
- It can be hard to understand. And since we don't even like reading things that aren't interesting, trying to get through something we don't even understand? Well, it's a tough sell.
- It's about dead people.
- The Bible is long. There's, like, a billion pages.
- It can be really confusing. I know some of you have just opened up your Bible and read the first thing you saw. It might have even been something weird like how we're not supposed to boil a goat in its mother's milk or something.

Plus . . .

- **You probably already know what's in the Bible because your parents or your student pastor or your Small Group Leader has already told you the important stuff.**

Or maybe . . .

- **You don't really WANT to know what's in there, because then you might have to make some real changes in your life.**

And let's be honest . . .

- **How do we know that this collection of 66 documents written over 1,500 years by dozens of authors on three different continents is even TRUE?**

Because that's the biggest question, isn't it? **If it is true, then it makes sense that it's the bestselling book of all time.** It's a game changer. But if it's not true, well then nobody's got time to read a book that big for nothing. If it's just one big scam, then the last thing we want to do is read it and then put the time and energy into actually doing what it says.

But the problem is this: How do you know?

---

## TRUTH

4 MINUTES

I really wish that were a simpler question. The truth is, people spend years—sometimes their entire careers—researching and thinking and asking questions, trying to figure out all of the evidence that exists for the Bible. And we're not going to cover all or even a large part of what they've discovered in the next few minutes.

And remember, it isn't just one book. It's a collection of multiple letters and documents by multiple authors. So while we can't talk through each of them specifically (you're welcome), we can look at one document that has the potential to help us understand all the others better. It's a letter written by a guy named Luke and it's one of the four accounts of Jesus' life found in the New Testament. It starts this way:

***Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us (Luke 1:1 NIV).***

That very first word is a clue. *Many*. What have *many* done according to this author? Undertaken to draw up an account. Which means, a bunch of people have tried to write down all the things that happened when Jesus was around.

Apparently whatever was happening at the time, it was important enough for *many* people to write it down. It means *something* happened. And, we have the writings of four people who wrote about that *something* being the life and death and coming-back-to-life of Jesus. Their four documents, along with all of the documents and letters of the New Testament, were passed around and copied and passed around and copied. Luke said many people wanted to write down everything that had happened. And they did. And then it was copied by other people who wanted to share the news. Think of it as an ancient retweet. And as a result, we have thousands of manuscripts, with different dates on them. No originals, but copies and copies, and copies of copies. In fact, there are more copies of New Testament documents than there are copies of any other ancient documents (like The Iliad or The Odyssey).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>



# TEACHING SCRIPT

---

So you may be wondering, doesn't that mean that there would be errors because everything was copied so many times? Glad you asked. No. We can take a manuscript dated 250 A.D. and compare it to a manuscript of the same book dated 500 A.D. and see if anything had changed over the course of 250 years of copying. And you know what you discover when you study all those manuscripts with such different dates? You find virtually no difference outside of spelling and grammatical mistakes.

It's fascinating how careful people would be when they were copying these documents. They would check and recheck and check again to make sure these letters and stories about Jesus were copied accurately and completely. And why was it so important? Well, it's because of *what* Luke was writing. Check out how he describes it.

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus (Luke 1:1-3 NIV).*

Luke is saying that these aren't just stories he's writing down. He's recording what was told by the eyewitnesses, by the people who knew the truth about Jesus. In fact, the Greek word he uses to describe them is *autoptes*. It's similar to our English word "autopsy," meaning the investigation that happens after someone dies. This isn't just storytelling for Luke. This is an investigation. It's research. Scholars agree that Luke was an educated man and he did his homework. And that's one reason why his account of Jesus' life is such a big deal. It's reliable. It's trustworthy. It's well researched and it presents real evidence.

And he wrote it down for a reason:

*So that you may **know the certainty** of the things you have been taught (Luke 1:4 NIV, emphasis added).*

He did this so his friend Theophilus, whoever that is, can be what? *Certain*. Certain of what? Certain of the things that he has been taught about Jesus. Luke spent time and energy and effort making sure that he got it right. He did that so that his friend—and so that we—can be certain that what is said about Jesus and what Jesus said about God is trustworthy. It's reliable. What Luke is giving us is the one thing that can help clear up the confusion or uncertainty about the Bible: context. He's giving us the big picture . . . not only of who Jesus is, but also of the research he put in to making sure that Jesus' story was told in a clear and accurate way.

What happened with Jesus was so extraordinary and so unbelievable that Luke had to write it down very carefully to make sure that his reader understood that this was the real deal. And he was right. Not only did *Theophilus* need it, we also need to know this is trustworthy, because if what Luke said is true—if Jesus was born, died, and raised back to life—then that changes everything. Jesus' story becomes the most important story ever told. His words become trustworthy. And following Him? Trusting Him with our lives? Well, that becomes a no-brainer.

## APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

And Luke is just one author inside this collection of documents that we call the Bible. And my challenge to you is to discover more about it.

Don't throw it out as untrue or useless until you've taken the time to at least consider it.

It's the best selling book of all time, after all. ALL TIME! And as someone who can decide things for themselves, you owe it to yourself to know *why* you do or do not believe what it says.

So, how do you do that?

First, **be curious**. Remember, this is the best selling book of all time! There has to be something in there that makes billions of people want to own a copy and read it. So, like Luke, spend some time investigating. And . . .

**Start with the context.** And context simply means this: It's the backstory. It's the story that sets up the story. And it can help you better understand what you're reading. That's why all four accounts of Jesus' life begin with some kind of backstory. It's why Luke began with his investigation. When you understand what's going on around the story, it can give you confidence that you understand what you're reading. In other words . . .

**Context makes things clearer.**

And a great way to do this—to read the Bible with some context—is to get a version with some assistance. *Life Application* Bibles are great for this. Or you can Google information about each book within the Bible before you read it and learn some things.

Search for answers to questions like:

- Who wrote it?
- Who was it written to?
- When was it written?
- Why was it written to those people at *that* time?

In fact, you can start with the book we talked about tonight, Luke, or the follow-up that was also written by Luke called Acts. As you read it, remember they were both written for Theophilus. So pretend you're *Theophilus*, and your buddy Luke did some research to help you see things more clearly. See if it helps. And just get started.

---

## LANDING

1 MINUTE

Look, I know that reading the Bible is challenging. Plus, people don't sit down and read much anymore. It takes time. And there's the risk of missing out on something on Netflix. There's also the risk of reading something that makes no sense to you.

But as you leave today, think about this: What if it is true? What if the story of Jesus—His death and being brought back to life—what if that's true? And what if the things Jesus taught and the things He believed to be true are just as reliable and trustworthy?

And imagine if the words recorded in the Bible really did have the potential to change your life story, but you never actually read it? What if it contained insights into how to live the life you were made for, but you never learned those insights? There is risk either way, but the reward, when you read it, is so much greater. And context can help make that clearer for you. So start your own investigation and find out for yourself.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

---