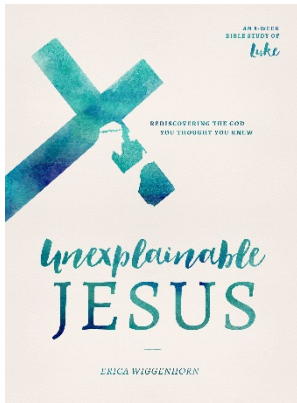


## ***Unexplainable Jesus: Rediscovering the God You Thought You Knew*** An 8-Week Bible Study of Luke



From the winsome pen of Erica Wiggernhorn comes an engaging new study on the life of Christ from the gospel of Luke. Why Luke? “He is hands down my favorite New Testament author,” she explains. “He applauds logic and facts, is extremely detail-oriented, and he is compassionate.” From this positive beginning, she takes us through an account of Jesus’ life in a thorough, joyful, sobering, and well-worthwhile venture.

Carefully researched, *Unexplainable Jesus* examines narratives that may be well-known to some readers, but with detail provided so the incidents are “not swallowed up in familiarity,” as Wiggernhorn puts it. Readers will discover insights about first-century Palestine; the Roman occupation; the Sadducees, who actually benefitted socially and politically from the Romans; how the written and oral Jewish law permeated every aspect of daily life; the travels of Joseph and Mary, and more. Erica includes information about coins and snakes, shepherds and dinners, Pharisees and parables and first-century Judaism.

This unexplainable Jesus is a champion of women, and also one who challenged some erroneous long-held beliefs, such as illness or infirmity being caused by sin. The study contrasts the religious elite with the ordinary person—all of whom need Jesus. Against the backdrop of biblical characters, the reader is challenged: Do we seek His miracles, or do we seek Him? Is it only healing we want, or the Healer? Will we settle for something from Him . . . or do we long for intimacy with Him?

This well-paced book works both for group and individual study, with lessons taking twenty to thirty minutes to complete. The eight-week format has five days of study each, and offers a workable blend of historical and cultural background, textual review, and life application. Thus, in each lesson, the reader is guided through a Bible passage, asked to respond to questions that ensure an understanding of the Scripture, and presented with an opportunity to make it personal. A free online leader’s guide is available at [www.ericawiggernhorn.com](http://www.ericawiggernhorn.com). This study also includes a video component of live teaching done by Erica, produced by Moody Publishers.

As a bonus, *Come to the Table* offers extra material at the author’s website and includes interesting nuggets about such things as the Feast of Ingathering; ties between Moses’ ministry and that of Jesus; background on Jesus’ references to the temple, towers, and Herod; prophecies of Daniel; the Jewish Passover; Elijah, Ezekiel, and Jewish beliefs about the Messiah.

For someone who's not yet a believer or isn't sure, Jesus' invitation is issued and the gospel clearly explained. For the reader who feels they have already completed countless Bible studies, there is much depth to expand their knowledge. For the one who's seeking to revive their encounter with Jesus, these pages beckon.

Erica Wiggenhorn issues an invitation hard to resist: "Maybe before you close your study book today, you'd like to pause and ask Jesus to reveal Himself to you in your everyday, ordinary life. Ask Him for eyes to see Him right where you are." *Unexplainable Jesus* will guide the reader to do just that.

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### *About the Author*

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**ERICA WIGGENHORN** is the founder of Every Life Ministries, bringing the truths of Scripture to transform lives. She teaches in various local and national venues and serves on the women's ministry leadership team for her church. She's also taught women in the Arizona State Prison system, and overseas. She loves to bring God's Word through Bible teaching, conferences, seminars and retreats. A graduate of Azusa Pacific University, Erica lives in

Phoenix with her husband, Jonathan, and their two children, Eliana and Nathan. For more information about Erica, her Bible studies, and writing/speaking ministry visit [www.EricaWiggenhorn.com](http://www.EricaWiggenhorn.com).

Week One: Unexplainable Beginnings  
Week Two: Unexplainable Births  
Week Three: Unexplainable Introductions  
Week Four: Unexplainable Teaching  
Week Five: An Unexplainable Kingdom  
Week Six: Unexplainable Invitations  
Week Seven: Unexplainable Confrontations  
Week Eight: An Unexplainable Rescue  
Continuing the Journey

### **Suggested interview questions:**

1. What made you become passionate about Bible teaching? Why can you empathize with the person out there who struggles to make bible reading or bible study a priority?

When I first became a Christian I was a teenager in a southern California suburb no biblical background whatsoever. When I opened my Bible I had no idea what Jesus meant when He spoke of fig trees, oxen and fishing. Because I couldn't understand the Bible and it made no sense to me, I struggled to read it. And then I felt guilty because I knew I was "supposed to". It wasn't until others began to teach me the Bible that the Word became alive to me. I want to help others who have my same struggle to make sense of the Bible and apply it to their lives.

2. Why do you think Biblical Literacy hasn't been a priority in recent years? Why do you think it's so important? How do your studies increase biblical literacy?

In our society today, words fly around everywhere- on our phones, television sets, car radios. But in biblical times, words were written on very expensive scrolls with a limited amount of space. And when you composed a letter or wrote a gospel narrative like Luke, you selected EVERY WORD carefully, so you could ensure the entire message would fit. For this reason, when we study Scripture a careful investigation of the chosen words is warranted. The Biblical authors tells us the location of where something is happening for a specific reason. To whom Jesus is speaking. The verb they chose. It is all significant because it is taking up valuable space on that scroll.

I think biblical literacy becomes less important because we don't understand the high value we ought to place on each word and because so many struggle to understand the Bible, so they avoid it.

3. What are we missing when we don't personally study scripture? What practical steps would you offer to someone who wants to grow in their ability to read and study the Bible?

Join a BIBLE STUDY! Learn form others, exercise your gifts within a bible study group. The Bible study author is going to have put hours of time in researching the meaning and the application of Scripture for you, bringing it to life in 20 minutes instead of 20 hours!

4. You mention that your desire for the reader of this study is to move beyond knowing about Jesus to encountering Jesus- what do you mean by that?

Steven Curtis Chapman story- knowing his songs, reading about him in magazines and articles, versuss sitting across the table from him and hearing his heart as he spoke. Then I knew SCC. It's the same with Jesus- we have to slow down and allow Him to share His heart with us.

5. What got you interested in the Luke's Gospel in particular? Why is this gospel narrative so important to individuals? Why is it important to the church?

Luke is a Greek physician- so he writes in a style from which our own western writing traditions stem making his gospel easier for us to follow. He composes his gospel narrative like how we would write a thesis statement in our schools- he starts with the hypothesis that Jesus is both human and divine and then systematically lays out his arguments to prove his point. He is methodical and deliberate pointing us to make a decision as to whether his hypothesis is true.

6. Your studies take the reader verse by verse through passages of Scripture- why do you write that way instead of centering your studies around a topic?

The goes back to the idea of the scroll but also to Luke's writing style. He lays his gospel out in an order of argument, presenting Jesus' identity first, then His authority demonstrated through His signs, miracles and teachings and lastly His

mission through His death and resurrection. Luke organizes his presentation of Jesus to push us toward a decision: is Jesus God in the flesh come to save the world or not? In Luke's estimation, everything else we may study about Jesus centers upon how we answer that question.

7. You chose to study the life of Jesus from the book of Luke rather than survey His life throughout all the Gospels. Why Luke? How does Luke's Gospel compare with that of Matthew, Mark, and John?

One of my favorite things about Luke's gospel is how he highlights the inclusive and compassionate side of Jesus. Unlike the other gospel writers, Luke emphasizes Jesus' inclusion of women and Gentiles in His ministry. He also highlights Jesus' compassion on the helpless the suffering. In Jewish thought, human suffering was a punishment for sin, so the other gospel writers struggle more with this concept, but for Luke, Jesus' compassion and inclusion for the suffering and outcast shines brightly as a physician who regularly dealt with the sick.

8. How is Luke as a storyteller? What do we know of him through his narration?

I love how Luke uses both foreshadowing, irony and little asides within his stories. They would be easy to miss with a casual reading of the text, but when you break the stories down verse by verse you see the funny things he puts in his narrative to bring humor and also hammer home a point!

9. How is the format of the study set up? Does it work best in a group, or can an individual do this herself? About how long will each lesson take to complete?

It takes about 15-20 minutes per day for 5 days to dive into the Scripture and finish the lessons. You can go through the study alone, but I would recommend doing it with at least one other person so you can share with one another what you are learning!

10. Is this study geared toward women, or will men also be drawn to it?

I have had men's groups and mixed gender small groups go through my other studies and feel they were valuable. I would never exclude anyone who felt compelled to dive into Scripture and wanted to dialog over my own thoughts and applications!

11. Explain how this approach includes both straight Bible study and application for the reader's life.

A common misconception about Bible study is that the purpose of it is information- so we can learn the Word of God. Yes, we need to learn the Word of God, but when Jesus taught while on earth, He didn't merely dispense

information, He offered an invitation for transformation. This is how we should approach the Word today also.

12. Tell us something unexpected or surprising you learned while working on this study.

I was surprised by how confrontational Jesus was toward those steeped in religious pride. I always thought of Jesus as the nice loving guy sitting on the rock patting children on the head, but He really got in people's faces sometimes for their critical and judgmental attitudes. I think we forget this side of Jesus.

13. Your books are well-researched. How do you know what sources are credible to cite? How did your research done in Israel impact this study?

If you start with one credible commentary- since Moody is my publisher, let's just start with the Moody Bible Commentary. Those authors are going to cite multiple authors in the construction of their commentary, so if you want to dig deeper, look there for additional resources.

This study on Unexplainable Jesus was born in my heart during my visit to Israel, because our Jewish tour guide explained things from a Jewish perspective. He put Jesus' allusions to events within the context of Jewish history. It is important to remember that Jesus was speaking to a specific group of people with certain cultural biases and religious beliefs. This background information needs to be brought into account when we are trying to decipher what Jesus meant.

14. What was the historical context during the time of which Luke was writing his Gospel? What was going on in Palestine? How will knowing these things enhance the reader's experience with the study?

Luke compiled his gospel during a time of great transition and turbulence in Palestine. The original twelve apostles were dying off and the Roman empire was growing increasingly hostile toward both Jews and Christians resulting in widespread persecution and death of many believers. Luke felt compelled to conduct extensive research and interview many eyewitnesses of Jesus while he still could. Luke's urgency to preserve the gospel message ought to compel us toward such urgency in our own generation.

15. Who are some of the biblical characters the reader will encounter during this study?

My favorite biblical characters in Luke's gospel are the women! Their courage to follow Jesus and faithfulness to serve Him and minister to Him inspire me!

16. What are some contrasts we find in Luke's Gospel? e.g., the religious elite and the common folk; the king of the world (Jesus) and the king at the time (Caesar Augustus).

During the time Jesus walked the earth, the literacy rate in Palestine was less than 10% which meant most of the people Jesus spoke to did not hold physical copies of the Law, the writings of the prophets, or other Jewish religious texts. They depended entirely upon the teachers of the Law and the scribes and Pharisees to explain to them how to live and what God was like. Jesus has a lot to say to these religious leaders as to how they poorly handled this sacred responsibility. As one who knows the gospel and teaching of Jesus today, how am I handling that responsibility in my time and place in history?

Jesus contrasts the person who knows about Him versus the person who is committed to following Him. While large crowds followed Him, we find only a few with Him after His death and resurrection. To these He conferred His kingdom. Many today know about Jesus- they have the basics- but how many are truly committed to following Him? This is a dramatic contrast Jesus emphasized in His teaching.

### **Quotes from *Unexplainable Jesus*:**

“Will you leave behind your daily, run-of-the-mill life and hope for something greater? Will you search for the sacred? Will you test the truth of what you believe about Jesus?” (p. 10)

“Some people insist they don’t need ‘religion’ or that all religions are ‘the same.’ I dare you to find a savior who offers these three things—light, salvation, and peace—unconditionally.” (p. 36)

“Jesus spent most of His life in the ordinary streets and home of ordinary people. . . . One of the most unexplainable things about Jesus is that we can always find Him in the midst of the everyday. Suddenly, He is there.” (p. 56)

“When we expect God to do the unexpected for us, we will be so much more willing to do the unexpected for others.” (p. 85)

“Those who truly seek Jesus will have His Word and power revealed to them. Those who don’t, won’t.” (p. 103)

“If you haven’t figured it out yet, Jesus is most interested in a relationship with you: not your performance, your righteousness, or your knowledge. He wants your heart.” (p. 124)

“Isn’t it amazing how dour some Christians can be? We serve a King who regularly went to dinner parties!” (p. 153)

“I don’t know about you, but my problem most often isn’t that I don’t have faith. It’s that I don’t have faith in the greatness of my God. I have made Him too small.” (p. 166)

“All things are from Him. All things belong to Him. What He asks us to give, He replaces with more. We cannot outgive God.” (p. 183)

“We have a Savior and Lord who will eventually put an end to all social injustice in His kingdom, and those who suffer will do so no more. The beauty of this Savior is that He has invited us into this work today.” (p. 200)

“Remember, when life feels dull, dreary, or dead, you serve the God who raises the dead!” (p. 235)

“He invites you to go with Him on the grandest adventure of your life. There will never be another today. Unexplainable Jesus holds out His nail-scarred hand, pierces into your very soul with His calm yet resolute gaze. A grin flashes across His face and He whispers, ‘Come, follow Me!’” (p. 246)

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