



MISSIONS

LUKE 4:14-30 - Nazareth Manifesto: Release to All Humanity

1) What is healthy about an outwardly focused church? Can it go too far?

Leaders: Any responses are good here. Don't worry about giving the right answer.

Read Luke 4:14-30

2) Why do you think the crowd in Jesus' hometown was happy about the initial message? (See their reaction in verse 22.)

Leaders: Perhaps because hometown-boy-makes-good stories bring honor and blessings to the hometown. Perhaps because release from Roman oppression was on everyone's mind at the time. Perhaps because they were hoping Jesus was going to turn out to really be God's anointed King.

3) What made them change their tune? (See their reaction in verses 28-29.)

Leaders: Jesus intentionally highlights the "not-for-Jews" element of Yahweh's provision and healing...perhaps especially because of the reference to Naaman - a Syrian army general at a time when Syria was making raids on Israel (and carrying off little girls). Maybe because they realized the depth of their need for a champion for Israel and felt that spreading out the blessings to other nations would water them down for their own.

4) What is the difference between the idea of God's Messiah offering release for all humanity, and a free-for-all universalism?

Leaders: Feel free to let this discussion play out all over the place. The offer is universal, but the release comes only through the God's chosen representative to humanity. John 1:11-13 may help - John says all who "receive" the Word (Jesus) and trust him get to become God's children. The adulterous woman's stoning might also be helpful to mention (Jesus frees her from certain death, yet also tells her to let go of her sins).

5) What feels different about the idea of sending American Christians to serve people in a far-off third-world country versus the idea of ourselves serving those same third-world people in our own backyard?

Leaders: No right answer.

6) Read Exodus 23:9. What is the reason given for not mistreating immigrants?

Leaders: Their foundational history is 400 years as immigrants freed by God. It may or may not help to remind people that we are all spiritually immigrants (Ephesians 2:12-13), and as well, for many of us, we're part of families that immigrated into the United States within the last 400 years..

To go deeper on your own time:

- Check out the two stories Jesus and his hometown audience are so familiar with by reading about the widow in 1 Kings 17:8-24 and the enemy general in 2 Kings 5:1-27.
- Flip through Luke and note the ways in which Jesus is releasing (or announcing good news of release) to the poor or outcast.

2023 Breakthrough Prayers

- Father, pour out your Spirit on us and move us to serve those in need.
- Father, allow us to provide Bibles, beds & bikes to those taking the gospel to the Nyamwezi in 2023. (Use us to build a Christ-centered reproducing church among an unreached people - the Nyamwezi – by 2030.)
- Father, please launch 100 discipleship groups among us this year.
- Father, help us walk worthy of our calling, maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1, 3).