

Week One

Conversations with God

LUKE 1-6

***Reminder: The daily rhythm of READ-MEMORIZE-MEDITATE is not new to this module. This highly personalized approach to engaging God through Scripture and meditation was introduced and practiced in Morph: Love God. If you have not experienced Morph: Love God, or if it has been a while, you are encouraged to read the Week Two section in the Love God Primer before beginning these exercises. The Love God Primer is available at www.morphonline.org.

READ

Good stories share a common arc. They start with conflict or tension—a mystery needs solving, a wrong needs righting, an evil must be stopped. The plot then thickens as the conflict deepens or the evil seems to prevail. Tension builds, and at the moment of maximum tension, something flips and everything gets turned on its head—the villain is captured, the lost child is found, the fraud is discovered. Good triumphs and evil is thwarted.

Good stories, though, don't end at the climax, especially in the real world. The dictator may be ousted, but the country still must heal. The activists may have gotten the law passed, but the law must then be implemented. The abusive father may have repented, but reconciliation often comes slowly. In every good story, even after the climax, there is work to be done. Only after this work has been accomplished do we experience the end, the grand finale, that moment when all is resolved and wrongs are again made right.

According to Scripture, history follows a similar arc.

God created humanity good, but humanity was tempted and rebelled...

[The serpent] said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"... When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband.
(Genesis 3:1, 6)

Life outside the garden, absent the original innocence, has seen an intensification of the rebellion against God. What started with the eating of forbidden fruit quickly grew to murder, war, rape, and conquest. The Old Testament chronicles humanity's ongoing rebellion, specifically through the people of Israel. Despite periods of brief repentance, time and again, humanity turned its back on God.

How will this tension be resolved? Where's the climax? The Old Testament ends, not with a solution, but with prediction of a solution...

But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. (Malachi 4:2)

The New Testament opens with four accounts of history's climactic event. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each describe this event from a unique vantage point. During the first half of this *Morph* module,

LUKE 1-6

we'll read Luke's account of the climax of God's story. In Luke, we get a vivid portrayal of how Christ's entrance into the world dramatically shifts the entire trajectory of human history. At the height of the drama, Christ (the hero) permanently defeats Satan (the villain), offering reconciliation to humanity from its rebellion against God.

We must not forget, though, that good stories don't end with the climax. The conflict is resolved, but resolution must then be applied. In the case of human history, Christ brought reconciliation, but this reconciliation must then spread throughout the world. In the second half of this *Morph* module, we'll read Acts. Acts tells the early story of how the solution given by Christ spread throughout the ancient world.

Luke and Acts were both written by Luke. They offer a unified voice from the climatic event of the death and resurrection of Christ to the application of this event throughout the known world. As you read, observe the working out of God's plan and the numerous people involved. Though Acts describes the work of restoration that Christ left to be done, this work is not yet finished and the Church of today continues the work initiated in Acts.

Scripture ends in Revelation with a description of the grand finale, the end of the story. As you read, be aware of your own place in history. Today, we are somewhere between the story of Acts and the final chapters of Revelation. The world has yet to experience the grand finale of God's story, and there is work yet to be done. This week, as you read the first six chapters of Luke, listen for Christ's early invitation for people to join him in his restoration work. Consider how he may be extending the same invitation to you today. In your meditation, talk to God about any resistance you may have to this invitation and respond in your own way.

MEMORIZE

This week's memory verses:

Isaiah 1:17 "Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow."

James 1:27 "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

LUKE 1–6

MEDITATE

Meditating is simply talking and listening to God. Your conversation with God will be inspired and informed by reading and memorizing Scripture, but your conversation should also be personalized. Carefully consider the passages, but don't *just* consider the passage. Talk and listen. Pour out your thoughts, concerns, frustrations, and joys. Or just sit in silence before God. Some talk best with God in a quiet room. Others prefer to talk with God while running or walking. Most importantly, engage God in a way that is authentic and personal.

Use the space below to record memorable thoughts or highlights from your Conversations with God to share with your Small Group or Running Partners.



LUKE 1-6

Week 1, Conversations with God, p. 38