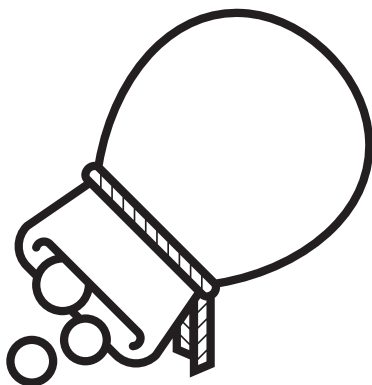
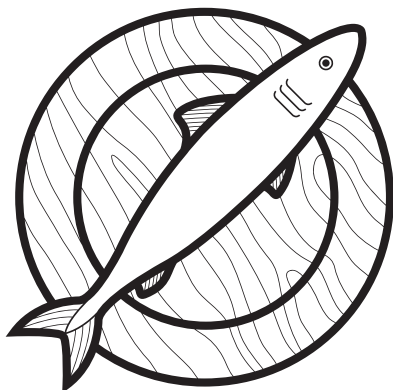


# Rebecca Manley Pippert



Six encounters with Jesus  
from the Gospel of Luke

Read Becky's comments on each  
of the questions at:

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# INTRODUCTION

## **Uncover, investigate, and examine the evidence...**

People have two things in common: we want to be happy and we want to be loved. Why are these simple desires so difficult to satisfy?

Part of the ache comes from our sense that there seems to be something more promised. There is more for us to live for, to embrace, or be embraced by. We want to know that our lives are significant.

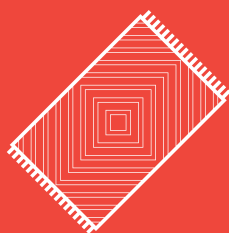
How can we discover and live with a deeper sense of life's meaning? When I was an agnostic I investigated various religions, until one day it occurred to me that I had never read the Bible. I realized that for the sake of intellectual integrity I couldn't reject something that I had never examined. I had to investigate the evidence and scrutinize the claims Jesus made about himself.

I vividly remember the first time I read one of the Gospel accounts that tell the story of Jesus. My impression of Jesus had been that he was probably sincere, and no doubt always blissfully happy. Then I started reading the Bible. I was not prepared for how much of what I discovered would challenge my pre-conceived ideas.

Here was Jesus: amazingly attractive, yet utterly exasperating. He claimed to be the Prince of Peace, yet he threw furniture down the front steps of the temple. He claimed to be the Son of God, yet one of the chief complaints about him was that he wasn't religious enough! This was not the kind of Jesus I had expected to encounter.

Maybe you've never read the Bible before. Or perhaps you've never looked at the life of Jesus with a critical mind. Whatever your story, one thing is certain: it's impossible to make an informed decision without first investigating the evidence.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, prominent 'B' at the beginning.





*Standing  
room only*





# LUKE 1 v 1-4 & 5 v 17-26

## Standing room only

### *Question*

Have you ever heard a friend say something like: *“If only I could get my deepest wish fulfilled, then I would be happy”*?

How true do you think that statement is and why?

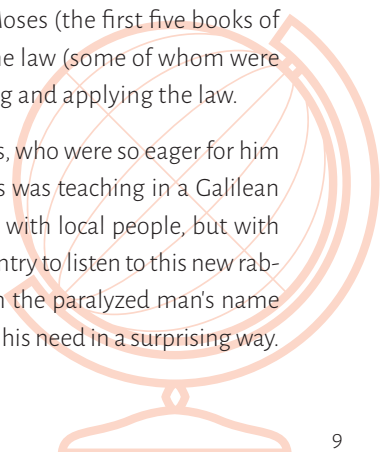


### Historical context

Jesus was extremely controversial in his day. While the common, despised or marginalized people were drawn to him, the religious authorities were frequently incensed by his claims, his associations and his lifestyle.

There were several types of religious leaders in Jesus' day. In this story we are introduced to two significant groups. The Pharisees were a religious sect of Jews who focused on a strict interpretation of the Law of Moses (the first five books of the Bible). The second group, called the teachers of the law (some of whom were also Pharisees), were professionally trained in teaching and applying the law.

We will meet a paralyzed man and his faithful friends, who were so eager for him to be healed of paralysis that they went to where Jesus was teaching in a Galilean town. To their surprise the house was packed not only with local people, but with religious leaders who had traveled from all over the country to listen to this new rabbi who was gaining so much attention. We never learn the paralyzed man's name nor how he developed this condition. Jesus responds to his need in a surprising way.





**READ SOURCE TEXT:** LUKE 1 v1-4 LUKE'S INTRODUCTION

**M**any have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup> just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. <sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

*Note: The small numbers in the Bible passages refer to the numbers of the verses.*

- 1 What was Luke's method in writing and what was his purpose (v 3-4)?

**READ SOURCE TEXT:** LUKE 5 v17-26 THE HEALING OF A PARALYZED MAN

**O**ne day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. <sup>18</sup> Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. <sup>19</sup> When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

<sup>21</sup> The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? <sup>23</sup> Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? <sup>24</sup> But I want

you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” <sup>25</sup> Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. <sup>26</sup> Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

Jesus is teaching in the region of the Galilee. The distance from Jerusalem (in the south) to the town of Capernaum (in the north where Jesus was based) is 120 miles. It would take a fit person four or five days to walk that distance!

- 2 Note where these religious authorities came from (v 17). Why do you think some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law decided to travel such distances and all at the same time?
- 3 Describe what life would be like for someone paralyzed: both practically and emotionally.
- 4 Once the men realize they can't get through the door because of the crowd, what alternative plan do they devise and what are the risks involved (v 18-19)?
- 5 Clearly this dramatic event would affect people in different ways. Try to imagine the reaction of those present to what they saw happening: The religious authorities and townspeople? The owners of the home? Jesus?
- 6 What does it say about the paralyzed man and his friends that they were so determined to get to Jesus?
- 7 What does Jesus see in these men that impresses him (v 20a)?
- 8 When Jesus says the man's sins are forgiven (v 20b), what do you think the reaction of the paralytic and his friends might have been?
- 9 Jesus seems to be saying to this man: “If all I do is heal your body, the happiness won't last, because the root of your problem is deeper than your physical condition.” What do you think about this?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10 By saying that his sins were forgiven, what did these religious leaders correctly perceive about the controversial claim Jesus was indirectly making (v 21)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The religious leaders were amazed by Jesus' healing ministry. But they were outraged by his claim to forgive sin, because they knew that was something only God

could do. Jesus didn't say to the paralyzed man: "Look, we all blow it. Nobody's perfect, so just take heart in that." Instead, Jesus proclaimed that the sins of the paralyzed man were forgiven, simply because he had pronounced it so! It was an earth-shattering statement that reflected Jesus' identity and mission—which wasn't lost on the Pharisees!

But what Jesus does next shocks them even more. When the Old Testament religious leaders wanted to invoke authority, they would always cite divine (never personal) authority by saying: "Thus says the Lord." The religious leaders believed the worst sin of all was to commit blasphemy—the claim to be God.

11 What authority did Jesus invoke when he spoke to the paralytic (v 24b)?

Just to be absolutely certain everyone understood, what did Jesus say his healing of the paralyzed man confirmed (v 24a)?

12 Describe the scene when the paralyzed man responds to Jesus' impossible command (v 25-26).

## *So, why does this matter?*

C. S. Lewis, an Oxford professor and Christian writer who was once a fervent atheist, wrote:

*"Then comes the real shock. Among the Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if he was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says he always existed. He says he is coming to judge the world at the end of time ... and when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips."*

Why do you think people who reject the controversial claims that Jesus made about his own identity still call him a great teacher and leader?



