



2065 Half Day Road, #T-2992
Deerfield, Illinois 60015
1.847.295.9308

www.scholarleaders.org

LIKE LUKE

By Christopher M. Hays



SCHOLARLEADER
INSIGHTS

LIKE LUKE

Over my years of graduate work and missionary service, I have been cobbling together a picture of Luke the Evangelist. It is slow going. The historical data is sparse. Unlike the Apostle Paul, whose personality and biography are easily identifiable on the surface of his epistles, Luke keeps himself mostly off the page. Still, with a little ingenuity, you can assemble some intriguing bits of information about the author of the Third Gospel and Acts. The guy was pretty great. As I have gotten to know him, I have realized that I really want to be like Luke. And in my short tenure so far as the new President of SCHOLARLEADERS, I've seen that this organization is a lot like Luke too.

Leaving home to follow God's call

Luke and Paul were buddies. If you simply had Paul's letters to go on, you would only know that Luke hung out with Paul while the Apostle was in prison (Col. 4; 2 Tim. 4:11; Phm. 24). But a careful reading of the book of Acts reveals that they actually spent a lot of time together over the years. To spot that, you just have to pay attention to the grammatical clues.

At numerous junctures in Acts, the narrative slips from third person to first-person plural. The first

time this happens is in chapter 16, which uses the third person plural to recount how Paul and Timothy traversed the western part of modern Turkey ("They went...They had come...they attempted..." etc.; Acts 16:6-18). After they arrived in the coastal city Troas, Paul received a vision summoning him to Macedonia. At that moment, the text suddenly switches to the first-person plural: "We immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them" (Acts 16:10). This shift suggests that the narrator, Luke, joined Paul in Troas, or thereabouts.

We can only speculate about how Luke made that decision. Colossians reveals that Luke was a Gentile and a doctor (Col. 4:10-14), a profession that would have afforded him a comfortable life. But medical practice and Gentile ethnicity notwithstanding, Luke decided to road-trip around the Mediterranean with this Jewish Apostle. Years later, when writing his Gospel, Luke would narrate how Peter and Levi left everything to follow Jesus (Luke 5:10-11, 27-28). I do wonder if Luke penned those accounts recalling how he did the same thing when an itinerant rabbi came through his town.



Photo credit: Christopher Hays

Christopher and his family.

Christopher M. Hays is the new President of SCHOLARLEADERS. A New Testament scholar, he studied and worked in the U.S., Scotland, England, and Germany. He then served for eight years as a missionary professor, teaching New Testament and Greek at the Biblical Seminary of Colombia in Medellín. He is the author and editor of several books, including *Renouncing Everything* and *When the Son of Man Didn't Come*. He now lives in North Carolina with his wife, Michelle, and their three children.



Photo credit: Antonio Janeski on Unsplash

The landscape of Macedonia.

Like Luke, God called my family to leave our home. That call took us from the U.S. to Scotland to England to Germany to England to Colombia and now back to the U.S. Time and again we have walked away from stable communities, good opportunities, and languages that we understood, often against the dictates of prudence and the advice of friends. That path was sometimes lonely, sometimes lean, sometimes frightening.

Luke knew what that was like. So do the scholars funded by LeaderStudies. They leave behind jobs, family, and security to train for a lifetime of theological leadership. But SCHOLARLEADERS accompanies them on their journeys.

Trusted brokers for Kingdom investment

Luke's first-person plural verbs pop up again near the conclusion of Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 20:1-5). That narrative recounts Paul's travels around the Aegean Sea prior to setting sail for Jerusalem, and the text names seven men who joined Paul and Luke on the trip (20:4). This initially seems like an odd comment, given that Paul did not normally travel with such a large entourage. Fortunately, a sideways glance at 2 Corinthians (written during that journey) explains this detail.

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in preparation for a visit from Macedonia to Corinth prior to returning to Jerusalem. His trip was basically a fundraising junket, collecting large donations for needy believers in Judea (2 Cor. 8-9). This explains why so many men joined Paul on this trip: they were his security detail. In a world before Western Union, the only way to move money long distances was to carry it, and if you didn't want to get robbed by bandits, you had to travel with some muscle.

In his letter, Paul told the Corinthians that he would send two people ahead of him to rally them to contribute to the collection. One of Paul's envoys was Titus; the other, he simply calls "the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming the good news" (2 Cor. 8:18). According to the Church father Origen, that famous evangelist was none other than Luke. If Origen is right, then between Paul's second and third missionary journeys, Luke stayed in Greece to preach and nourish the churches there. Because of the good reputation Luke's evangelistic ministry had earned, Paul could send him with Titus to begin gathering funds.

Like Luke, SCHOLARLEADERS' years of ministry have built a reputation that allows us to distribute

resources from one sector of the global Church to another. It all started out with offering scholarships, a few thousand dollars at a time, gradually building for decades. When COVID struck, SCHOLARLEADERS delivered aid to partner institutions around the globe. Right now, SCHOLARLEADERS is providing emergency relief to theological schools and churches in Ukraine. And we also are writing grant applications to allow us to continue to tackle pressing global challenges, like supporting women in theological leadership or intellectually equipping the Church to relate to Islam. Our extensive network allows us to be a trustworthy bridge between the generosity of the West and the opportunities and needs of the rest of the world. (Fortunately, *unlike* Luke, we can wire money across the globe, rather than delivering it on foot!)

Amplifying the voices of global Christian leaders

In three of the letters that Paul wrote from prison, the Apostle mentioned that Luke was by his side (Col. 4: 14; Phm. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11), caring for him – the ancient correctional system did not provide meals or medical attention to the incarcerated. Indeed, when Paul drafted his second letter to Timothy, Luke was the only person still with him. Luke probably bought the papyrus for that epistle!

Perhaps Luke even lent the imprisoned Apostle his own stylus. After all, many scholars think that, as Luke toiled around Asia Minor and Palestine with Paul, he jotted down notes and interviewed eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus (Peter, Philip, James, perhaps even Mary herself), collecting the fodder for his remarkable Gospel (Luke 1:1-3).

So Luke the author was himself a migrant missionary. Abandoning his home in Turkey, Luke pinballed around the Mediterranean, crossing boundaries, languages, and cultures, all the while taking notes to tell others' stories. In the books Luke would eventually produce as an old man (he died at 84), he amplified the voices of Peter, Paul, Stephen, Philip, and even Jesus, sending them echoing into subsequent centuries. And because

he had moved between cultures, Luke could also interpret the words of the Jewish Messiah and Apostles for a Gentile audience who had come to call Jesus their king.

Like Luke, SCHOLARLEADERS amplifies the voices of Majority World theologians. One way we do this is through our InSights publications, many of which are authored by graduates of LeaderStudies. Others are written by SCHOLARLEADERS staff, some of whom have lived for years as migrants in foreign cultures, while others have become astute listeners through the long journeys chronicled in their dog-eared passports. This depth of cross-cultural experience enables SCHOLARLEADERS, like Luke, to foster mutual understanding and cooperation across the breadth of God's Church.

It's not about us

I mentioned that Luke is an elusive historical figure. As an author, he makes no effort to identify himself for his readers. The only reason we know that he composed the Third Gospel and Acts is because the Church Fathers tell us as much. Even the Gospel's title, "According to Luke," was added in the second century. Luke never names himself, because his work was not about him. It was about Jesus, the Church, the Kingdom. So also with SCHOLARLEADERS. Our work is not about us. It's about Jesus, the Global Church, the Kingdom. Especially in this sense, we want to be like Luke.



Photo credit: David McLennan on Unsplash

A scene from Palestine.