ForeWord Reviews
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RELIGION

**Free at Last: A Life Changing Journey through the Gospel of Luke**
Leesa K. Donner
West Bow Press
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Encouraging thought, reflection, and discussion, these lessons on the book of Luke pose unique questions to Bible-study groups.

Leesa K. Donner's study guide and course book on the Bible, *Free at Last: A Life Changing Journey Through the Gospel of Luke*, is a thoughtful and thought-provoking work of faith, and one filled as well with hope and charity. Although intended primarily for use by groups of Bible students, it can be a helpful tool for individuals who prefer to contemplate the New Testament in private.

The guide covers the twenty-four chapters of Luke in thirty-four lessons. Some chapters are covered in a single lesson, while others are split between two. Each lesson begins with an introduction and is broken down into three segments, one for each of the passages covered. Each segment opens with a declaration of what students will be studying, and then it gives the passages to be discussed in full chapter and verse.

If there is one failing in this otherwise lovely, heartfelt, and inspiring work, it is what many may see as the unfortunate choice of the New Living Translation (2nd Edition) of the Bible as the source for Luke. While Donner offers her reasons for this decision, many (if not most) who have read or heard the Bible will not find this translation familiar. To those who adhere to the King James Version, it will seem dull, lifeless, and possibly even "dumbed down."

After reading the selection from Luke, students are presented with a series of questions. Some are workbook style, where the reader rereads a passage in order to find and then write down answers: "According to verse 13, who had named the child, and what was the name to be given him?" Most of the questions, however, are more thought-provoking and are intended to spark discussion or reflection: "Have you ever expected the Lord to act in a certain way only to find he did not behave the way you had anticipated?"

Many lessons also include an "Exploring the Heart of the Matter" section. This typically

contains more questions for students to ponder as additional food for thought, but sometimes the author throws in a caution of her own, such as “Worry is deformative,” or an instruction to “live proactively and prospectively.” Donner does not preach at her audience but encourages them to think, reflect, discuss, and come to their own conclusions. As she notes, this book is meant to engage “both the heart and the mind of the student,” not just get them to parrot what they are told.

*Free at Last* is not meant to be read like a book; each segment of every lesson is the equivalent of a class and should be approached as such—whether with a group or alone. While many may question the translation of Luke presented, they should not let it get in the way of the good that can come from going along with Donner on her “life-changing journey.”

*Mark McLaughlin*