

Luke the Lakota by nirtog

Questions for book study, by chapter

This study guide will foster group discussion, which may also be enhanced by including internet searches on any topic. One question is offered per chapter but may pertain to anything from previous chapters. Suggested answers follow the entire list of questions.

A glossary for both Lakota and Greek words is available separately. It provides pronunciation guidance as well as definitions.

Questions

Chapter 1: *Luke is Transported*

Luke is able to speak English but uses a few transliterations of his native Greek, as he would habitually refer to familiar names from his time. For example, just as he did with his gospel and book of Acts, he opens this text by addressing his friend, Theóphileh. Typically, English Bibles use the Latinized “Theophilus.”

For each of the following terms Luke uses, give the 21st-century name:

- a) Hellada
- b) Anatolia
- c) Melitay
- d) Gallia
- e) Hispania
- f) Serica

[see answers](#)

Chapter 2: *Brother Beaver*

Lakota is an oral language that gained written expression only when Christian missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century began an orthography. Even today, the Lakota language has numerous dialects and variations of pronunciation among the sub-tribes. As a result, many Lakota resist the standardization generally promoted by orthography.

One of the most recognizable Lakota letters, not used in many Western languages, including English, is the “ŋ,” which looks like an “n” with a backward curving right leg. The IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) contains variations of n’s with extended right legs, such as those with long right legs that do not curve or that curve forward.

Given the oral origin of their language, the Lakota do not even have a name for this letter, which comes from the IPA, as a guide to its pronunciation, and is called “velar nasal.” How do you think the “ŋ” is pronounced?

Written Lakota also provides accent marks that can help English speakers know the proper emphasis of each syllable in a word.

How do you think “Čhaŋté” is pronounced?

[see answers](#)

Chapter 3: *Early Inspiration*

Luke begins his guidance to Čhaŋté by giving him a few biographical details. Historians do not even agree whether Luke was Greek or a Hellenistic Jew. In this novel, Luke describes himself as Greek, having been born in Chalkis but migrating to Antiochia (Antioch) as a boy with his family.

What is your current understanding of this biblical character? Did Luke meet Jesus? Did he know Paul or the disciples of Jesus, such as Peter and John?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 4: *Black Elk*

Although Čhaŋté describes the Lakota Holy Man, Black Elk, to Luke in this chapter, the next one contains more information about his spirituality. Chapter 4 introduces Luke to the modern human invention of a motor vehicle, namely Čhaŋté’s truck. Do you think a person from the time of Jesus would react as Luke does? Would he have ever experienced anything similar to metal, glass, seat cushions, or electronic dashboards?

[see possible answer](#)

Chapter 5: *A Smoke on the Peak*

As one of the most well-known and respected medicine men of the Lakota, Nicholas Black Elk lived from 1863 to 1950. Historically, Lakota spirituality would not be considered monotheistic in the sense of a personal Creator who alone made the universe. The Lakota may be more content than Westerners to “sit with the mystery” of human existence. While some Lakota myths offer origin stories, their spirituality may be less insistent than many religions about the Creator. Yet, under the modern influence of Christianity, The Great Spirit can be seen as equivalent to the Holy Spirit.

Black Elk equates walking the *Red Road* to living an honorable life. What spiritual question might you ask Black Elk if he were available to advise you?

[see possible answer](#)

Chapter 6: *Early Guidance*

Luke suggests that many spiritual problems result from an imbalance in people’s thinking between intellect and emotion. He says that too much of either at the expense of the other ends up causing us problems. Can you think of ways other people, including historical figures or even characters in books or movies, have exemplified this imbalance? Can you think of ways that you have had trouble with the balance?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 7: *Uncertainty*

Luke suggests that James misled Christians by insisting that believers should not let themselves feel any uncertainty about their beliefs. Luke says his Greek culture taught him that life offers few clues about the ultimate reality to provide certainty. But he also points out that faith does not require certainty. To have faith in Jesus means to trust him. Trust means relying on another person’s integrity rather than one’s own certainty.

Do you agree with James or with Luke? (Or neither?) Why?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 8: *Driving Home*

Luke talks to Čhaṅté about Jesus' command that his followers love their enemies. He reminds Čhaṅté of how Jesus said if a man slaps you on the cheek, offer him the other cheek. And if he takes your cloak, offer him also your tunic. And if he forces you to walk a mile with him, offer to walk two miles. Luke said that most listeners thought Jesus was crazy to say this.

Luke explains that it begins to make more sense if you consider the "power arrangement." Think of someone who you might consider an enemy. Such a person may only seem antagonistic toward you, or they may merely tend to annoy you. But can you imagine how you could love that person? Can you believe loving people is more powerful or admirable than resisting or belittling them?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 9: *The Little Hawks*

When Luke meets Čhaṅté's family, he is greeted by Rose, the mother, with a happy welcome in Lakota. But Čhaṅté's father is wary. Luke assures them that John, the disciple of Jesus, taught us to "test the spirits" and not to be susceptible to just anything some person claims. Scholars today think John wrote his gospel long after the other three. Could Luke have known what John taught?

Luke says he already has a sense that the Great Spirit of the Lakota is the same as the Holy Spirit of his time. Earl, Čhaṅté's father, asks why the Great Spirit never mentioned Jesus to the Lakota before the arrival of the wašičus. Luke replies that God may allow a person to know the character of Jesus without knowing his name or that such a person once lived. Do you agree with Luke?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 10: *Crossing State Lines*

On the drive to Nebraska, Čhaṅté tells Luke about worldwide companies that are very powerful and care more about money than people. Luke replies by describing Paul's teaching about "*principalities and powers*." Yet, Luke does not think this term refers to invisible spirits. From his Greek background, Luke suggests that many terms from the Bible should be taken as metaphors. He goes so far as to suggest that no invisible spirits, such as demons, actually exist. Do you agree? Is it

possible that Jesus spoke metaphorically about demons? Could Jesus have incorrectly believed in the existence of demons?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 11: *Luke in a Cowboy Hat*

Luke gets some modern clothes, changing out of his cloak and tunic and leaving them at the store. Čhaṅté suggests Luke wear a straw cowboy hat and put his long gray hair into a ponytail. Do you think Luke would look like a Native American? If Luke was Greek and grew up along the Mediterranean coast north of Syria, do you think he would look more like a white American than a Native?

Luke asks Čhaṅté if any Christian leaders among the wašičus are like Dr. Martin Luther King. Čhaṅté says he doesn't know of any. He mentions Billy Graham, from his grandparent's generation, but doesn't think he ever visited a reservation. How would you answer Luke? Are there nationally respected Christian leaders today?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 12: *The Internet*

When Luke searches the web on the Little Hawk's computer, he looks up "Rome." The search results present him with a photograph of today's Colosseum, the famous structure that did not exist in his time. Luke's mission to America coincided with chaos in Rome that culminated in the suicide of Emperor Nero. Coincidentally, the building of the Colosseum began soon after that.

Try to imagine yourself as a time traveler to the year 4000. What might famous places in today's world look like then? How might history judge our era?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 13: *Mika*

Whereas the Lakota have been very experienced with horses, Luke would be much less familiar. In his time, generally, only the Romans used horses. Mika may be like many young American girls who love horses, but she also experiences them up close instead of merely in picture books. They are big animals but not thought to be very intelligent. What is your experience with horses? Mika says they are more

intelligent than people give them credit for. Have you had enough personal contact to agree or disagree with her?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 14: *One-Armed Bandits*

After the miracle of Luke's time travel, only a few things in the story may seem to have a supernatural origin. For example, Luke speaks English and knows how to type. But at the casino, perhaps the Holy Spirit gets out of hand. When reading the gospels, we can ask why Jesus performed some miracles and let other human needs go unattended. Why do you think the Spirit makes the slot machines go nuts when Luke touches them?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 15: *Jail*

In a dream, Luke's friend Paul implies that finding the Kingdom of God should be our goal but that humans get misled by earthly distractions. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," and, "The Kingdom of God is *within* you." Thus, Paul suggests we must keep our priorities straight and not let our hearts be in a different place than the Kingdom.

Could your heart use some redirection?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 16: *Terra*

Terra's professional role brings information to the public, especially the Lakota of Pine Ridge. In today's world, however, news stories may quickly go global. While journalists feel additional fulfillment if they discover news stories before their peers do, the internet also provides pressure to report with minimal fact-checking.

Professional journalists adhere to an ethical code requiring them to report actual events, whereas random bloggers on the internet can say anything they want. Although talking about "fake news" has recently been popular, humans have always distorted their reporting to suit themselves. While some news outlets may

be more trustworthy than others, the onus remains on the reader to respond appropriately.

Do you think Terra should be skeptical about Luke? What does she mean about “...the Jesus reincarnation didn’t work...”?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 17: *A Tale to Pass the Time*

As listed in the glossary available at nirtog.com (which covers Greek and Lakota terms used in the novel), *ginnaya* comes from Aramaic, the native language of Jesus. If *djinn* and *genie* are related to *ginnaya*, that leads to interesting possibilities for storytelling. The tales from *Thousand and One Nights* (or *Arabian Nights*) were composed centuries after Jesus. Their origin is probably varied, possibly several Central Asian countries and India.

The form of these entertaining short tales (or legends, parables, or fables), often with supernatural characters, could have been used throughout a large region and over many centuries. Thus, this chapter has Luke telling a story that sounds similar.

Do you find this chapter out of place in the novel? Does this parable have any relevance to our current time?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 18: *Ben Swallow*

The Lakota medicine man, Ben Swallow, is Čhaŋté’s spiritual mentor. Black Elk lived several generations earlier, and every tribe has more than one contemporary medicine man. Ben does not act prideful or superior when he meets Luke, a non-Lakota advisor. Why do you think Ben suggests they have a ceremonial pipe smoke together as they discuss their role with Čhaŋté?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 19: *Luke Speaks*

Hotah, the Lakota pastor, has presented a message about whether miracles are possible. He finds it surprising that some of today’s Christians are content to assume that science has invalidated that possibility. If a Creator exists external to

the physical universe, then the question becomes whether he ever “messes with it.” The Creator has given physical reality an order and the ability to “run on its own.” Science is the human endeavor to discover how this orderliness works. Hotah says that if God made it, he can “mess with it.” What do you think?

People performing miracles is an entirely different matter. We can understand that Jesus had such a close relationship with God, The Father, to be granted the ability to do miracles. Do you think any other human has ever been so intimate with the Creator? Doing miracles is a sign that the human has God-given authority. Should we be skeptical that any human could approach divinity?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 20: *A Starry Night*

Luke walks near the Little Hawk home and meditates all night under the stars. He finds himself thinking about the mysterious biblical character, Melchizedek. While rarely mentioned in the scriptures, this man seems to have been both a king and a priest (a rare combination). Luke notes that his mission to the 21st century puts him as far ahead of his normal time as Melchizedek was prior.

While many commentators today emphasize the king-priest role and how that foreshadowed Jesus, Luke thinks about the origin of monotheism. Luke says that, by the time of Jesus, the Greeks were giving up polytheism. He speculates that Melchizedek may have been among the first to realize that one Creator god makes more sense than many competing human-like gods. The blessing of this insight was passed on to Abraham, then to Israel, to David, and finally to Jesus.

Some people today might suggest that history presents us with a logical progression: many to one to none. But one is infinitely more than none. What do you think? Is there a fatherlike Creator?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 21: *Wounded Knee*

Čhaŋté and Luke meditate at the site of the Wounded Knee massacre. Luke hears the voices of Lakota people who are not physically there. Čhaŋté does not hear them but Luke reports what they are saying. The original incident, where the US Cavalry killed men, women, and children, could be one reason the Spirit sent Luke to the Lakota. Would an emissary on a Christian mission go to the US Congress

instead? Or the President? Or the King of England? How does spiritual power differ from earthly power?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 22: *Ben and Florence*

Ben, the Lakota medicine man, confirms that Luke's encounter at Wounded Knee was an *aural vision*. Instead of images, the recipient receives only sound. Ben feels that the Great Spirit has confirmed Luke's mission. He and Luke agree that humans are easily misled and need additional people, a trusted community, to help clarify ideas.

Can sharing thoughts and suggestions in a group really help clarify the best actions or interpretations? Today's society seems so contentious that people don't generally want to hear dissenting opinions. They might prefer to group with only people that already think like themselves.

If getting group consensus is important, how would you suggest such a group should operate? Extroverts and charismatic people tend to dominate. Our human natures tend to belittle or shun unfamiliar or misunderstood ideas. Given our human fallibility, is the idea of group consensus too idealistic?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 23: *Arts and Crafts*

While sitting around in the evening with the Little Hawks, Luke enjoys watching Rose knit and discussing the skill with her. She describes how making beautiful patterns in knitted cloth requires first acquiring the skill to knit without mistakes. She uses words about which Luke is curious: art, craft, and technique. Rose explains that technique is a physical skill with various media. After becoming skillful, a person can create art, she says, which involves beautiful patterns or combinations of physical components.

Do you agree with Rose? What makes something a craft rather than artwork? Is "technique" something used more broadly than arts and crafts?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 24: *Front Page News*

Mika laughs when Luke asks if Čhaŋté knits, saying, “Boys don’t like to knit!” A discussion follows about male and female roles. Čhaŋté says that a male Lakota can take up a female activity without being accused of being gay. Luke doesn’t understand the term.

Many Christians today consider Paul’s writing to forbid homosexuality. But Luke suggests that Paul did not explicitly forbid it but tied the sanctity of any act to whether a person simultaneously expresses love.

Do you think the key to all human interaction is whether love is involved? Do you think any act has the potential to become sinful if love is not involved? Are humans so flawed that asking them to love in all their actions is a high bar?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 25: *The Greek Professor*

Terra has put out a newspaper story about Luke coming to the Lakota. In this digital age, it reaches far beyond the borders of the Pine Ridge Reservation. A Greek professor in Denver reads the online article because she is interested in the Lakota people. From Terra’s office, Čhaŋté, Rose, and Luke join in a conference call with Emily Elias, who teaches Greek at Denver Seminary.

The prospect of speaking biblical Greek with a native Greek from that time excites Ms. Elias. Čhaŋté and Luke decide to visit her in Denver. Luke thinks he would enjoy seeing a large American city.

Do you foresee any difficulties arising from the broadcasted information that Luke from the Bible has come to visit the Lakota?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 26: *Code of the West*

Čhaŋté’s father, Earl, is concerned about the trip to Denver. He has experienced anti-Indian sentiment and wants his son to be wary. Earl talks about recent hot-headed young white men who want to write a new “Code of the West.” Created by newly arrived ranchers in the 19th century, the previous code helped regulate behavior before civilization arrived.

The idea of self-regulation, using locally agreed-to ethics, appeals to modern ranchers because of the American myth of self-sufficiency and independence. Yet, clearly, real laws and duly appointed law enforcement officers should supersede the code.

Current American society seems divided and contentious. Do you think US citizens should have a national conversation about constitutional freedoms? How should we regulate liberties exercised by some when they limit the freedom of others? Can we find ways to be more united and to provide *freedom and justice for all*?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 27: ***Taking Action***

Luke talks to Čhaṅté about how Christians should take action based on personal urges from the Holy Spirit. He says that being created in God's image gives us healthy imaginations. We can easily imagine things that don't exist. We can easily imagine the Spirit giving us impressions when they come from ourselves.

Do you believe in a Spirit that wants to interact with us? If so, should we be wary of claiming that some action we take was motivated by the Spirit's urging? How can we improve our ability to distinguish divine urges from selfish ones?

If you do not believe in God or a Spirit who wants to interact with us, how should you treat people who do? Would you change them if you could?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 28: ***Modern Science***

They discuss the difference between scientific knowledge and spiritual knowledge. Although science deals with the physical world, gaining information by posing and testing hypotheses, the conclusions are not always correct. Regarding spiritual understanding, Čhaṅté says people should be wary of thinking they know some complex scheme that God is working out. People are too susceptible to personal prejudices and pride.

If you are Christian, do you agree with Čhaṅté that God's plans are probably beyond our comprehension? Should we be happy to do what seem to be less significant things?

If you are not Christian, could you agree that Čhaṅté’s insight also may apply to secular actions? Haven’t small ideas sometimes been better than big ones?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 29: *Things Peter Said*

During their discussion, Luke tells stories from the Bible which portray God, the Father, as sometimes intransigent and curmudgeonly, but Jesus as caring and forgiving. How does this square with the idea that the Father and Jesus are one (as Jesus says they are in the New Testament)?

If an afterlife exists, do you think it will accept flawed people? Might it include a transitional period (like the Catholic purgatory) where people receive training to become good enough for the afterlife?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 30: *Water Baptism*

They take a break from driving and walk down along the river that the Lakota call “Wašíŋ Wakpá” which, according to the glossary and pronunciation guide (available separately), refers to animal fat or tallow. The word Wakpá means “river,” and together, they are pronounced *wah-sheeh’ walk-pah’*. The US maps call this river South Platte.

The river reminds Luke of his baptism in the Jordan River (on a visit to Jerusalem). He tells Čhaṅté about his experience and asks whether Čhaṅté has also been baptized. Čhaṅté begins to describe the Lakota way, which involves smoke. Although not mentioned in the book, some American Christians disagree about what counts as baptism. While many think one must be dunked as an adult, others say one may be sprinkled as a baby. Given these opinions, one would not expect such insistent people to accept the Lakota smoke baptism. What do you think? Is this an important ritual? Is it symbolic so that specifics do not matter, or has God decreed a correct way that must be strictly followed?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 31: *Smoke Baptism*

Luke describes several incidents in Peter's life which challenged his beliefs up to that time. Peter had wanted to be a strong follower of his religion and be vigilant against any prohibitions. But after Jesus, the Holy Spirit seems to have singled out Peter for lessons intended to loosen his certainty. The effect would be to increase Peter's dependence on moment-by-moment following the urges of the Spirit rather than depending on the validity of church doctrine.

If you are Christian, would you be willing to let go of things your church says are essential if you felt the Spirit asking that of you? (Name one.)

If you are not Christian, are you willing to let go of ideas you think are essential if, for example, scientific studies called them into question?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 32: *Life as a Test*

As Luke and Čhaŋté discuss the purpose of life, they think about the parable Jesus told about the narrow gate to the Kingdom of God and that "few are those that may enter." Čhaŋté asks how this squares with the idea that Jesus is merciful and helps people be acceptable. He eventually decides that access to the Kingdom may depend more on the mindset of each person. Those who feel they have earned entrance are barred. The way is narrow for those whose hard life has prevented them from knowing how to ask for mercy. And it is wide open for those who know they cannot enter without the forgiveness of Jesus.

Does this make any sense to you?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 33: *Socratic Dialogue*

Luke would have been familiar with Socrates, who lived about 400 years earlier than himself. During his time in the 21st century, Luke doesn't always know whether his thoughts are conscious, dreaming, or during a trance. Luke longs to talk with his friend, Theóphileh after Čhaŋté describes how contemporary Christians can angrily accuse each other of not being Christian.

In their discussion, Luke and Theóphileh allude to the Book of Job, one of the strangest books of the Bible. Perhaps written in the 6th century BCE, Job incorporates motifs from much older stories. The godly man, Job, is attacked by

Satan as God looks on. Job has three friends who try to help him by instructing him from their spiritual knowledge. But with their “fix-it” or “find blame” mentality, they do not prove themselves true friends.

How would you respond if a friend of yours came to you in mental anguish?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 34: *Coming into Denver*

Luke and Čhaᅇté discuss whether God willed that Jesus should die or whether he could have accomplished his mission to show people how to seek the Kingdom and to bring forgiveness and grace without suffering death on the cross. Luke says that Paul and Barnabas disagreed on the matter. What do you think? Did God require a scapegoat? Does the sacrificial death of an innocent excuse the evil deeds of guilty ones?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 35: *Animal Encounters*

Neither Luke nor Čhaᅇté could have known that the population of Denver during their visit was about half the population of Rome during Luke’s time there. Yet, Rome would have been much more compact. Travel in the city would have been by foot for most people. The rich, who owned slaves, could be carried around in a litter. Carts drawn by oxen would handle large loads.

How do you think Luke might have compared the two cities and their people? What might he have thought was similar? What different?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 36: *Human Encounters*

Social media has taken the news of Luke’s visit to the Lakota and caused differing reactions from people. The young women at the zoo wanted to use Luke for their own Instagram popularity. Some in the zoo crowd apparently believed he could be Luke from the Bible, while others scoffed.

Regardless of your own faith, imagine that you were in that zoo crowd, having heard about Luke's visit. Would you want to believe he could be Luke? Would you find it impossible to accept that someone traveled through time? What other ways might you react?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 37: *Sacrificial Lamb*

Luke says that belief in a pantheon of gods was waning in both the Greek and Roman societies of his time. Jesus happens to have appeared coincidentally with this "void of theological leadership." But Luke claims that the Hebrew religion was also at a crossroads, with animal sacrifice losing adherents.

Roman society also fostered a middle class that had a powerful influence on the running of the state. Instead of a single dictator with all the power, Rome spread wealth and a sense of personal value to many in its society. Thinking for themselves, these people could both reject polytheism and explore Christianity.

Do you think monotheism makes sense two thousand years later? Do today's large middle-class populations in first-world countries cause more disagreement across today's religions? Is the same factor the Roman society experienced responsible for the rejection by many today of any god at all?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 38: *The Elias Home*

At the home of the Greek professor, they talk about whether Luke's coming is a sign that God might soon make something big happen, like the end of the world. Both Čhaŋté and Luke are surprised by this idea, and Emily explains that theories about "end times" have been much speculated upon, usually not within the mainstream religions.

Where does the Bible mention the end of the world?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 39: *Čhaŋté Takes Over*

We know that Luke composed this long letter to his friend, Theóphileh, on the computer at the Little Hawk home. He could not work on the writing when he was traveling with Čhanté. For some reason, beginning with Chapter 39, Čhanté takes over the narration.

Why might Luke have stopped his writing?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 40: *Tensions Building*

Luke's comments to the reporters include his observation that humans have not made much spiritual progress in the two millennia since the time of Jesus. Do you agree? What constitutes spiritual progress?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 41: *Escaping Denver*

Luke has said Christians have a hard time obeying Jesus when it comes to loving enemies. To follow him, Christians must take this teaching seriously. But should non-Christians also seriously consider that Jesus may have been onto something? Is failing to love our enemies one reason humans have made limited spiritual progress since Jesus?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 42: *Stuff Happens*

Cries of “fake news” roiled the American political landscape during Luke's and Čhanté's time together. Conspiracy theorists would posit wild ideas on social media. Their purpose may have been more to gain attention than to expose the truth. Many Americans seemed to believe whatever proposed truth best fit their preconceptions. Yet, this was not only a 21st-century phenomenon. Throughout history, people have hoped that reality would conform to their imaginations.

What techniques would you suggest to help people discern the real from the fantastic?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 43: *Original Sin*

Luke thinks the stories of Adam and Eve, Eden, and The Fall were all symbolic. Christians think The Fall explains our separation from the Creator. They interpret the “Original Sin” in Genesis as Adam’s and Eve’s disobeying God by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Luke thinks the first sin was deceit. Humans discovered they could trick others in ways beneficial to themselves.

Do you agree with Luke? Are the Genesis stories mythological or metaphorical? Could the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil be the same as humans discovering they could deceive each other? If so, what are the implications for truth discernment and people’s tendency to not notice their personal biases?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 44: *Lakota Stories*

Čhaŋté tells Luke that early 20th-century contact between the Lakota and Catholic missionaries caused the Lakota to think Jesus was a white man. Jesus had light skin, with long hair and a beard, if true to the pictures they had been shown.

Was this another form of unintentional deceit? Luke affirmed Lakota spirituality. He said that the Great Spirit and the Holy Spirit are the same. He said the Red Road and The Way are the same. What would you think or feel if a couple of Lakota came uninvited to your front door and asked you if you know Wakǰán Thánka or Thunǰkášila?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 45: *Lakota Folklore*

Čhaŋté tells Luke a story from Lakota folklore, saying, “I have a story to tell you about wówičakǰhe.” This word, meaning “truth” is pronounced woe’-wee-chah-khay. (See pronunciation guide, available separately.) What does the story of Iktó versus Šuŋmánitu teach about truth?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 46: *Family Reunion*

The Lakota have long been experts with horses. Mika had already told Luke that horses are more intelligent than the credit people give them. However, prey animals are especially attuned to dangers and sometimes overreact. When Mika and Čhaŋté feed them in the evening, the horses are restless.

The Little Hawks have also been fearful, staying away from public places. Is this fear an overreaction? Does it seem plausible in today's world that anyone who happens to have gotten noticed on social media should fear for their safety?

[see possible answers](#)

Chapter 47: *The Right Tree*

Čhaŋté isn't interested in following the usual wašiču protocol when dealing with crimes scenes and dead bodies. He knows that nothing can make up for the damage already done. He may not have even been thinking about Crazy Horse, but he takes care of Luke similarly, keeping the location secret from the wašičus.

The body of Crazy Horse was first buried in a secret location by a Lakota medicine man. It was later moved to the Pine Ridge Reservation. Within the rez, it was apparently moved a few more times and may now be near Wounded Knee Creek, though not in the cemetery at the memorial site. (The true location may never be known.)

Suppose you had been there when any of the famous people from the Bible died, such as Paul, Peter, John, or even Jesus. Suppose you could have been the one to take care of their bodies. Knowing how important they were to history, would you have buried them in a shrine where people could visit, or would you have thought it better to keep the location secret?

[see possible answers](#)

Answers

Chapter 1: *Luke is Transported*

- | | |
|-------------|--------|
| a) Hellada | Greece |
| b) Anatolia | Turkey |
| c) Melitay | Malta |

- d) Gallia France
- e) Hispania Spain
- f) Serica Northern China

[back to question](#)

Chapter 2: *Brother Beaver*

The Lakota do not think of “ŋ” as a separate letter but only as an add-on to three vowels (a, i, and u), indicating nasalization. The English letter “n” is formed by placing the tip of the tongue on the alveolar ridge (just behind the upper incisors). For the “ŋ,” the back of the tongue touches the back of the palette and holds, as in the “g” sound of the word “goat.” The difference between “n” and “ŋ” can be demonstrated by the following word pairs: win versus wing, son versus song, and ban versus bang.

Pronounce the three Lakota vowel pairs as follows:

The pair “aŋ,” as in “Čhaŋté” (meaning “heart”), is not spoken as in “chant” but more like “chaunt” with the back of the tongue giving the “a” a more nasalized sound.

Pronounce the pair “iŋ,” as in “kiŋ,” (meaning the definite article “the”) not like “kin” but more like “key” or “keh.”

Pronounce the pair “uŋ,” as in “él uŋ,” (meaning “to be present”) not as “ell un” but more like “ail ung.”

To hear these sounds and words spoken by male and female Lakota voices, check out the downloadable Lakota Dictionary at lakhota.org or your mobile app service.

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Chapter 3: *Early Inspiration*

Many scholars today think Luke was an educated Greek who lived in Antioch (today’s Antakia, Turkey, near the border of Syria). They consider the New Testament writings attributed to Luke a more refined Greek than the other books. Luke’s educational background is evident in Paul’s letter to the Colossians (4:14), where Luke is called a physician. According to Acts, he traveled with Paul extensively and would have considered himself a disciple of Paul. Indeed, Paul’s

writings indicate that Luke may have been with him in Rome when Emperor Nero killed Paul. He probably knew many of Jesus' disciples, including Peter and John, and later followers, such as Barnabas and Mark.

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Chapter 4: ***Black Elk***

One would not be surprised that a person from Jesus' time would fear the vibration and loud noises of truck engines. Luke would also have had no experience with how a truck is effectively a container, which significantly muffles outside noises and air movement. In addition, Luke cannot have seen anything like the curved steel parts of a modern truck. While iron was in Roman use long before Luke's time, its use would have been more familiar in weapons than anything else.

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Chapter 5: ***A Smoke on the Peak***

According to Joseph M. Marshall III, author of *The Lakota Way*, 2002, the Lakota revere twelve virtues: Humility, Perseverance, Respect, Honor, Love, Sacrifice, Truth, Compassion, Bravery, Fortitude, Generosity, and Wisdom. Many religious people around the world would agree with this list. Did your question for Black Elk touch on any of them?

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Chapter 6: ***Early Guidance***

So-called road rage is a modern example of letting emotion have too much control over our actions. Drivers who engage in it may later regret their rash actions. As mentioned in the book, the Nazis of Germany may have let their intellect overpower their human emotions by killing thousands of Jewish men, women, and children because of mistaken notions about ethnicity, race, and religion.

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Chapter 7: ***Uncertainty***

Luke might say that Christians who feel pressure to be certain about their beliefs are apt to try too hard to suppress doubt and lose touch with their authentic

selves. Better to trust the teachings of Jesus and admit any doubt or lack of understanding. More spiritual energy should go into emulating Jesus' character and asking forgiveness when we fail than gaining an unwavering opinion of the meaning of scripture.

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Chapter 8: *Driving Home*

Many of Jesus' teachings stretch our human abilities, and his call to love enemies may be one of the most famous. Yet, if we trust Jesus, we must not ignore these problematic teachings. If we claim to be Christian and yet obviously express distaste for groups of people or individuals, then we show ourselves to be hypocrites. The Scriptures recorded many times when Jesus expressed disgust for hypocritical behavior.

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Chapter 9: *The Little Hawks*

Luke knew John personally and probably talked with him about Jesus. John would have given Luke his opinion about the essential teachings of Jesus. Thus, Luke could have known the gist of what John would write years later.

Christians today express different opinions about what it means to know Jesus. Since Jesus said that the only way into the Kingdom of God would be through him, some Christians believe that no one who does not know the Jesus of the Bible can obtain access to the Kingdom. This divisive issue may be one about which Christians should refrain from judgment.

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Chapter 10: *Crossing State Lines*

The human nature of Jesus severely limited him compared to God, the Father. Christians believe that Jesus and the Father are one, and Jesus made that claim. Yet, Jesus may have purposely limited himself. He did a few miraculous things, like walking on water, but he did not regularly fly or do what people would have taken as magic tricks. His miracles were sparing and meant to show his authority and his mercy. Possibly, the self-limitation of Jesus showed that he would not know anything about everyday life beyond what people of his time knew. The existence

(or not) of demons may be one of those issues about which Christians should refrain from judgment.

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Chapter 11: *Luke in a Cowboy Hat*

Most likely, Luke would not have looked like a Native American, but neither would he seem a typical white American. According to Wikipedia, Southern Mediterranean people range in skin color from dark cream to light brown to a darker olive. But wearing a straw cowboy hat and in the company of Čhaṅté, Luke could well have been mistaken for a Lakota.

Well-known Christian leaders exist in many denominations, and some respected professionals, such as national news commentators and politicians, profess Christianity. But none have the near-universal respect of Dr. King or (in the Hindu faith, Gandhi).

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Chapter 12: *The Internet*

The way things are going in our world, it would not be out of the question that humans may have made the planet inhospitable by the year 4000.

While the Roman Colosseum is dilapidated, at least much of it still stands two thousand years later. In the 21st century, we may not build with the intention of permanence. However, several science fiction movies imagine the Statue of Liberty in a far future and drastically different world. It might still be around in 2000 years.

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Chapter 13: *Mika*

In the animal kingdom, between so-called predators and prey, the former are usually credited with greater intelligence. Yet, humans frequently over-generalize. More recent psychological studies, for example, suggest sub-categories, such as “emotional intelligence” and “musical intelligence.”

Many horse owners would probably agree that if we closely observe these animals, we may find that their behaviors rise above the label “dumb.”

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Chapter 14: *One-Armed Bandits*

From our perspective, knowing how the life of Jesus turned out and his impact on human society, we can speculate that he intended some of his miracles to rile up the Pharisees. Yet, they also served to show his authority. If a Creator exists, then supernatural intervention would seem possible. But such acts by a human would only be possible with the blessing of the Creator. Jesus showed that he had an “in” with God that no one had ever had before or since.

If we ponder why Luke’s touch made the one-armed bandits behave impossibly, we could also ask why the Spirit sent him to our time in the first place. Perhaps, ordinary interactions by a human on a spiritual mission cannot help but interfere with the natural order. Luke thinks he is there only to counsel Čhanté, but the Spirit may have additional purposes.

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Chapter 15: *Jail*

Life is difficult, even for the luckiest of us. One of the topics Luke and Čhanté will discuss extensively is why we are here. Does life have some purpose? Some might say it has none. Yet, to start with a tautology, the purpose of life may be to succeed at living. We can live minimally, or we can live fully. Our lives can be rich or impoverished. Perhaps, the Christian scriptures try to help us live more completely.

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Chapter 16: *Terra*

Since humans have never observed time travel, Terra should be skeptical that this person is Luke from the Bible, and Čhanté should also be wary. But he has less responsibility than Terra does due to her role as a reporter.

The “Jesus reincarnation” refers to Wovoka, the Paiute medicine man whom Čhaŋté discussed earlier with Luke (in chapters 5 and 6). Wovoka may never have claimed to be Jesus, but his understanding of Christianity influenced his teachings. These may also have been meant only for his own tribe, but fame brought them to a broader audience. As a result, others may have suggested that he could be Jesus returned.

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Chapter 17: *A Tale to Pass the Time*

The Arabian Nights remain popular reading and have been influential in literature for over a millennium, perhaps due mainly to the tricky but entertaining genie characters. Many cultures have stories of demigods, demons, or invisible tricksters, which may literally have been believed in by listeners. Today, we may take them as obviously metaphorical. Yet, can the belief by Christians in angels and devils be traced to similar stories?

The story Luke tells may apply to anyone who has an oversized ego or tends to engage in wishful thinking.

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Chapter 18: *Ben Swallow*

Various pipe ceremonies give the Lakota a sense of being grounded and in touch with true spiritual power. They may be elaborate or impromptu, as with the one in this chapter. Perhaps the best wisdom in the practice is that sitting together and smoking provides natural time and space for contemplation and listening to others.

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Chapter 19: *Luke Speaks*

Never having witnessed a possible miracle is not evidence that they cannot happen, nor that an external Creator does not exist. The Creator may choose not to “mess with” the physical universe.

The Catholic practice of documenting miraculous acts of particular humans (so as to confer sainthood upon them) is highly susceptible to corruption by ulterior

motives. Jesus did miracles without special effort, continuously, as if doing so was part of his nature. Humans seem to think great effort is needed to achieve a single miraculous act. If you can't do it the way Jesus did, then you probably can't do it.

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Chapter 20: *A Starry Night*

Intelligent Design is a misguided modern effort to find evidence of a Creator. These investigations are misguided because they claim to be scientific. The science disciplines must restrict themselves to natural phenomena. Scientists must ignore anything of supernatural origin because it would lead them off track (from the natural, independent way things have been set up to work).

Belief in a Creator remains a matter of faith or trust, not physical evidence.

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Chapter 21: *Wounded Knee*

God would not need to get the blessing of people in positions of earthy power. The nature of God, as demonstrated by the character of Jesus, shows that his ways are far above human ways. Jesus was more interested in being with powerless people than in impressing the powerful ones.

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Chapter 22: *Ben and Florence*

Group consensus can work with a few operational rules. Among these would be allowing everyone to speak and treating everyone respectfully. Beware of allowing earthly distinctions to confer greater respect on some people. For example, the group should not give greater weight to the ideas of doctors, famous people, or rich people. Note that these rules are used by the Lakota at their great council fires.

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Chapter 23: *Arts and Crafts*

To take music as an example, a person can gain skill at playing an instrument, but if they only play compositions written by others, then perhaps the art they create is more like a craft. They have not created the music they play. If they make a piece of music to express their own feelings, that would seem more worthy of the term “art.” Since science also requires certain physical skills, the term technique can also apply.

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Chapter 24: *Front Page News*

Much of the New Testament and the words of Jesus seem to put a high value on love. Jesus even calls on us to love our enemies. A person who condemns homosexuality based on a few lines in Paul’s letters might at least consider whether people of the same gender may be intimate and loving with each other.

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Chapter 25: *The Greek Professor*

Terra was right to be wary of claiming this person is Luke from the Bible. After all, no one has ever documented time travel. But the story is hard to resist. It might sound like something only a tabloid might put out. But Terra may be thinking more of her local readers on the reservation. Wouldn’t they want to know about this interesting man, whether or not he is really Luke?

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Chapter 26: *Code of the West*

Americans have not sufficiently dealt with the issue of untethered freedom. As the country gains population and becomes more ethnically diverse, the problems can only worsen. Is this one of those taboo subjects?

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Chapter 27: *Taking Action*

Christians sometimes want to take action because they feel compelled by the Spirit. Yet, they should exercise humility about the source of their motivation. At a

minimum, discussing their sensations with others is a good idea. Luke would say they should always ask themselves whether the action they contemplate is loving.

People who doubt the existence of God should also exercise humility. Rather than belittle those who try to follow religious practices, they should consider how they decide whether some action is worth taking.

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Chapter 28: *Modern Science*

For Christians, love should motivate action. Taking small steps that are loving allows the Spirit to guide more comprehensive strategies.

For non-Christians, our natural desire to have importance can give us greater confidence in complex plans than the plans deserve. Perhaps Occam's Razor should be applied: a more straightforward solution, without extraneous details, may often be better.

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Chapter 29: *Things Peter Said*

Perhaps Jesus tried to show that his being sent to Earth was God's solution to a problematic situation. Heaven is for good people, but no people are good. Many of Jesus' parables show that bad behavior leads to exclusion. But Jesus claimed that, as God's son, he had the authority to forgive people for their bad behavior.

Our imaginations concerning an afterlife are probably too limited or colored by our earthly experiences. But maybe a loving God accepts flawed people and has some way to help them improve.

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Chapter 30: *Water Baptism*

If Christians want to grow their following, they should not argue among themselves about what appear to be minor issues. Expressing no humility and lacking compassion for others is the opposite of Christian virtue.

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Chapter 31: *Smoke Baptism*

The essence of this question is what authorities do you take as not to be questioned when it comes to beliefs or practices. Is it impossible that some higher authority might come along and convince you to change long-held ways?

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Chapter 32: *Life as a Test*

Some Christians feel that God's mercy is so great that, in the end, he will forgive everyone, no matter how much evil they committed in their lives. If so, one might ask again why he put us here.

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Chapter 33: *Socratic Dialogue*

In our time, many know the value of professional counseling, and those who seek it are not considered mentally deficient. Many books also offer suggestions for non-professionals to help their friends or themselves. Patient listening is, of course, a good start.

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Chapter 34: *Coming into Denver*

This is one of those tough religious questions. Most Christian churches would side with Paul and against Barnabas. They would also dispute that Barnabas could have thought differently than Paul. The early church fathers probably did not always agree. Why not imagine that they had contentious arguments about theological matters (as people do today)?

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Chapter 35: *Animal Encounters*

The most obvious difference between ancient Rome and 21st-century Denver would be the roads and freeways, with their fast-moving vehicles. Luke probably would have sensed that Denver was more spread out. Even at the zoo, he may not have felt crowded by the density of people. He may have sensed that Denver had fewer poor people. To Luke, everyone in Denver would have looked rich.

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Chapter 36: *Human Encounters*

Patient and curious people would probably want to hear what Luke would say rather than make prior judgments. Unfortunately, a damaging aspect of current-day religious belief is the tendency to a dogmatism that stigmatizes others as enemies. Typically, in human affairs, enemies must be destroyed. For Christians, however, hating enemies becomes a fatal flaw. One cannot follow Jesus and hate one's enemies.

Some fervently religious people would claim not to hate their enemies or desire their destruction. They should consider whether not hating is equivalent to loving. The love Jesus commanded may require a more proactive interaction with people who believe differently than ourselves.

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Chapter 37: *Sacrificial Lamb*

In Western cultures, since the Romans, most people either believe in one God or none. For much of that two millennia, those who did not believe in any god did so more often because they saw too much evil and too little evidence of God's hand at work. The disintegration of Christian churches into factions that frequently detest each other did not help.

Today's large middle classes are similar to Rome's in that they are relatively wealthy and educated. These factors may dampen interest in religion.

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Chapter 38: *The Elias Home*

Jesus predicted, in Matthew 21, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, saying, “Not one stone will be left upon another.” When the disciples asked Jesus to elaborate, he said to watch for wars and uprisings, with nations rising against each other. He predicted that Christians would be persecuted and armies would surround Jerusalem. “There will be signs in the moon and stars” and “At that time, they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Jesus may not have meant the end of the entire world, but only of Jerusalem. Paul said in I Thessalonians Chapter 5 that the exact time of the end would be unknown.

The prophet, Daniel, said in Chapter 12, “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.”

The book of Revelation uses apocalyptic imagery to suggest what will happen in the end when Jesus returns.

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Chapter 39: *Čhanťé Takes Over*

One can imagine things that temporarily prevent a person from working on a computer. But Čhanťé taking over indicates that it might not be temporary.

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Chapter 40: *Tensions Building*

Happiness, self-worth, community, family, a sense of purpose, and qualities that foster these things for all people are generally spiritual matters. Society may have the most difficulty with caring about the well-being of others. Short-term personal values are almost always prioritized, as we cannot help suspecting that investment in longer-term things that also benefit others may not pay off. That is precisely where human societies have failed to improve, despite advancements in science, technology, and psychology.

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Chapter 41: *Escaping Denver*

Loving enemies may seem beyond human capacity, but consider how many horrible events in the last two millennia would have been avoided if that were the case between humans.

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Chapter 42: *Stuff Happens*

Occam's Razor has been a convenient rule since the mid-nineteenth century. When analyzing proposed explanations for phenomena or solutions to problems, better answers among the plausible are those with fewer steps or factors. A conspiracy theory is highly improbable if it requires large numbers of coordinated movements by agents far removed from each other.

Another tip for truth discernment is to look for ulterior motives. A quick and easy action is to search the internet to see if anyone has already done a fact-check. Several websites are devoted to debunking conspiracies.

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Chapter 43: *Original Sin*

If deceit is our most profound problem, then Jesus offers a solution by saying, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He seems to have understood our situation. Following him, he says, will lead us to the truth. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." At any rate, a serious concern for being truthful should characterize all Christians.

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Chapter 44: *Lakota Stories*

Uninvited visitors who have an agenda or something to sell are usually not appreciated. But suppose you met in circumstances that allowed time to interact as people. Maybe you would enjoy learning about Lakota spirituality.

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Chapter 45: *Lakota Folklore*

Some interpretations of the story might be that people are so often deceitful that one should always be wary of what they say. Also, people who get a reputation for being untruthful lose respect. We should value integrity: the virtue of being wholly truthful. A person with integrity is not truthful sometimes and deceitful at other times. They can be trusted at all times.

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Chapter 46: *Family Reunion*

Social media apps may be so new that societies have not yet adequately adapted to them. But America may have a combination of factors that add to the dangers. Jumping to conclusions is human, as is blaming others for personal troubles. Easy access to weapons and getting famous for using them is a mental health issue. The resolution of these problems may take decades.

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Chapter 47: *The Right Tree*

We do not know the burial location of those famous Bible people, but humans tend to designate a supposed place and make it a tourist destination. Anything that can serve as a relic gets the same treatment, such as the Shroud of Turin. We remember famous people and events by designating shrines. Yet, anything created by humans is vulnerable to corruption or mistaken ideas.

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