

Zacharias And Elizabeth

Luke 1:5-25

MEMORY VERSE

LUKE 1:16

“And He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

As many 6” pieces of yarn as the number of children in your class plus one additional 12” piece of yarn, stickers or other small prizes.

A spray bottle or can of perfume or potpourri.

2-3 slips of paper with the phrases “I saw an angel,” “We’re going to have a baby” or “The Savior is coming.”

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Drawing Lots

Precut enough 6” pieces of yarn for each child in your class. Cut one piece of yarn that is 12.” Hold all the pieces of yarn in one hand so the ends look like they are all the same lengths. Have each child choose a piece of yarn and pull it from your closed hand.

Reward the child with the 12” piece of yarn with the privilege of passing out a sticker or small prize to the entire class. Collect and discard the pieces of yarn, you will refer to this activity later in your lesson.

LESSON TIME!

Between the Old Testament and the New Testament there was a 400 year period of silence. God had spoken in the Old Testament through His prophets, but for 400 hundred years He had no message for the nation of Israel. How sad it must have been for God's people to not hear from the Lord for that long period of time. But He broke the terrible silence, just as He had planned, by doing something very extraordinary during one very ordinary day. **God can do the impossible.**

LUKE 1:5

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth lived during the reign of Herod the Great (King Herod) who ruled over Judea for a long time. King Herod rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, but he also built pagan temples for worshipping idols instead of the one true God. He was a man full of hate and cruelty who would do anything to keep his throne; he even killed his wife and two of his sons.

The land was full of evil. Life seemed dark and was bad for most people. Herod made his main job war, and he was very good at it. He liked to build things: big palaces for himself, towers, aqueducts, and amphitheatres. Many of his building projects are still in Israel today.

During this dark and evil time lived a certain priest named Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth. In their day mothers and fathers did not choose names for their children because of the way they sounded, they chose them for what they meant. A mother or father would often pray for a name for their child. Zacharias and

Elizabeth had special names. Zacharias means “Remembered of God” and Elizabeth means “One who gives loyalty to God.”

LUKE 1:6

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

In a dark and godless time, Zacharias and Elizabeth had hearts for God, and God saw them. When the rest of the world ignored God and His ways, Zacharias and Elizabeth chose His ways and walked with Him. Zacharias was a priest, but that did not make him good. Some of the priests in Zacharias’ day were not right with God; they had given their hearts to evil. Zacharias and Elizabeth were right before God; they loved Him and obeyed Him.

They were probably quite different from the other people around them. They had a different way of life. They watched carefully what they did, thought, said, heard and read. They chose each day to do only what would please God.

LUKE 1:7

But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

Zacharias and Elizabeth had no children. That was probably a very sad thing to them. As much as they hoped and prayed, Elizabeth was barren. Barren means that she had never had a baby. Now, because she was so old, it was impossible for her to have a baby.

In Bible times, people often thought that barrenness (not being able to have a baby) was judgment from God on a couple He was unhappy with. But that was not the case with Zacharias and Elizabeth. Sometimes we do not understand God’s plans or purposes, but He always has the best in store for us. Maybe they prayed for children for a long time. God heard the desire of their

heart, but He was going to answer in a way that would show His glory and power. **God can do the impossible.**

LUKE 1:8-9

So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,

according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

One day an amazing thing happened to Zacharias. He was faithfully doing his work when he was chosen by lot to burn incense in the temple before God. Now on the surface that may not very amazing, but God was going to do a wonderful thing in his life.

It is important for us to be faithful in what God has called us to do. Zacharias faithfully served God in what he was given to do, and God blessed him and used him for something wonderful. Sometimes we feel like God cannot use us until we are old enough or smart enough or big enough, but just like Zacharias, when we faithfully serve God, He will use us for His glory to do wonderful things.

Drawing Lots

Ask the child who drew the long yarn to describe to the class how it felt to be chosen by lot and have the privilege of serving the class. Remind the class to be faithful with what God wants them to do.

Being chosen by lot to burn incense before the Lord in the Temple was a very high honor. Out of all the priests who wanted to burn incense before the Lord each year, only one could perform this service. If a priest was chosen, he knew that it was a once in a lifetime blessing to serve God in that way.

LUKE 1:10

And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

This special offering of incense that Zacharias was about to offer was a symbol of the prayers of the entire nation. At that particular moment, Zacharias was the most important person in the entire nation of Israel, and God had planned it that way. **God can do the impossible.**

A Pleasing Fragrance

Spray a perfume or potpourri into the air and explain how incense would rise up as a sweet, pleasing fragrance. This incense was a symbol for the children of Israel of their prayers rising to heaven and pleasing the Lord.

Our lives and prayers can also be incense to the Lord, a sweet smelling fragrance. How? We can be a sweet smelling fragrance through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

LUKE 1:11-12

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

At this very special moment of Zacharias' life an angel of the Lord appeared to him. How do you think he felt? There he was, alone in the quiet of the temple, when out of nowhere a supernatural being was suddenly appears right in front of him! It was a very dramatic visit, and it frightened Zacharias. He responded with awe and fear.

Fear Fell Upon Him

Ask for one or two volunteers to reenact Zacharias response as "fear fell upon him".

Be prepared to use the attention-getting signal as this might cause an energetic reaction from the class. Ask the class to share what they might do if an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to them.

LUKE 1:13

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John."

The angel saw that his appearing had frightened Zacharias; so, he reassured him not to be afraid. God was going to answer his prayer. Many times when angels appear to men in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, the first thing they tell the people is, "do not be afraid." There is a healthy fear, awe, and respect of the Lord, but we should not be terrified of the Lord. He is approachable and wants us to come to Him and have fellowship with Him.

What do you think this verse indicates Zacharias had been praying for? Zacharias had made some special prayer to the Lord and the angel told him that God had heard him. Even though Zacharias and Elizabeth knew that it was impossible for them to have a child, Zacharias was still praying for a baby. The angel even told Zacharias the name of the baby that God would give him. (Ask the children if anyone can tell the name of the child.)

We see here a truth that is wonderful and real even now. **God can do the impossible.** Elizabeth was too old to have a baby, but God can do anything. Can you think of an Old Testament story in Genesis that this reminds you of? (Abraham and Sarah – How did God show them He could do the impossible?) The angel told Zacharias that Elizabeth would have a baby in a supernatural way; it would be a miracle.

LUKE 1:14-17

"And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

These verses tell us about this special baby promised to Zacharias. He would not be the Messiah, but he would be the man who would get the people ready for the Messiah. John was to be the “herald of the Lord” or the forerunner. The story of Jesus actually begins here with the announcement of His forerunner.

God did not reveal this great news to King Herod or the other important men of Israel. God revealed it to a simple man who obeyed Him. Four hundred years of silence were broken as this angel told Zacharias about the son he would soon have. God had not forgotten or failed; He was working according to His perfect time and His perfect plan. Jesus was coming and John would go before Him to prepare the hearts of the people to receive Him.

A Forerunner

Put together a couple of pairs of children. Make one the forerunner of the other. Send the pairs out and have one forerunner come in and announce the coming of the other child. Here's an example: "Listen everyone, here comes Joey. He's on his way and he'll be here soon. Joey is about to arrive; get ready for Joey."

Have "Joey" come in and let the class applaud him. Repeat the process with the next pair of children. Explain that this is what John the Baptist did as the forerunner of Jesus. Use your attention-getting signal to regain the attention of the children.

The children of Israel, God's chosen people, had been waiting for their Messiah. The Old Testament prophets had foretold His coming. In Isaiah 53 He was described as the Savior who would be "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities." Now Zacharias was hearing that his son was to be the man that would go before this Savior, declaring the coming of His kingdom! The angel said six things about John:

1. He would be a joy and a delight and many would delight in his birth.
2. He would be great in the sight of the Lord.
3. He would take no wine or fermented drink, indicating the importance of his message and the calling of God on his life.

4. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth; God would empower and enable him.
5. He would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.
6. He would go before Jesus or be the forerunner of Messiah.

John was to announce the coming of the Lord. He would be like the prophet Elijah from the Old Testament. Malachi 4:5-6 foretold of one who would “turn the father's hearts toward the children.” John was to be that one! Jesus even described John as one who came like Elijah. John was to “make ready the people” and prepare them for Jesus. It was a very serious job!

Zacharias heard this wonderful message, given by a very special messenger, and what did Zacharias do? Can anyone guess?

LUKE 1:18

And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

He doubted! He said he did not think it could really come true because Elizabeth and he were too old to have a child! Old Zacharias was looking at the impossible instead of trusting God to do the impossible, but **God can do the impossible.**

Have you ever doubted what God said? Sometimes we do. We might read a promise in His Word but doubt that God will keep it. We can learn to trust God from this story because **God can do the impossible.**

LUKE 1:19

And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings."

Then the angel introduced himself. What was his name? Gabriel means “Hero of God.” Gabriel was God's special messenger who carried God's good news to people. You would think just seeing an angel would convince Zacharias that the message he carried was true! This angel had stood in the very presence of God and received this message for Zacharias. He told Zacharias it was God's message. He turned Zacharias’ eyes away from himself and to the Lord because **God can do the impossible.**

LUKE 1:20

"But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

The angel told Zacharias he would not be able to speak until the day the baby was born. He would not be able to talk because “he did not believe.” God gave Zacharias a reminder of his encounter with the angel and the wonderful things he was told. Every time Zacharias tried to speak but could not he was probably reminded of this great message from God. Messiah was coming and his son John would be his forerunner.

LUKE 1:21

And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple.

The people were puzzled and disturbed that Zacharias was taking such a long time in the Temple. It did not take that long to burn incense. Was Zacharias okay? Had he gotten sick or fallen asleep? What was taking him so long?

LUKE 1:22

But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.

When Zacharias finally came out of the Temple, he couldn't speak. He couldn't tell the people what had happened to him. But he did do something that let them know he had seen something very special.

Charades

Imagine Zacharias coming home to tell Elizabeth about everything that happened. There was only one problem. He could not speak. Imagine you are Zacharias, how would you act out the events that you just experienced.

Choose a couple of volunteers to act out what Zacharias experienced. Write out a couple of phrases for your volunteers to communicate like, "I saw an angel," "We're going to have a child," and "The savior is coming."

Have the children take turns acting out the different situations. Make sure your volunteers don't use any words. Emphasize today's theme as the children are acting. **God can do the impossible.**

LUKE 1:23-25

And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house.

Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying,

"Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people".

When Zacharias' priestly duties were over he went home to Elizabeth, and we read that Elizabeth has a baby, just as the angel had said. **God can do the impossible.**

Elizabeth stayed quietly in her home for five months, perhaps just enjoying her dream come true. A baby was to be born and not just any baby. This baby was to be the forerunner of the Messiah! God blessed Elizabeth with a child in His own special way in His own perfect time. He had not forgotten Zacharias and Elizabeth. He saw them and was pleased with them because they were lights for Him in a very dark world. They loved Him, when so much of the world had turned away from Him.

God chose to bless them for their obedience by giving them a miraculous baby. They obeyed Him and He performed a miracle. They had no idea that God would use them in such an important way, but they obeyed Him everyday with whatever they did. We don't always know how God will use us, but we can be faithful, loyal, and obedient to Him. He is honored when we believe His Word, even when it seems impossible, because **God can do the impossible.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of:

1. Belief in His Word.
2. Faithfulness, loyalty, and obedience.
3. Belief that He can do the impossible.

If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them the opportunity to do so.