

*Memory Verse*

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“The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.” (Psalm 34:15)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Work [Behavior]</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. God uses His people to accomplish His plan.</li><li>2. The births of John and Jesus Christ are the saving acts of God, fulfillment of His promise to His people.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. God is all-knowing.</li><li>2. God is all-powerful.</li><li>3. God does the impossible to fulfill His prophecies.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Entrust our worries to God with faith.</li><li>2. Wait patiently for God to answer us in His timing.</li></ol>

*Overview*

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**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Who were Zacharias and Elizabeth?
- B. An Angel of the Lord Appears to Zacharias
- C. Elizabeth Becomes Pregnant
- D. The Birth of John the Baptist

**Life Application**

1. We should never give up on the things we have entrusted to God.
2. No situation is impossible for God to solve.

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** God used His people to accomplish His plan of salvation. God is all-knowing, all-wise, and all-powerful; He will answer our prayers in His time, in His way, and in His power.

## *Spiritual Teachings*

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### **A. Who were Zacharias and Elizabeth?**

Zacharias and Elizabeth were both godly parents. Both were descendants of Aaron; Zacharias was a priest from the tribe of Levi who served the Lord during the reign of Herod in Judea. His name means, “the Lord remembers.” His wife Elizabeth’s name means, “the oath of God.” They had been born and raised in homes of priestly families who served the temple in Jerusalem. They were also related to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The Bible said they were “righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Lk 1:6). What does this tell us? Both Zacharias and Elizabeth:

- Were blameless in the sight of the God;
- Walked in His commandments;
- Submitted to the will of God;
- Obeyed the word of God; and
- Lived a righteous life.

In other words, they led lives pleasing to God. They cared more about how God viewed them than how men viewed them.

### **Zacharias and Elizabeth Were Childless**

Though Zacharias and Elizabeth both led lives that pleased God, the Bible tells us that they had one problem: “But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years” (Lk 1:7). We don’t know how old they were, but we can place them somewhere between late middle to old age, and definitely past child-bearing years.

In their society, barrenness was considered shameful, so their lives would not been without difficulty. But instead of allowing the judgments of others to impact him, Zacharias prayed about it (Lk 1:13). He committed his problem to the almighty God.

The stigma of barrenness must have weighed heavily on Elizabeth’s heart. But Elizabeth pursued God and sought to be called “blameless” in His eyes. She refused to allow her sorrow to drag her faith down; instead, she reached out for God’s strength. They both walked “in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord” (v. 6).

### **B. An Angel of the Lord Appears to Zacharias**

Let’s read Luke 1:8–17.

While Zacharias was performing his priestly duties, the angel Gabriel suddenly appeared, “standing on the right side of the altar of incense” (v. 11). Though frightening, it must have been amazing to be in the presence of an angel. Gabriel reassured Zacharias not to be afraid, informing him that his petition had been heard. His wife would bear him a son, and he would name him John. Not only that, he would have joy and gladness, and many would rejoice at the birth of John. Clearly, Zacharias’ child would not be a normal person. He would be the Messiah’s forerunner, prophesied by Malachi (Mal 3:1; 4:5–6).

Can you imagine what must have been going through Zacharias’ mind? He and Elizabeth had been praying for a child for so long and, after all this time, an angel told him that he would have a son! The

message seemed too good to be true, so Zacharias asked, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years” (Lk 1:18).

Even though Zacharias was a priest of God, he still had his human weaknesses. His question, “How shall I know this?” and mentioning that Elizabeth was “well advanced in years” revealed his doubt that God could do the impossible. He found it difficult to believe that his aged wife could still give birth. In other words, he found himself unable to trust God’s promise because of his limited human knowledge. Even though he had been praying to God for a son, he had already lost hope.

Therefore, God gave him a sign. “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” (v. 20). Here is a clear indication that Zacharias was in disbelief.

When Zacharias left the holy place, he was mute. “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” (v. 22).

### **C. Elizabeth Becomes Pregnant**

“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’” (vv. 24–25). Elizabeth’s pregnancy was truly a miracle given by God. When Zacharias and Elizabeth had lost all hope, the impossible happened! God’s timing is perfect, and His work is beyond human understanding! God really is the only one who can truly solve all our worries and problems. No doubt Elizabeth’s faith was strengthened through this miracle!

**Why did she hide herself five months?** In response to God’s love in answering her prayers, Elizabeth chose to live five months in isolation and privacy. The Bible does not record the exact reasons for her decision, but it is possible that Elizabeth needed time to commune with the Lord. It is also possible that she was simply waiting until her pregnancy was confirmed.

### **A Visit from Mary**

Let’s now read Luke 1:39–45. Mary was Elizabeth’s young cousin from Nazareth. Mary had hastened to see Elizabeth because the angel Gabriel had told her about the pregnancy (v. 36). Elizabeth was six months pregnant already. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the Holy Spirit filled her, and she blessed Mary. Pay attention to verses 42 and 43: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

This short passage gives us a deeper understanding of Elizabeth’s character and of her relationship with God.

#### **1. She understood God’s plan for His people.**

The words Elizabeth used reveal that she understood the significance of Mary’s child. She called Mary, “the mother of my Lord.” She recognized and acknowledged that Mary would give birth to the Messiah, the Son of God. “My Lord” is a messianic term taken from Psalm 110:1, “The LORD said to my Lord.”

#### **2. She was full of humility.**

Elizabeth was older than Mary, but she honored Mary before her. In fact, she did not even feel

worthy of Mary's visit. Even though Elizabeth played a key role in God's plan of salvation, her focus was always on the Lord, never on herself. She appreciated God's mercy and kindness; she praised God for giving her a son but did not become prideful for her own role in God's plan.

### 3. She knew her pregnancy was to fulfill God's plan.

God did not bless Elizabeth with an ordinary baby. God blessed her with John the Baptist—a forerunner of the Messiah who would preach repentance and purify the hearts of the people. John the Baptist was a child upon whom the hand of God was evident from his earliest days, a person whom Jesus Christ would call the greatest man (Mt 11:11).

Elizabeth had an important role to play in God's plan. Though barren for many years, she had not given up on her prayers and trust in God. It is true that we may not always understand God's plan, but we should never give up trusting Him. Not only that, she was blessed with the role to raise John the Baptist for God's work! This role could not be taken lightly.

## D. The Birth of John the Baptist

Let us continue by reading Luke 1:57–66.

As was the custom in those days, relatives and friends came to rejoice with Zacharias and Elizabeth on the eighth day of their child's birth, the day of their child's circumcision. Everyone was so happy to see the child, and they expected Elizabeth to name him after his father as was traditional, but she said he would be called John (v. 60). The people were perplexed—no one in her family had this name. When they asked Zacharias what the baby should be named, he asked for a tablet and wrote, "His name is John." Everyone marveled at this, and at once Zacharias' mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to praise God (vv. 62–64)!

### Zacharias' Prophecy

Zacharias made a song to magnify the name of God. After John's birth, able to speak again, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Let us read Luke 1:67–79.

## Understanding the Prophecy

### 1. The Meaning of Salvation

- **Verse 68: "He has visited and redeemed His people."**  
The reason He has come is to redeem us from the slavery of sin.
- **Verse 69: "He has raised up a horn of salvation for us."**  
An animal's horn represents power and strength. God has raised up a horn of salvation, meaning the Savior has the power to save us.
- **Verse 71: "That we should be saved from our enemies."**  
Victory over our enemies is guaranteed. Salvation is deliverance from the hand of Satan, who holds the power of sin and death (Acts 26:18; Col 1:13; Heb 2:14). Through the Lord's redemption, we are no longer under the control of our sinful nature. Our lives are now free from Satan's oppression and dominance (cf. Eph 2:1–2) (*BSG: Luke, 7.2*).<sup>1</sup>
- **Verses 74–75: "To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear [...] before Him all the days of our life."**  
Having been freed from the power of sin, we may now serve the Lord God by offering our

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<sup>1</sup> TJC Department of Literary Ministry, *Bible Study Guide: Luke*, (Malaysia: True Jesus Church, 2012), [https://bsg.tjc.org/tjc\\_bsg\\_lesson/luke-5/](https://bsg.tjc.org/tjc_bsg_lesson/luke-5/), 7.2: 5

bodies as instruments of righteousness, living a holy and blameless life (Rom 6:11–14; 1 Thess 1:9).

- **Verse 77: “To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins.”** Salvation is through the remission of sins. Christ has conquered sin through His death and resurrection. Through baptism, the blood of Christ washes away all our sins and our old self is crucified (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom 6:1–7). Having been justified, we will not have to face condemnation (Rom 5:9–11).
- **Verses 78–79: “Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us [...] to guide our feet into the way of peace.”** Finally, the sun has risen above the horizon of a dark world! Salvation is like the light of dawn that gives us hope and joy (Acts 26:18; Mt 4:15–16). The way of salvation is also the way of peace—we are reconciled with God, and we can have the peace of Christ in our lives (Jn 14:27; 16:33; Phil 4:4–9). When Jesus comes into our lives, the shadows flee. That is the unmatched grace that Jesus Christ brings to us.

## 2. John’s Mission

The miracle of John’s conception and the loosening of Zacharias’ tongue made the people clearly aware that John was no ordinary child, and that the Lord’s hand was with him. The name “John” means “God is gracious.” The meaning of this God-given name and the fact that God opened the mouth of Zacharias the moment the child was named must have sent a powerful message to everyone that God was with John. Therefore, through these miraculous events, God began preparing the people’s hearts for the gospel.

The angel Gabriel told Zacharias before that his son John would “turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God [...] to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Lk 1:16–17). Like Elijah, who turned the hearts of the Israelites back to God through his faithful perseverance and divine power, John would also carry out a powerful ministry. He would declare God’s message of repentance and announce to the people about the coming of the Savior, who would deliver them from sin.

After Zacharias could speak once again, he praised God through a prophecy concerning the kingdom and the salvation of the Messiah. He clearly remembered the covenant that God had made with Abraham in which God promised to bless the descendants of Abraham. At that time, many Jews were beginning to think that God had forgotten His promise, but through the miracle of the conception and birth of John the Baptist, the nation once again experienced the hope that God had promised. From his birth and his life’s work, we can see that the prophecies that God proclaimed through Malachi and Zacharias came to pass (Mal 3:1; Lk 1:76). It is clear that God often does the impossible to fulfill His prophecies, which will surely come to pass. Our God is a God of promise. When He promises something, He will do as He has said!

### *Check for Understanding*

1. **What was Zacharias and Elizabeth’s family background? What was their character like, based on verse 6?** Both were of the tribe of Aaron and raised in priestly families. “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Lk 1:6).
2. **How did Zacharias show his unbelief when the angel Gabriel told him the news?** He asked the angel Gabriel, “How shall I know this?” (Lk 1:18). Even though he had been praying to God, he had

already lost hope.

3. **What did Gabriel say this child would accomplish?** “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” (Lk 1:16–17).
4. **What does Elizabeth’s reaction to Mary’s visit tell us about her character?** She understood God’s plan for His people; she was full of humility; and she knew her pregnancy was to fulfill God’s plan.
5. **What impact did the miracle have on Zacharias? How about on the people?** The miracle made Zacharias and the people clearly aware that John was no ordinary child and that the Lord’s hand was with the child. The name “John” means “God is gracious.” The meaning of this God-given name and the fact that God opened the mouth of Zacharias the moment the child was named must have sent a powerful message to everyone that God was with John. Therefore, through these miraculous events, God began preparing the people’s hearts for the gospel.

### *Life Application*

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#### **1. We should never give up on the things we have entrusted to God.**

When we find that our prayers have not been answered, it is easy to give up. Often, we only focus on our immediate circumstances. When God does not act as we expect, we begin to doubt whether God is listening or whether He is able to do what we ask. This mentality needs to be changed. Instead of giving up on God, we need to wait patiently without losing faith. The angel said to Zacharias, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard” (Lk 1:13). We do not know when Zacharias prayed for a son; it may even have been many years ago, when Elizabeth was still of child-bearing age. The angel makes it clear that not only did God already hear Zacharias’ prayer, He also remembered it. God hears all of our prayers immediately, but sometimes He delays in giving us an answer.

Learning to be patient while we wait is one of the most difficult things for us to do. While we can only see what is in front of and around us, God looks at the bigger picture. He will carry out His will in His time (cf. Isa 55:8–9). We must trust that God will do what is right and best for us, even if He does not do according to what we ask (Rom 8:28, 32). God’s timing is perfect. He is never early or late. The Bible does not tell us to stop praying because we have not received a timely answer or because we are discouraged. In fact, it tells us the opposite (Eph 6:18; Rom 12:12; 1 Thess 5:17). Therefore, never give up!

#### **2. No situation is impossible for God to solve.**

Zacharias and Elizabeth were beyond childbearing years. Even Zacharias believed that he and his wife were too old to conceive. But God answered his prayer. At times, it seems that God has let a situation reach the point of hopelessness. But from this example, we can see that no situation is impossible for God to solve. Just when we may be ready to give up our hopes and dreams, His answer comes!

The story of Lazarus’ resurrection illustrates this. Jesus intentionally delayed in seeing Lazarus, waiting two more days after receiving news of his illness before traveling to him. It seemed to others that He did not care. When Martha told Jesus that Lazarus had been dead for four days already, Jesus replied, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” (Jn 11:40). After the stone was taken away from Lazarus’ tomb, Jesus commanded him to come forth.

Jesus waited until resolving the situation was humanly impossible, and then worked a miracle with His power. This is why we give all the glory to Him! There are plenty of stories that illustrate the importance

of waiting for God to answer our prayers. When we respond in trust, in that moment, we will realize that the waiting actually builds our faith!

### **Questions to Think About**

- How has your prayer life been lately?
- Are you willing to let God answer your prayer in His own timing? In His own way? In His own power?
- Are you willing to let God answer your prayers for His purpose?
- Are you praying in harmony with His nature, His heart, and His purpose for your life?

### *Memory Verse*

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“The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.” (Psalm 34:15)

### **Meaning**

God wants us to be righteous; He wants us to pursue righteousness, earnestly seeking to follow and honor Him with our lives. If we live a life of righteousness, we never have to wonder if He is listening to our prayers. Moreover, we have the assurance that God is there to hear every request that we cry from our hearts in every prayer! He is watching us with His eyes and caring for us!

### *Conclusion*

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Both Elizabeth and Zacharias were well advanced in years, and despite their blameless lives, they remained childless. But did Zacharias turn away from God during these years? Did he become bitter since God had not answered his prayers? No, he and Elizabeth both remained faithful, serving and loving the Lord diligently.

When we are faithful, God remembers His promise to reward our faithfulness and to hear our prayers. Thus, God mercifully healed this couple’s pain of barrenness. Elizabeth’s name means, “God is my oath,” or “God is my fortune.” God did not fail to be a “fortune” for Elizabeth, as her name signified. He blessed her with an extraordinary child—John the Baptist, a forerunner of the Messiah!

From this passage, we have learned two major teachings. First, God uses those faithful to Him to accomplish His plan of salvation. Through Zacharias and Elizabeth, John the Baptist was born. Secondly, God is all-knowing, all-wise, and all-powerful; He will answer our prayers in His time, His way, and in His power.

## Lesson 1 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse teach us about what God wants for us?  
*He wants us to pursue righteousness and earnestly seek to follow Him in our lives. He also wants us to be assured that He is there to hear every request that we make to Him.*
2. What kind of stigma did Zacharias and Elizabeth have to live with? How did they deal with it?  
*They had no children, and being childless was considered shameful at the time. They dealt with it by drawing closer to God and serving Him obediently so that they could be regarded as blameless in His eyes.*
3. What does Zacharias' reaction to Gabriel's words tell us about his faith at the time?  
*Although he had given his problems to God in prayer, he still doubted the angel's words and was unable to trust in God's promise because of his limited human knowledge; he had already lost hope and did not understand that with God, the impossible can be made possible.*
4. What does Elizabeth's reaction to Mary's greeting tell us about her relationship with God?  
*She understood God's plan for His people, she was full of humility, and she knew that the purpose of her pregnancy was to fulfill God's plan and to glorify Him.*
5. What key lesson does this story teach us about God's response to our prayers?  
*We should never give up on what we have entrusted to God in our prayers because He often waits until the situation is humanly impossible before He answers us. As long as we pray according to His will, He will always answer us, but always in His own time.*
6. Have you ever prayed for a long time with seemingly no answer from God? After today's lesson, how will you deal with this in the future?  
*Personal answers.*