

Luke Lesson 2—Luke 1:1–38

God's Good News

Memorize the TRUTH!



“For nothing will be impossible with God.” Luke 1:37

DAY 1: LUKE 1:1-7—Introduction

1. How did Luke gather the information for this Gospel?
2. Why did he write it?
3. What stands out to you from Luke's description of Zechariah and Elizabeth?



Learn the TRUTH!

Zechariah and Elizabeth had been praying for a child for years. Even though God didn't answer their prayers right away, He had heard them. And in His sovereign will and perfect timing, He gave them the miracle they had asked for. What are some things you have been praying about for a long time? Renew your commitment to pray for those things this week. If there's something you would like others to pray with you about, plan to share it with your small group.

DAY 2: LUKE 1:8-17—A Birth Foretold

4. What was Zechariah doing when the angel appeared?
5. How long do you think Zechariah and Elizabeth had been praying for a child? What does the angel tell Zechariah about his prayer, and how could this encourage you?
6. What does the angel tell Zechariah that his son will do? What do you think this would have meant to him?

DAY 3: LUKE 1:18-25—A Promise Fulfilled

7. From verse 18, what did Zechariah ask for?

8. How did the angel identify and describe himself?
9. Why did the angel tell Zechariah that he would be unable to speak until these words were fulfilled?
10. Have you ever found it difficult to believe God’s word to you? How does Zechariah’s story challenge you?

DAY 4: LUKE 1:26-34—Another Birth Foretold

11. How did Gabriel describe Mary when he greeted her?
12. How did Gabriel describe the child Mary would conceive? What do you think this would have meant to her?
13. How was Mary’s reaction similar to Zechariah’s? How was it different?

DAY 5: LUKE 1:35-38—Mary’s Response

14. How was Mary’s conception of this child different from every other human conception?
15. What information did Gabriel give Mary about her relative? If you had been Mary, how do you think this news would have affected you?
16. What do you admire about Mary from your study of verses 26-38?



Apply the TRUTH!

God gave Mary a special calling. Mary’s obedience brought her great blessing and joy—but it also came with a cost. Has God ever asked anything of you that was hard? What do you learn from Mary’s attitude? Plan to share with your small group.

DAY 6: Participate in Class

Lesson 2 Commentary

God's Good News

Luke 1:1-38

Luke wrote an “*orderly account*” for Theophilus, so he would know that what he had been taught was true. Luke began his account “*in the days of Herod.*” Though the Greeks and Romans to whom Luke wrote did not believe in angels, he opened his Gospel with two messages from the angel Gabriel (see Daniel 8:16; 9:21).

For Israel, these times were dark and discouraging. The Roman Empire had conquered their land. In the Roman province of Judea, Herod the Great ruled with a cruel hand, taxing the people to pay for his building projects and corrupting God’s worship with pagan practices. Spiritually, it was also a dark time. Israel’s people had not heard from God since Malachi’s prophecy 400 years earlier. Yet despite this oppression and turmoil, God chose this time and place to fulfill His promise and bring His kingdom. He sent the angel Gabriel to announce good news to a man named Zechariah.

Messages From God

Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were “*righteous.*” They followed all God’s commandments, and He was pleased with their love for Him. But Elizabeth was barren, and they were old. Though they had hoped to have children, it seemed too late for that to happen. People in their culture considered barrenness a sign of God’s disfavor on a person’s life—especially for those who were descended from a priestly line, as Zechariah was.



Think about God’s favor. Zechariah and Elizabeth lived righteously. But they didn’t escape sadness, misunderstanding, and disappointment. It’s a mistake to believe that we can earn God’s favor. It’s also a mistake to believe that suffering means God does not love us. God’s favor is based on His perfect purposes for us and His kingdom—not on what we do or don’t do. But He loves us always, regardless of our circumstances and regardless of our actions.

Zechariah was also a priest. He was one of Aaron’s descendants from the tribe God had called to serve Him (see Exodus 28:1-3; 40:12-16). At this time, priests were in charge of Israel’s special offerings (Numbers 18:8) and burning incense on God’s altar (Exodus 30:7-8). This incense symbolized prayer rising to God. It was a special privilege to offer it, chosen by the casting of lots. The lot fell to Zechariah, and he entered God’s temple to burn incense. A “*multitude*” of worshipers were praying outside at this set “*hour of incense.*”



Think about the importance of both corporate and private prayer. During the hour of incense, people saw the incense smoke ascending and gathered in the temple courtyard to pray. Although Zechariah appeared before God on their behalf, these worshipers did not rely solely on his prayers. Instead, they joined him. At this time of prayer, God sent “*good news*”: He would send someone who would turn people’s hearts back to Him and prepare the way for their Messiah to come. God answered not only Zechariah’s prayer, but prayers that all Israel had been praying for generations.

As Zechariah offered incense, Gabriel appeared next to the altar. Zechariah was terrified at this unexpected sight. But Gabriel told Zechariah not to be afraid. God had heard his prayer. Elizabeth would bear a son, and they would name him John. God would give them joy and gladness. People would rejoice at their son’s birth.

John’s life would fulfill prophecies God gave His people hundreds of years earlier. God had promised He would send a “*messenger*” to “*prepare the way*” before Him (Malachi 3:1). And Isaiah had declared that a voice would come, calling, “*In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God*” (Isaiah 40:3; see also Matthew 3:1-3).

Even before he was born, John would be filled with the Holy Spirit. He would come *“in the spirit and power of Elijah”* to announce Jesus’ arrival and the coming of God’s kingdom. Like the Old Testament prophet, he would turn the people of Israel back to God. He would turn fathers’ hearts to their children (see also Malachi 4:5-6). And he would make people ready for Jesus.

Zechariah asked Gabriel how he could know this would happen, since he and his wife were old. Gabriel answered that he had come from God’s very presence to bring this *“good news.”* His words, he told Zechariah, would indeed come true. But because Zechariah had not believed him, he would be *“mute”* until these events occurred.

Six months later, God sent Gabriel to Mary, a young virgin woman living in the Galilean village of Nazareth. The Pharisees and rabbis thought of Galileans as uncultured peasants. But God had promised to shine a glorious light in Galilee, *“the land beyond the Jordan”* (Isaiah 9:1-2). He would give a child, the Prince of Peace and Mighty God, who would establish David’s throne and bring a kingdom of justice and righteousness (Isaiah 9:6-7). Jesus, Savior of the world, would come from this simple place.

Mary was a relative of Elizabeth. Mary was engaged to a man named Joseph, and they were both descended from David’s line. Their year-long betrothal period was as sacred and binding as marriage and could be ended only by divorce. A physical relationship with someone else was considered adultery.

Gabriel greeted Mary as a *“favored one,”* saying the Lord was with her. Like Zechariah, Mary was perplexed and *“troubled”* by the angel’s visit. But Gabriel told her not to fear. She had found favor with God. She would conceive God’s Son and call Him Jesus. He would receive David’s throne. He would reign forever over the house of Jacob. And His kingdom would be never-ending.

Mary asked, *“How will this be?”* Her question was similar to Zechariah’s, but with an important distinction. She assumed that what the angel had said was true. For obvious reasons, she just wanted to know how. Gabriel did not give the details. But he made it clear that neither Joseph nor any other human would father this special child. His father would be God Himself. This is why the virgin birth was so miraculous.

Gabriel told Mary more astonishing news. Her aging relative Elizabeth had also conceived a son, and she was now six months pregnant. Imagine Mary’s awe. But as Gabriel assured her, nothing is impossible with God.

Mary no doubt knew that carrying the Son of God would not be easy. She would face rumor, ridicule, and humiliation. Joseph would be troubled when he heard of her condition. Villagers would surely gossip about her pre-wedding pregnancy. It would be hard for her to explain, and many would not believe her. Possibly someone would even accuse her of adultery and try to have her killed (see Deuteronomy 22:23). Yet Mary answered Gabriel with faith, describing herself as a servant of God. *“Let it be to me according to your word,”* she said.



Personalize the TRUTH!

Zechariah and Mary both asked questions when God spoke to them through Gabriel. The difference was that Zechariah asked with doubt, while Mary asked with trust. What is something you are concerned about? Try this simple exercise: think of a question about your concern that is based on doubt, then think of a question based on trust. Write them down so you can look at them closely. What’s the difference between these two questions? Ask God to give you a heart that believes in Him and trusts Him, like Mary did.