



LIFEWAY MEN

BEHOLD

the

SAVIOR

Treasuring the Story
of Christmas

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Treasuring the Story
of Christmas

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

GROUP GUIDE

Each week of the study, you'll find a brief group guide with discussion questions and prayer prompts to use if you're studying with a group. Advent is a busy season, but we also know studying together reinforces understanding. Consider gathering with your small group, friends, or other men once a week to check in, whether in person or virtually.

PERSONAL STUDY

This study is meant to be a slow walk through Luke chapters 1 and 2. This may be a very familiar story to you, but we hope this verse-by-verse look will remind you of the importance of the first Advent. Each day, you'll read a few verses from Luke 1–2 along with devotional commentary and answer questions to help you interact with and apply the text. You may also read Scripture from other places in the Bible. This will help you get a full picture of the anticipation felt for the arrival of the Savior. There are four days of Bible study per week, along with one day set aside for more reflective journaling time.

PREPARE HIM ROOM

Because this season features so much hustle and bustle, we wanted to provide you with the opportunity to take a moment to prepare room in your schedule and your heart for Jesus. Each week, you'll have one day set aside to reflect, journal, and pray through what God is teaching you in this season. We hope this helps create margin in your week to truly behold Him.

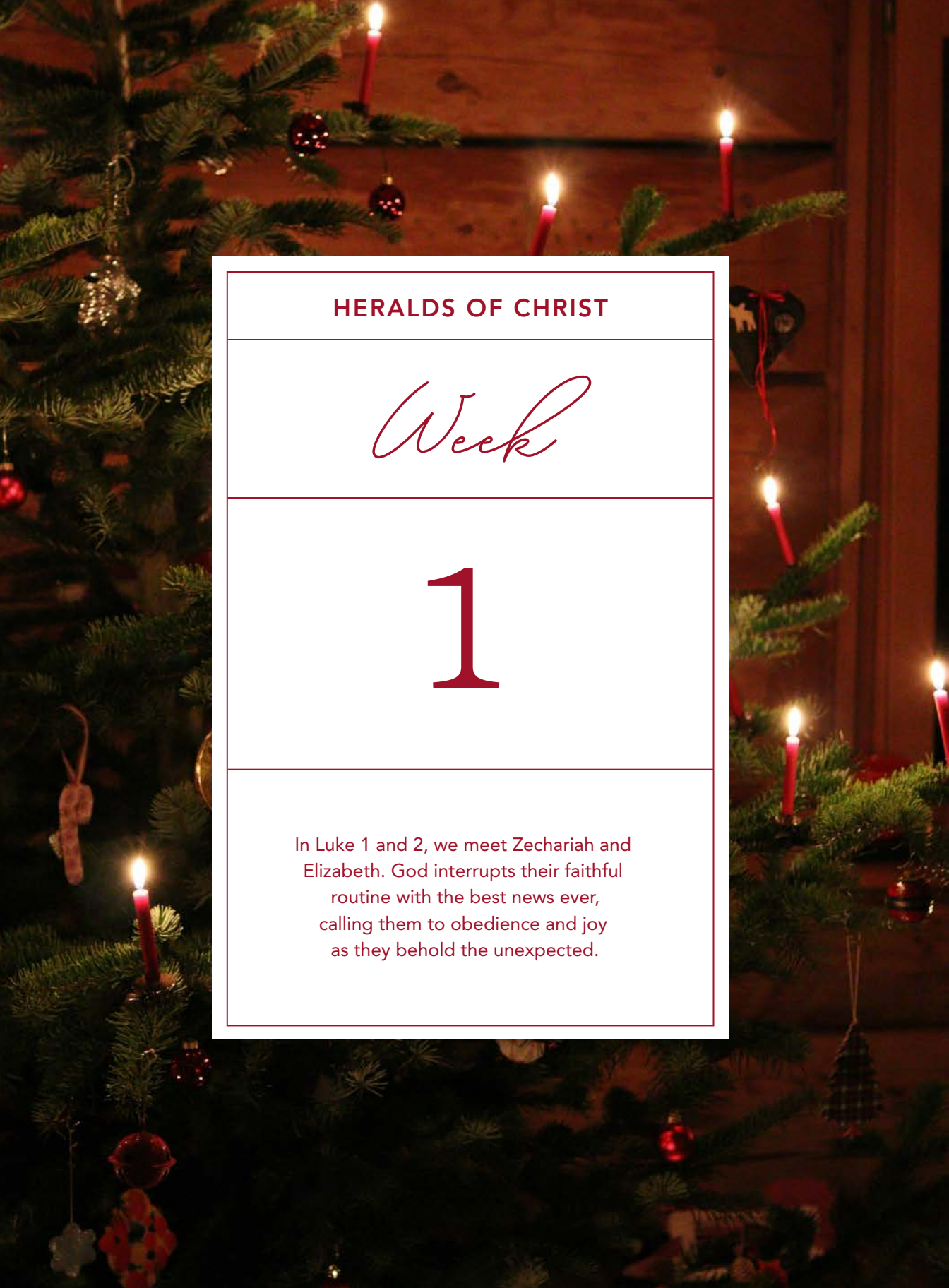
CHALLENGES FOR THE COMMUNITY

Christmas is a season full of family and friends and fun. We want to extend the invitation to *behold* to those around us. Each week of study includes some suggestions for looking outside of yourself to serve the needs of others. Additionally, we've provided a verse to memorize and reflect on each week. This practice will help you internalize the story of Advent and meditate on it now and throughout the coming year.

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

Advent is a time when Christians around the world consider together the birth of Jesus and the promise that He will come again. The themes of Advent are timeless and have been celebrated for centuries in different ways. If you prefer to follow a more "traditional" Advent schedule, it's helpful to know that Advent begins four Sundays out from Christmas, on the Sunday that falls between November 27 and December 3.

Regardless of when you study, our hope is that you will continue to make room for and behold our Savior all year long.



HERALDS OF CHRIST

Week

1

In Luke 1 and 2, we meet Zechariah and Elizabeth. God interrupts their faithful routine with the best news ever, calling them to obedience and joy as they behold the unexpected.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Welcome the group to the first week of *Behold the Savior*. Provide name tags and distribute Bible study books if participants don't have them yet. Invite each man to introduce himself and share basic get-to-know you information. Encourage discussion with these questions and talking points:

Icebreaker: What is your favorite holiday and why?

Why do you want to be a part of this study and this group?

What do you hope to gain from this focused time in God's Word during the Christmas season?

The title of this study is *Behold the Savior*. What does it mean to behold something? What do you behold most often in your everyday life?

Take the time to read Luke 1–2 together as a group. Invite a few people to say what stuck out most to them.

Pray for your hearts and minds during this season, asking God to help you prepare room for and behold Christ.

Remind your group to complete week 1 in their Bible study books before your next meeting.

LUKE 1:1-25, 57-66

The Dedication to Theophilus

Many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as the original eye-witnesses and servants of the word handed them down to us. ³ So it also seemed good to me, since I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed.

Gabriel Predicts John's Birth

⁵ In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah's division named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ Both were righteous in God's sight, living without blame according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years.

⁸ When his division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ it happened that he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ At the hour of incense the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. ¹¹ An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified and overcome with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. ¹⁴ There will be joy and delight for you, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of the Lord and will never drink wine or beer. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb. ¹⁶ He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people."

¹⁸ “How can I know this?” Zechariah asked the angel. “For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years.”

¹⁹ The angel answered him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and tell you this good news. ²⁰ Now listen. You will become silent and unable to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time.”

²¹ Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary. ²² When he did come out, he could not speak to them. Then they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He was making signs to them and remained speechless. ²³ When the days of his ministry were completed, he went back home.

²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived and kept herself in seclusion for five months. She said, ²⁵ “The Lord has done this for me. He has looked with favor in these days to take away my disgrace among the people.”

The Birth and Naming of John

⁵⁷ Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she had a son. ⁵⁸ Then her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her his great mercy, and they rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹ When they came to circumcise the child on the eighth day, they were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. ⁶⁰ But his mother responded, “No. He will be called John.”

⁶¹ Then they said to her, “None of your relatives has that name.” ⁶² So they motioned to his father to find out what he wanted him to be called. ⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they were all amazed. ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ Fear came on all those who lived around them, and all these things were being talked about throughout the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ All who heard about him took it to heart, saying, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the Lord’s hand was with him.



LUKE 1:1-4

Many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed them down to us. ³ So it also seemed good to me, since I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed.

Told with Confidence

DAY 1 * BY G. DWAYNE MCCRARY



LUKE 1:1-4

Read Luke 1:1-2 and underline words and phrases that set the stage for Luke's writing.

A book's first sentence sets the tone for what the author is about to unfold, and Luke's Gospel account is no different. Look at the words and phrases used by Luke to describe the accounts already available: *undertaken*, *compile*, *eyewitnesses* and *servants*, and *handed down*. He commends the work done by others in providing an account of what had been "fulfilled among us."

Why might it have been important for Luke to affirm the work of others?

How does his commendation of others add credibility to the work he was undertaking?

These words and phrases indicate that Luke was not a first-hand witness to what he was about to unravel. Matthew and John were two of the twelve disciples—eyewitnesses. Some scholars believe Mark was at least present at the arrest of Jesus, fleeing from the soldiers in the garden (Mark 14:51-52). Luke would need to depend on others who were present if he was to compile another narrative about the life of Jesus. We can identify with Luke, since none of us were there either. We must depend on others if we are going to put together the truth about Jesus. We can be grateful that Luke did some of the heavy lifting for us.

Pause to thank God for enabling people like Luke to do the hard work of compiling a narrative so we can know the truth about Jesus today.

Read Luke 1:3 and notice the steps taken by Luke to write his account.

Paul identified Luke as a physician (Colossians 4:14), so we know he could conduct research. But good research requires access to original documents and eyewitness accounts. Luke's second book sent to Theophilus, which we call the book of Acts, gives us clues about the kind of access Luke had in order to do the required research. In Acts 16, 20, 21, and 27–28, we find what scholars call the “we” passages. Luke switched his narration to first person plural (“we”) in these passages, indicating that he was a witness to the events recorded in these sections.

Scan Acts 16, 20, 21, and 27–28, looking not only for the use of “we” but also the names of the people Luke encountered in these sections.

Paul is an obvious participant in the “we” passages, but one name that stands out is James (see Acts 21:18). James was the leader of the Jerusalem church and the half-brother of Jesus. Luke arrived in Jerusalem with Paul in AD 57, after Paul's third missionary trip. Most scholars believe Luke's Gospel was written in the late 50's or early 60's AD, so the timing is important. James would have been a valuable source for Luke's research. Luke had access to the people who could help him finish the research needed to write the account. We can be confident that everything we find in Luke's Gospel was intentionally researched, weighed, and determined reliable.

Who do you depend on to help you research the birth of Jesus and other Bible stories?

How can you become the expert for your family and friends when it comes to the birth of Jesus?

Read Luke 1:4 to discover Luke's purpose in writing another account.

Luke commended the accounts of the life of Jesus that were available at the time, yet he felt the need to add to the collection. We don't know much about the *most excellent Theophilus* (v. 3) other than that he had a Greek name and was addressed the same way Paul addressed two government leaders, Felix and Festus (see Acts 24:3 and 26:25). Theophilus mostly likely was a Gentile with some kind of position or status. Somewhere along the way, he heard about Jesus and became friends with Luke. Theophilus appears to be needing more proof about what he had been told, and Luke was the right person for the job. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul noted that only three Jewish men were in his circle at that time, and Luke was listed in a separate group (see Colossians 4:10-15). In short, Luke was a Gentile and was writing an account of the life of Jesus to assure another Gentile of the truth of Jesus. Both held some type of status with professions that were respected. They could talk in each other's language, Gentile to Gentile, man to man.

How can God use your experiences and background to help others with a similar personal history to more fully understand and be confident about the birth of Jesus and His importance?

CLOSING

The story of Jesus can get lost in the other stories that may get attention during the Christmas season. As men, we can help other men and our families stay focused on the true Christmas story with confidence, knowing that the story has been researched, fact-checked, and found trustworthy by those who have gone before us.



LUKE 1:5-7

⁵ In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah's division named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ Both were righteous in God's sight, living without blame according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years.

Faithful and Ordinary

DAY 2 * BY BRETT MCINTOSH



LUKE 1:5-7

Read Luke 1:5.

Following his introduction and explanation to Theophilus, Luke opened his gospel account with a historical timestamp and important context on Zechariah and Elizabeth: “In the days of King Herod . . . ” Most scholars believe these events took place between 7-4 BC.¹ Further, we are told that Zechariah was of Abijah’s division and Elizabeth was from the priestly line of Aaron.

Herod was the leader of the people and would have been viewed as the most powerful figure in the area. Meanwhile, Zechariah and Elizabeth came from a “royal” priestly line. In these introductions, alongside the passages that follow, we are reminded that God’s values are different than those of the world and He often works through unlikely people.

Why is it important that we remember and focus on what God values over the ways of the world?

Where might you be wrongly valuing things of the world over God’s will in your life? What needs to change?

1. A. Boyd Luter, “Luke,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Read Luke 1:6.

In verse 6, Luke moved from Zechariah and Elizabeth's status to their character: "Both were righteous in God's sight." As is often the case in the Bible, God works through those who are faithful to Him. Zechariah and Elizabeth lived according to God's commands. This prepared them for what God would call them to next.

What are some other instances in Scripture where God used faithful but ordinary people to do His will? What can we learn from their example?

Many people search for God's will in daily life. Often, we expect to discern God's will by experiencing a spiritual high or receiving a "sign." Yet, repeatedly, the Bible reminds us that God's will is our faithfulness to Him. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth, we can confidently pursue God's will in the routine moments of daily life, knowing He will use us when and how He desires. We don't have to look for a sign in the clouds; God has given us His Word and His Spirit to guide us. As we remain faithful to Him, He will use us for His purposes.

Where might you have neglected daily faithfulness to God while searching for miraculous means of learning His will?

Read Luke 1:7.

Our modern eyes and ears may catch the sorrow of verse 7, but we may miss the full significance of this detail. Further, we should recognize that this was not a throwaway detail by Luke but a crucial aspect of how God would work in the lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

After reading of their blamelessness before the Lord, we might expect to next read that the couple flourished. But if we've followed Christ for any amount of time, we know that this correlation is often not as direct as we hope. In fact, it is often the opposite, as it was here. We instead learn of a wound this couple carried.

Leviticus 20:20-21 (among other passages) reminds us barrenness was viewed as curse from God. So instead of feeling blessed by God, this faithful couple likely felt punished.

In what area of your life do you feel like you are receiving the opposite of what you “deserve” from God?

How can this be a dangerous way of thinking? How does the gospel remind us this is not the case, no matter our circumstances?

CLOSING

Zechariah and Elizabeth might be seen as representative of all of God’s people at this point in history. They had waited with anticipation for one to come—a child for this couple, a Messiah for the nation. But much time had passed, and disappointment had set in. It would be easy to wonder if God had forgotten them—maybe they would not see His work again. But this could not have been further from the truth. Zechariah and Elizabeth, and all of God’s people, were on the precipice of a miraculous breakthrough in their lives and history. And God was going to use the long-hoped-for child of this elderly couple to announce the coming of the Messiah.

How are you encouraged by remembering the way God worked in Zechariah and Elizabeth’s lives, despite their waiting and disappointment?

This does not mean God will resolve every hurt we experience in life. But it does mean we can trust Him in every hurt. The account of Zechariah and Elizabeth sets the table for the greatest fulfillment of God’s promises, the coming of Jesus, who knows our pain, has restored us to God, and promises us a hope and future with Him.



LUKE 1:13-17

¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. ¹⁴ There will be joy and delight for you, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of the Lord and will never drink wine or beer. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb. ¹⁶ He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.”

Waiting in Hope

DAY 3 * BY LIFEWAY ADULTS



LUKE 1:8-23

Read Luke 1:8-12.

Advent is a season of waiting and anticipation. Zechariah finds himself in that place as we open the Scriptures today. On day 2, we saw that Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, had no children and that they were both old. The Bible does not tell us how they felt about this, but it's reasonable to assume they felt disappointed. The couple could not seek a medical specialist to diagnose and treat their infertility. They had no option but to wait until their waiting resigned into the acceptance that they would be childless.

Would you say you are good at waiting? Why or why not?

How do we continue to remain faithful when our hopes seem deferred?

In another sense, Zechariah's waiting had ended. "It happened that he was chosen by lot" to enter the most holy place (the sanctuary) to burn incense on the altar (v. 9). Because of the number of priest serving Israel, it was possible that a man could have served his entire life and never been given the privilege to do what Zechariah was chosen to do.

Imagine the scene in your mind. An elderly Zechariah has been faithful over a lifetime. He is chosen to enter the holy of holies. The remainder of his division stations themselves outside praying. Inside the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appears and Zechariah is terrified—which is the most common response people have to encountering angels.

However, in this encounter, two of Zechariah's lifelong hopes were fulfilled together. While Zechariah was waiting, God was working.

Read Luke 1:13-17.

How is Zechariah's son described?

What role would he play in the Messiah's story?

Like many in Scripture, the first words Zechariah received from the angel were words of comfort: "Do not be afraid." The angel brought news regarding an unanswered prayer Zechariah and Elizabeth likely offered throughout their whole marriage.

When have you had to wait (maybe you're still waiting) in hope that the Lord would answer your prayer? What did you learn through the waiting?

When has God answered a prayer in a way that you never would have expected? What did that teach you about His character?

Many of us have prayer requests so personal and weighty that they become almost painful to repeatedly lift up to the Lord. We start to question if God really does hear us, and these questions can lead to anxiety and worry. But our prayers do not have a shelf life. Instead of worrying about the outcome, wondering if God will answer in the way we expect, we can trust that when we lift our prayers up to Him, they are in the best hands.

Zechariah's prayer was answered in a way he likely never expected. In this Christmas season, we remember that God not only heard His people but He took the next step to be with us, coming to earth and standing in our place as Immanuel—God with us.

Read Luke 1:18-23.

How did Zechariah respond to Gabriel's announcement?

In what way do you identify with Zechariah's response?

Like Abraham long before him (Genesis 15:8), Zechariah had difficulty accepting this answer to prayer. The years of waiting along with the reality of his and Elizabeth's age blunted his ability to receive the angelic pronouncement. Waiting has a way of doing that to us. But one of the great lessons of Advent is that hoping in the Lord is never in vain. He is able to work in ways that we could never ask, think, or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Whatever we are waiting on this season, we can place our hope in Him.

CLOSING

Beyond Zechariah's and Elizabeth's long offered prayer for a child, the nation of Israel waited in hope for a Messiah. God's answer to that prayer was even more unexpected. In our seasons of waiting, we can look forward in hope with the confident assurance that God is working and His answers will always satisfy those who seek Him.

How does the truth that God is with you change the way you view your circumstances?

Pray and lift to God some of the prayer requests that remain unanswered in your life. Ask Him to help you trust Him with those needs and desires today.



LUKE 1:24–25

²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived and kept herself in seclusion for five months. She said, ²⁵ “The Lord has done this for me. He has looked with favor in these days to take away my disgrace among the people.”

Is Anything Too Hard for God?

DAY 4 * BY RON W. PARHAM



LUKE 1:24-25, 57-66

Read Luke 1:24-25.

Elizabeth, an elderly woman considered barren, conceived a child. This was a miraculous event, defying natural expectations. In her time, childlessness carried a significant social stigma, a “disgrace” as Elizabeth called it. Her pregnancy wasn’t just a personal blessing; it was a public affirmation of God’s favor.

What does Elizabeth’s reaction say about her faith in God?

How does this passage challenge our understanding of what is “possible”?

Like Elizabeth, we too sometimes face situations that seem impossible. This passage reminds us that God’s power surpasses our limitations and that He can work miracles even in seemingly hopeless circumstances.

Where in your life do you need to trust God to do the impossible?

What does it look like to wait with faithfulness and expectation?

Read Luke 1:57-66.

The birth of John was not just a happy occasion; it was a further demonstration of God's miraculous intervention. Additionally, the naming ceremony served as a powerful testament to divine purpose. Zechariah, struck mute for his disbelief in the angel's announcement of John's birth, was only able to speak again after writing "His name is John," confirming the name declared by Elizabeth and previously announced by the angel Gabriel. This miraculous restoration of Zechariah's speech solidified the divine nature of John's birth and inspired awe and wonder in those who witnessed it.

What is the significance of John's name?

What do these events teach us about the amazing work of God?

The story of John's birth and naming reminds us that God's plans are often surprising and that He confirms His word in remarkable ways. We can trust God's promises, even when they seem unbelievable.

When has God done something "unbelievable" in your life?

How did that experience build your faith?

Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy and John's divinely ordained name point toward something even greater: the coming of Jesus. John's birth foreshadows his role as the forerunner of Christ, preparing the way for the Messiah. Just as these births were signs of God's favor and intervention, the birth of Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's love and salvation for humanity. These passages highlight God's power and faithfulness, reminding us that nothing is too hard for Him. They inspire hope and anticipation for the coming of the Savior.

How does today's passage point you to the hope of Christ we find in Advent?

What can men specifically learn from Zechariah's faithfulness?

The themes of hope, trust, and God's faithfulness in these passages resonate deeply with the Advent season. Just as Elizabeth and Zechariah experienced God's intervention in their lives, we too can find hope in God amidst our challenges. Advent reminds us that God is with us, even in difficult times. We can trust in His timing, even when we don't understand it. Like John the Baptist would go on to teach in his ministry, we are called to prepare our hearts to receive Christ, repenting and living lives that reflect His love. And like Elizabeth and Zechariah, we can bear witness to God's faithfulness in our own lives, sharing our stories of His grace with others.

CLOSING

Reflect on a time when you experienced God's faithfulness in a surprising way. How did that experience shape your understanding of God?

As we anticipate the celebration of Jesus's birth, how can you prepare your heart to receive Him more fully? Consider how you can share your story of God's faithfulness with others during this Advent season.

WEEK 1



PREPARE HIM ROOM

Prepare Him Room



For each day 5 of Advent, we'll spend time preparing room for the Savior in our hearts and minds by reflecting on the week's Scripture and study. Here, you will find journaling prompts to guide you as you treasure these things like Mary did so long ago.

How does this week's study encourage you in seasons of waiting?

What about this week's study pointed you to God? What did the study on waiting and Jesus fulfilling all God's promises reveal about the Father's character?

[illegible]

This week's Scripture focused on waiting and preparing the way for the Savior. How can you help prepare the way for Jesus's second coming—the second Advent?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page or a sheet of stationery designed for writing. The edges of the paper are slightly irregular, suggesting it might be a scan of a physical document. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



CHALLENGE

*for the
Community*

HERALDS OF CHRIST

This week's Scripture dealt with people who were eagerly waiting in the hope that God would answer their prayers. These heralds of Christ held on to hope in seasons of waiting. Our seasons of waiting provide us the chance to encourage one another in word and deed. Consider one or more of the following activities to do for your community:

- Identify people in your community who are waiting in hope. Take time to connect with them for the purpose of encouraging them. Send a text, pick up the phone, or write a card and include a gift card to let them know you see them.
- Consider blessing someone unexpectedly at a drive-thru by paying for their order.
- Take a moment to encourage the ministerial staff at your church who are likely quite busy at this time of year and will benefit from your encouragement.
- Luke wrote this account to encourage a man named Theophilus in his faith. Who might you encourage this week with the Christmas story?

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE:

After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived and kept herself in seclusion for five months. She said, "The Lord has done this for me. He has looked with favor in these days to take away my disgrace among the people."

LUKE 1:24-25

**“Look, I proclaim to you good news of
great joy that will be for all the people.”
– Luke 2:10b**

Behold the Savior is an invitation to pause and focus on Jesus this Advent season. Through this four-week study written by a team of men, you'll slowly walk through Luke 1–2 verse by verse. You'll reflect on the significant people and events found in these chapters, celebrating the first Advent and anticipating Jesus's return. You'll learn to treasure and meditate on the wonder of the Christmas story and the glorious moment when heaven came to earth through the birth of Jesus our Savior.

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