



# Digging Deeper

*Putting your faith in ACTION!*

This morning let's not be just 'hearers' of the Word, but 'doers of the word. Take some time at lunch, dinner, or bedtime to DIG DEEPER into the today's lesson and story. Take a few moments to apply today's lesson to our lives.

## ASK MYSELF...challenging questions for the heart:

1. Have you prepared your heart for eternity by surrendering to Jesus?
2. How are you preparing your heart to celebrate this Christmas season?
3. How can you 'prepare the way' for the Lord for someone else?

## FOR THE FAMILY...challenging questions for family life:

1. Read Luke 1:1-25 together.
2. Discuss how the faithfulness of Zechariah and Elizabeth set the stage for God's blessing in their lives.
3. Discuss how your family can help 'prepare the way for the Lord' for someone else this Christmas.
4. Take some time pray together.

## DEVOTIONS FOR THE SEASON...scan code for Advent inspiration:



The first message in our series speaks to the first call of Christmas being that of *a call to prepare*. What better way to daily *prepare* our hearts than to meditate on God's great gift to us this season. You'll enjoy this 31 day devotional guide as you focus on Christ this season.

<http://bit.ly/2gy54JI>



## Today's Service

November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016

### Part 1

## "Zechariah: A Call to Prepare"

Pastor Brian Stanley



**Luke 1:1-4 (NLT)** <sup>1</sup> Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. <sup>2</sup> They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. <sup>3</sup> Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught. <sup>5</sup> When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. <sup>6</sup> Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. <sup>7</sup> They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old. <sup>8</sup> One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. <sup>9</sup> As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup> While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.

**Exodus 30:1-10 (NLT)** <sup>1</sup> "Then make another altar of acacia wood for burning incense. <sup>2</sup> Make it 18 inches square and 36 inches high, with horns at the corners carved from the same piece of wood as the altar itself. <sup>3</sup> Overlay the top, sides, and horns of the altar with pure gold, and run a gold molding around the entire altar. <sup>4</sup> Make two gold rings, and attach them on opposite sides of the altar below the gold molding to hold the carrying poles. <sup>5</sup> Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. <sup>6</sup> Place the incense altar just outside the inner curtain that shields the Ark of the Covenant, in front of the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—that covers the tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. I will meet with you there. <sup>7</sup> "Every morning when Aaron maintains the lamps, he must burn fragrant incense on the altar. <sup>8</sup> And each evening when he lights the lamps, he must again burn incense in the Lord's presence. This must be done from generation to generation. <sup>9</sup> Do not offer any unholy incense on this altar, or any burnt offerings, grain offerings, or liquid offerings. <sup>10</sup> "Once a year Aaron must purify the altar by smearing its horns with blood from the offering made to purify the people from their sin. This will be a regular, annual event from generation to generation, for this is the Lord's most holy altar."

**Luke 1:11-20 (NLT)** <sup>11</sup> While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. <sup>12</sup> Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. <sup>14</sup> You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. <sup>16</sup> And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly." <sup>18</sup> Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years." <sup>19</sup> Then the angel said, "I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! <sup>20</sup> But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time." <sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. <sup>22</sup> When he finally did come out, he couldn't speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary. <sup>23</sup> When Zechariah's week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. <sup>24</sup> Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. <sup>25</sup> "How kind the Lord is!" she exclaimed. "He has taken away my disgrace of having no children."

God's call to prepare...

1. ...is not based upon our \_\_\_\_\_.
2. ...is not restricted by our past \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ...does not require a track record of \_\_\_\_\_, only a willingness to \_\_\_\_\_.

