

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. *Enjoy discovering more about Him!*

"ZACH, LIZ AND LIL JOHN" | LUKE 1:1-26, 57-80 | PASTOR BRIAN

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What is the best way to tell someone about a pregnancy?

"Conception Announcement of John" (Luke 1: 5-26)

Zechariah and Elizabeth are described as righteous yet faced the shame from society of having no children. In our society today, what do good people get shamed for having or not having that they little control over?

God answers Zechariah and Elizabeth's prayers and gives them a son, removing their shame. What does this say about God and His characteristics?

"Birth Announcement of Lil John and Zachariah's Prophecy" (Luke 1: 57-80)

Zechariah learns from his poor reaction the first time and when he finally gets to speak, immediately starts praising God. What are reasons people have poor reactions when they are blessed? What are ways to have good reactions to blessings?

REFLECTION QUESTION:

The birth of John the Baptist reminds us that our careers, our children, our lives are not our own but part of a bigger story and plan that God is orchestrating in His own timing. Zechariah finally realized that and didn't just get excited over his own son but what God was doing in the world. Have you been focused on God's story or just your issues lately? How would your attitude towards work and family and friends change if you saw them as part of the bigger purpose God has?

Zach, Liz, & Lil John

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-10 AP: BCC. Persp. Starting Point. R&R. CG (5).
- B. Slide11 JM11: We are looking forward to our *Justice Matters Sun* on Feb 6, as we share ways to combat HT. Please join us for service & then stay for a BBQ on us & workshops & connect w/our other partner org's to find unique ways to get involved.
1. Our next *Children at Risk* mtg is next Sunday 3-5pm. (ways to be involved)

II. Slide12 Intro: Zach, Liz, & Lil John [Zachariah, Elizabeth, & John the Baptizer]

- A. Speaking of *Justice* ... Malachi ch.2 ends with the Jews asking God, *Where is the God of justice?* Then he continues in 3:1 says *Behold, I send my messenger* (JohnB), *and he will prepare the way before Me* (Messiah). *And the Lord whom you seek* (Messiah) will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant (Messiah) *in whom you delight, behold, he is coming* (Messiah), *says the Lord of hosts* (Father).
1. As soon as Malachi is finished, *Prophetic Laryngitis* sets in for 400 years, AKA the Intertestamental period. Quiet. *Where is God?* Is He finished w/us?
- B. Prayer: may our time be *pleasing* to You, and *profitable* to us.

C. We'll get to John's *Birth Announcement* but 1st ... his *Conception Announcement*.

1. Here is *the next event* in human history where **God speaks** (after 400 yrs).

III. Slide13 CONCEPTION ANNOUNCEMENT OF JOHN (1:5-26) Read 5-17

A. (5) Interesting, that Luke's *opening and closing scene* in his gospel takes place in the temple. (24:53)

B. (6) Pretty great list: both rt before God & walked blameless before man. But ...

C. Slide14 (7) But they had no child... Eliz was barren -

1. Barren *stamped on her life* like others: Sarah, Rebekah, & Rachel.
2. PS: if He blesses u w/kids & u *love your kids*, worship Jesus, *not your kids*

D. **Slide15 Barren but blameless, Barren but not broken** - See, in that day if your wife was *barren* it was OK to divorce her. **But** does Zachariah? **no!** **Instead**, they didn't sin, they didn't get bitter at God, *they're still in ministry, still worshiping, still praying, still serving ... and still asking God for a baby.*

E. **Slide16 (9) Chosen by lot to enter the temple, burn incense** - 18,000 priests, 24 divisions, 750 in each. Each went to Jer for a week, twice a year. (William Barclay)

1. So for 40-50 years Zach **lost!** (like u in elem school if u never got picked).
2. **But now he won Super Lotto Plus! A highlight of his life.**

F. **So he walks from** the *court of the Gentiles*>Woman>Israel>Priests >into Holy Place (not H of H). **Only things in the room were:** *menorah, table of showbread, altar of incense.*

1. **Slide17 Pour incense on burning coals.** Smell, only for God. If anyone made or smelled this mixture, *they were cut off.* Ex.30:38
2. Many priests would never have the privilege of *burning incense* all his life. If they were chosen, it was *the greatest day* of his life, the day he dreamed of.
 - a) I remember in 8th grade I was asked to be *in charge of all the altar boys* in my Catholic church. **I was honored, and Bobbie was proud!** [fav part ringing the bells & holding the incense for the priest]

G. **Slide18 (11) And there appeared to him** - all alone, never been in there before. Then *Ahh!*

H. (13) Here it is *1st time God was speaking again to man*, the *Prophetic Laryngitis* wore off, after **400 years.** *Do not be afraid ... your prayer has been heard.*

1. Matthew Henry, **Prayers are filed in heaven, & are not forgotten though the thing prayed for is not presently given us. The time as well as the thing is the answer; & God's gift always transcends the measure of the promise.**

- a) They weren't going to just have a baby, but the greatest boy to have ever lived, says Jesus! *I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John.* Lk.7:28 [John = God is gracious] (last OT prophet)

b) Zachariah / *The Lord Remembers*, Elizabeth / *God's my oath/promise*.

- I. (15a) He must not drink wine or strong drink - Zach & Liz could, *but* not John.
- J. Biblically I believe it is *acceptable* for Christians to drink, *under certain situations*:
- 1) don't get drunk 2) don't cause someone else to get drunk 3) don't disobey the law
1. Thus the Christian has *freedom* to drink, *or* not drink (legally & in moderation).
 2. We have certain *freedoms* we shouldn't let anyone take away through *legalism, rules, or moralism*. But we can **give away** that *freedom*, out of *conscience and conviction and compassion*.
 3. Zachariah is told to tell his son to *give away his freedom*.
 - a) *Some* of **you** need to *give your freedom away*. *Some* should not drink at all. Maybe you're prone to *alcoholism, abuse, or lack of self control*.
 - b) *So* Christians, you have the freedom to, *but* you need to **pray and ask God** what **His convictions** would be for you personally.
 - (1) **May the Holy Spirit speak to each of us personally, right now.**
 - c) Maybe you should *give away your freedom* because of: *Health, conscience, family, witness, personal conviction, calling from God, ministry opportunity, or a proclivity to addictions*.
 4. If you're **Free**, don't judge the *not free*. **Not free**, don't judge the **free**. Rm.14
 5. **14:22** says, *If you're Free don't post it on IG*. (keep it between u & God)
- K. Slide19 (15b) He will be filled w/the HS even from his mothers womb - wow!
1. We are a **pro life church**. This is not *political*, this is **Biblical**.
 2. People are made in the image & likeness of God. They are endowed with *dignity, value, and worth*. God honors them *and cherishes them, even in* their mothers womb. Even the *8th Circuit Court of Appeals* said to South Dakota in 2008 every woman must be told, "*Abortion will terminate the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being*".

3. **Note:** the child in the womb here is named John. Filled with Holy Spirit. Set apart as a Nazarene. A little bit later in the chapter leaped for joy in her womb when Mary walked in the room. *A pretty good case for personhood.* [a whole, separate, unique, living human being]

a) **Some** of you parents have been struggling with *infertility*. **Others** with a miscarriage, *or multiple*. Don't forget, **God is Father** *holding your little baby*.

L. **Slide20a Read** 1:18-25

M.(18) **Zechariah** went from *faithful*, to *faithless*, to 9 months *speechless*.

1. He had the faith *keep on praying*, **but** when the answer came *he did not have the faith to accept it*. - He was looking at his own limitations rather than **God's unlimited power**.

N. **Slide20b** Zechariah should've just went home ... **but** he speaks. *How shall I know?*

1. (Pause) **Really? Let's review:** You've been asking for a baby for decades. **You won the dice rolling game today.** The presence of God is right behind you. **I am an angel** (notice the wings). You were doing the incense, praying, have been asking for a baby, I show up and say **yes** (pause) *What am I missing?*

2. **At times** we need to just go home and literally *shut up and wait*. Sometimes we as Gods children **talk too much** and *wait too little*.

O. **What unbelief** do you struggle with? Are you looking presently at **your** limitations or **God's unlimited power**?

P. **Slide21a** (24,25) **What's Liz doing?** Just nesting, hanging out at home. Worshiping God, rubbing her belly, get the nursery set up, **and rejoicing** *she has a mute husband*

1. If I was Elizabeth, as soon as I had *the belly bump*, I be down at the well telling all the women, *"oh yah, ol' granny Liz is having a baby."*

2. **Take away my reproach** - sense was *disgrace, shame, scandal*. Kittels [I would want to clear that up asap ... *not Liz*] *decades of reproach*

a) The *Grace of God*, i.e. **John**, Elizabeth's *holy secret*!

3. **Slide21b** Her praise is addressed **to God** for what He has done, *The Lord has done this for me*^(NIV) [emphasis on the *Blessor* rather than on the *Blessing*]

Q. So with Zachariah *speechless* *what is it that he can't proclaim?* Sure, the miracle of his wife's pregnancy, *but even worse* he can't share *the good news* he's waiting for his whole life, as w/every Jew, *that God was about to send the Messiah to the world.*

1. **So** when he finally can speak what does he say ... (note only *2vs.* about his boy)

IV. **Slide22 BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT OF LIL JOHN (1:57-66)**

A. Birth announcements are becoming more and more creative. *Show pics.*

B. Running commentary on this. *Read* 1:57-66

C. (63) **Slide23**

V. **Slide24 ZACHARIAH'S PROPHECY (1:67-80)** song, benediction

A. Here, Zachariah *praises God* for *fulfilling His promises* by weaving together several OT promises regarding *the Messiah Coming*.

B. Running commentary on this. *Read* 1:67-80

C. (80) **Slide25**

D. Keywords: abortion, angel, birth, God, gospel, grace, joy, justice, prayer, promises, prophet, righteousness, salvation.