

# 2.1

## WHAT GOD SAYS IS TRUE

### LESSON BIG IDEA

I will have faith in God and believe what He says is true.

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God wants us to trust His plan.



### FOCUS VERSES: Luke 1:18–20

<sup>18</sup> And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

<sup>19</sup> And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

<sup>20</sup> And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

### LESSON TEXT: Luke 1:5–20, 57–64

# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

**Lesson Text:** Luke 1:5–20, 57–64

Following the complex, refined style of the prologue (Luke 1:1–4), verse 5 settles down into a more relaxed storytelling mode reminiscent of Old Testament narrative. Luke was eager to show that his account was in direct continuity with the grand saga of God's deeds conveyed by the Jewish Scriptures. Jesus' coming was no random accident, but entailed a direct fulfillment of God's ongoing purposes. (See Luke 24:25–27, 44–47.) Luke began his story by placing it in the historical context of the Judean king, Herod the Great. He coordinated Jesus' infancy account with that of His relative, John the Baptist, who was born of priestly Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi.

While among ancient cultures barrenness was considered shameful as well as a financial liability, it is a motif commonly found in the Old Testament. A struggle with infertility challenged such well-known couples as Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 11:30), Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 25:21), Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 29:31; 30:1), Samson's parents (Judges 13:2–3), and Elkanah and Hannah (I Samuel 1:2, 5–6). In addition, Zacharias and Elisabeth were well beyond their childbearing years.

Luke's Gospel begins and ends at the Temple (Luke 24:53). As an elderly priest carrying out his appointed term of Temple service (verse 8), Zacharias had been selected by lot to officiate in incense burning (verse 9).

This special child (John) had come to restore and advance the great prophetic tradition of Israel's past by calling God's people to repentance (verse 16), paving the way for the advent of the Messiah. The angel's description of John recalled the persona and role of Elijah (verse 17). The closing book of the Old Testament prophesied that Elijah would return to turn the hearts of fathers and children towards each other once again (Malachi 4:5–6).

LUKE'S GOSPEL BEGINS AND ENDS  
AT THE TEMPLE.

DAY 1

Bible Reading Plan

Leviticus 20 □ 21 □ 22 □ 23 □ | Matthew 27 □

Luke 1:5-6

<sup>5</sup> There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.  
<sup>6</sup> And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

Biblical Insight

Because of the number of priests available to serve, and since there were twenty-four courses (i.e., divisions), each priest could serve only twice per year. (See I Chronicles 24:7-18.) The number of priests included in each division and the variety of ministries to be performed meant each priest would be selected only once during his lifetime to burn incense (Logos Bible Software).

Zacharias and his wife, Elisabeth, were righteous and blameless. This does not mean they were without sin. The sin problem is universal (Romans 3:23). It means they dealt with their sins as commanded by the Law of Moses with its sacrificial system.

Daily Devotion

Richard Montañez showed up to work every day at Frito Lay and washed the floors. Being a custodian was known as a thankless role, but he remained faithful. One day the Frito-Lay CEO sent out a video urging employees to take ownership of Frito-Lay’s success, so Montañez called the CEO directly to share an idea. He had no idea he was breaching communication protocol; he was embracing the CEO’s initiative.

In his neighborhood, street vendors made Mexican grilled corn with lime and chili. Montañez had an idea for a Cheeto with chili powder on them. Impressed, the CEO gave him two weeks to present his vision to the company executives. Montañez pitched his idea of the Flamin’ Hot Cheeto, and his life changed forever. The Flamin’ Hot Cheeto became an all-time best-seller, and Montañez now serves in an executive position.

Breakthroughs often happen in the mundane process of faithfulness. Like Montañez, Zacharias faithfully fulfilled his priestly duty, and his steadfast devotion led to a miraculous encounter that changed his life. Remain faithful in the small moments. We never know what day could change our lives forever.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

### Bible Reading Plan

Leviticus 24 ☐ 25 ☐ 26 ☐ 27 ☐ | Matthew 28 ☐

#### Luke 1:7-11

<sup>7</sup> And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

<sup>8</sup> And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

<sup>9</sup> according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

<sup>10</sup> And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

<sup>11</sup> And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

#### Biblical Insight

On at least four occasions, Scripture identifies key persons in God's plan as "stricken" or "well stricken" in years. These people include Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18:11; 24:1), Joshua (Joshua 13:1; 23:1), David (I Kings 1:1), and Zacharias and Elisabeth (Luke 1:7, 18). Usefulness to God includes, but is not limited to, those who are young.

Another frequent identification of women who have key roles in God's plan is that they are barren. These include Sarai (Genesis 11:30), Rebekah (Genesis 25:21), Rachel (Genesis 29:31), Manoah's wife (Judges 13:2-3), and Elisabeth (Luke 1:7, 36).

Like Mary's virginity, these insights reveal that "with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

#### Daily Devotion

The pastor of a small-town church felt impressed to preach on baptism in the name of Jesus. He had several people in mind as he preached, but no one responded as he had hoped. After service, he had an out-of-town business trip to attend, so he started his journey. But, when he is was about an hour away, he received a call.

"Pastor," Sunny said, "Grandma wants to be baptized!"

"Wonderful," the pastor exclaimed, "I'll meet you at the church!"

Sis. Wynter, or Grandma, as everyone affectionally called her, was the last person on the pastor's mind. Originally from Jamaica, Grandma Wynter moved to Texas to live with her granddaughter and family. She prayed diligently and was a dynamic, Spirit-filled woman of faith. The pastor had no idea she had never been baptized in the name of Jesus. But now, at eighty-one years old, Sis. Wynter took on the precious name of Jesus in baptism. God's plan never expires. God fulfills his promises to everyone who believes. So today, dust off the promises of God and dare to believe again. It is never too late for a miracle.

#### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

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DAY 3

Bible Reading Plan

Numbers 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ | Mark 1 ☐

Luke 1:12-15

<sup>12</sup> And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.  
<sup>13</sup> But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.  
<sup>14</sup> And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.  
<sup>15</sup> For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Biblical Insight

We may wonder why a priest like Zacharias would react with fear to the appearance of an angel. But this may be more understandable if we remember this was the only time in his service as a priest that he was privileged with the very responsible task of burning incense. Zacharias had never stood in this precise place before, doing this specific thing, and apparently he had never before been visited by an angel while in the Temple.

The angel's good news was that Zacharias's prayer had been heard. Zacharias must have been praying a long time for a son, and the answer indicated his son would be a special person in God's plan. John would be filled with the Holy Ghost even before he was born.

Daily Devotion

Have you ever seen an angel? Angels do not look like chubby babies floating in the clouds with cute little wings. Angels serve as mighty warring spirits to protect the heirs of salvation. Like Zacharias, we would likely respond in fear in the presence of Gabriel as well. Our natural fear-response to the unknown is to fight, freeze in place, or run. And when the threat holds supernatural powers, we run faster! However, Zachariah's response remains puzzling. The fear we understand. But how could someone lack faith in such a sacred moment?

Zechariah's doubt in the middle of this miraculous moment reflects the destructive nature of misplaced faith. People who doubt often have *faith* in the wrong thing. Belief in the impossibility holds more sway than faith in the power of God, even when an angel stands before them.

Gabriel silenced the doubt by silencing Zechariah. Perhaps we should do the same. Maybe we should take a voluntary vow of silence the next time our doubts question the power of God. God specializes in the impossible. If it were possible, we would do it. Today, silence your doubts and watch God work.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

# DAY 4

## Bible Reading Plan

Numbers 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ | Mark 2 ☐

### Luke 1:16–20

<sup>16</sup> And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

<sup>17</sup> And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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.

<sup>18</sup> And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

<sup>19</sup> And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

<sup>20</sup> And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

### Biblical Insight

John would turn many of the children of Israel “to the Lord their God.” This news, together with the angel’s next words (“he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias” and “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord”) forms a powerful declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the one before whom John went. He is the one to whom many of the children of Israel would be turned. He is the one for whom a people would be prepared.

### Daily Devotion

You may have heard of preppers in the news. Preppers go to great lengths to prepare for impending calamities. The calamities range from low-level crisis events like power-outages to apocalyptic-extinction events. When the 2020 COVID pandemic hit the world, more people started paying attention to this phenomenon. Suddenly prepping did not seem so far-fetched.

Academic research by Bradley Garrett explored the world of preppers by living in an underground bunker community for three years, and he concluded, “the prepper ideology, faith in adaptation has supplanted hope of mitigation” (*Doomsday Preppers and the Architecture of Dread*, Geoforum). In other words, preppers have little hope of making a change in the world, but they have a nice bunker.

John may be the original prepper, but he prepared differently. John did not assume a defensive posture. John boldly called people to repentance. John prepared people with the hope of change.

Today, God’s people prepare differently. We do not hunker down in fear and silence. We shine brighter and preach louder than ever before. We prepare the world for the coming of the Lord: the ultimate hope that will change everything once and for all.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

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DAY 5

Luke 1:57-64

<sup>57</sup> Now Elisabeth’s full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.  
<sup>58</sup> And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.  
<sup>59</sup> And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.  
<sup>60</sup> And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.  
<sup>61</sup> And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.  
<sup>62</sup> And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.  
<sup>63</sup> And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.  
<sup>64</sup> And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

Biblical Insight

Zacharias’s fear and failure to believe upon seeing Gabriel meant he would not be able to speak until his son’s birth (Luke 1:18-20). When his parents brought John to be circumcised, there was an attempt to name him after his father. Elisabeth refused, saying, “He shall be called John.” The name John means “Jehovah is gracious.” This may have been the name specified by Gabriel to point out how gracious God was to answer Zacharias’s prayer for a son. Traditionally, sons were named after their fathers or grandfathers, but no one in the family bore this name. Rather than to move ahead with Elisabeth’s direction, a writing tablet was brought to Zacharias to see what the baby should be named. He wrote, “His name is John.” Those present marvelled, and immediately Zacharias could speak.

Daily Devotion

Imagine the best basketball player in the world challenges you to a dunking contest. The basketball player wows the crowd with his otherworldly jumping abilities. Then you try to jump and dunk the basketball but barely touch the bottom of the basketball net. It would be a humorous and embarrassing scenario. Now imagine the same scenario, but this time, instead of a dunking contest, the challenge is to see who can touch the sun. It’s ridiculous to even think about it. No matter how high the basketball player jumps, or you jump, both of you are still over ninety million miles from the sun.

God’s perspective puts everything in its place. When we could not reach Him by our efforts, He came to us. And the very name of the forerunner of Jesus (Yahweh-Savior) would be called John (Yahweh-Gracious). Grace would prepare the way for salvation. Grace still prepares the way for salvation today: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. (Ephesians 2:8, NKJV). So let’s cancel the jumping contests and stand in awe of the Son.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

**Lesson Title:** What God Says Is True

**Scripture Focus:** Luke 1:18–20

### The Lesson in Context

Now that we have been redeemed by His blood, we cannot simply make peace with the way things are in our world. We have been called out of that kind of darkness into a marvelous light. We do not conform to the world. Our faith might not seem to work in theory, but it works in practice. We look at a cross and insist it is the throne of God. We look at the crown of thorns and call it a crown of glory. Like our Lord, we never take the world at face value. We shake our fists at the spiritual desert and demand it rain. We look at the houses of prostitutes, the broken, the addicts, and insist they are to be houses of the redeemed. We look out on whole continents in the grip of Satan and declare them won for Christ.

To all of life's heartaches, it might be tempting to say, "That's just the way it is." But if you listen closely, you will hear another "it." For on a dark, skull-shaped hill many years ago, the earth shook, Christ died, and His disciples heard Him say, "It is finished."

### Group Discussion

1. In what ways did John "prepare the way" for the Lord to come?
2. Has God made a promise that seems impossible to you?
3. Why do you think God likes to change the status quo?
4. Why do we sometimes struggle to take God at His word?
5. How would you describe God's love to someone who has never experienced God?

### My Prayer for the Upcoming Week

How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?

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