

## Luke 1:39-80

### *Mary, Elizabeth and Zacharias*

#### Study Summary and Learning Objectives

Study Summary: This study is written to show how God uses individuals in His story of redemption and to consider how God's faithfulness calls us to have faith (and not doubt) in His promises and their fulfillment.

For this study, we would like for you and your small group to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of how the Jewish people understood the coming of the Messiah
- To study the lives and responses of Mary & Zacharias at the time their story was intersecting with the story of Jesus and the fulfillment of the promised Messiah
- To reflect on how our individual stories intersect with God's story

#### Steps to Prepare (For Leaders)

- Read over Luke 1:39-80 to familiarize yourself with the passage.
- Bring handouts and make sure everyone has a pen/pencil to use for the handout activity. You may want to complete the exercise beforehand to have discussion points/answers prepared.

#### Section One: Mary and Elizabeth

**? Icebreaker** Has there ever been a time in your life when God gave you a glimpse of how your story was intersecting with His story? What did this look like?

*Leader's Note: This a long passage; try to break it up by having multiple people read sections of it. Pass out the provided handout (for scripture reference).*

#### Read Out Loud: Luke 1: 39-80 (NIV)

39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

46 And Mary said:

"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.  
48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.  
49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
And holy is His name.  
50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him  
From generation to generation.  
51 He has shown strength with His arm;  
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
And exalted the lowly.  
53 He has filled the hungry with good things,  
And the rich He has sent away empty.  
54 He has helped His servant Israel,  
In remembrance of His mercy,  
55 As He spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and to his seed forever."  
56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

57 Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. 58 When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. 59 So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. 60 His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John."  
61 But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." 62 So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called.  
63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. 65 Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. 66 And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.  
67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:  
68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,  
For He has visited and redeemed His people,  
69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
In the house of His servant David,  
70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,  
Who have been since the world began,  
71 That we should be saved from our enemies  
And from the hand of all who hate us,  
72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers  
And to remember His holy covenant,  
73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:

74 To grant us that we,  
 Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,  
 Might serve Him without fear,  
 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.  
 76 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;  
 For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,  
 77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people  
 By the remission of their sins,  
 78 Through the tender mercy of our God,  
 With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;  
 79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,  
 To guide our feet into the way of peace."  
 80 So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation  
 to Israel.

### Activity Time!

**Read Out Loud:** Both Mary and Zacharias's responses are recorded in the forms of prayers. Let's put the two prayers side by side to get an idea for how exactly these two people saw Jesus.

*Leaders Note: Follow the instructions on the handout.*



What are some words or concepts that you see in both prayers?

*Possible Similarities: Mercy, Salvation, Israel, Abraham, Serving God, God fighting for His people, fathers, ancestors, prophets, saved from enemies.*



What do these two prayers say about the state Israel is in? How do these words/concepts inform our understanding of who Jesus is and how the Jews understood his coming?

*Possible Answers: State Israel is in: exile, overtaken by enemies, in need of a savior, lost, expectant for a Messiah to come*

*Who Jesus is: Savior, merciful, faithful, King, Promised one, deliverer from enemies, seed of Abraham, fulfillment of promises to Abraham, expected Messiah, deliverer from exile, the one whom the prophets spoke, and culmination of the story*



Both Mary and Zacharias find themselves in the midst of God's plan of redemption through Jesus.

How do they react to their story intersecting with God's story on such a personal level? What about their responses are similar or dissimilar?

*Possible Answers: Both point to Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises. They both praise and give thanks to God. They recognize God's holiness, faithfulness and strength. They ask for deliverance from their enemies.*

Luke 1:18-19 18 Zacharias asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." 19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

? In our last study we read about how Zacharias responded with unbelief and doubt to God's promise to him, that he would have a son. We now see Zacharias' response has changed. What brought about His change in response?

*Possible Answer: Zacharias encountered God. He saw that God was faithful to bring about the fulfillment of His promises. God's faithfulness allows him to trust God at His word.*

? What are some promises God gives us still today? Have you ever responded with disbelief like Zacharias to a promise God has given? What changed your response?

*Possible Answers: God has promised to never leave or forsake*

*us, when facing temptation there will be a way out, He promises that He is sovereign and in control of the universe, He promises that you are made righteous by Jesus, He promises your sin is washed away and you are forgiven, He promises that He will redeem the earth and make all things new*

#### **For Discussion and Accountability**

? What promises of God do you continually find hardest to believe? What would change your response from doubt to faith?

? How might God be calling you to partner in His story of redemption in your life or in the life of someone around you?