



Luke is a wonderful historian. Archaeological findings have repeatedly confirmed the accuracy of his accounts. As a historian, Luke goes into greater detail and length than the other gospel writers about the events surrounding Jesus' birth. Luke believed important things related to the coming of Jesus happened before that first Christmas night in Bethlehem. In this study, we go back to the beginning of Luke's Christmas Story. We are introduced to Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth—an older, childless couple—and the surprising way in which Zechariah learns that they are going to have a son. Luke begins his Christmas story here, because of the important role the son, John, has in relation to Jesus.

Read Luke 1:5-25.

- What does the text tell us, both explicitly and implicitly, about Zechariah and Elizabeth? Who would they be in our world today?
- Gabriel told Zechariah, "Your prayer has been heard" (v. 13). Why would these words have meant so much to Zechariah? Can you share a time in your own life when you can say, "My prayer has been heard?" How did that make you feel?
- We often see Zechariah's inability to speak as a kind of discipline for his unbelief. Can you think of and reasons it might have been a gracious gift given to Zechariah (and those around him)?
- We know that the birth of Jesus was surrounded by the supernatural (virgin birth, angels, unusual star). The birth of John was also surrounded by the supernatural. Identify the "supernatural" elements in this passage. Why do you think God chose to bring John into the world like he did? (**See Luke 1:65-66.**)
- Zechariah had an encounter with an angel. Have you ever had an encounter with an angel? Have you ever had what might be called a "supernatural" experience with God?
- **Read Luke 1:15-17, 1:39-44, 3:1-6 and John 3:30.** Why was John such a great trailer for Jesus?
- Respond to this statement: You are a trailer for Jesus. The question is, "Does your life make people want to see Jesus, or does your life make people say, 'No thanks.'" Is there an edit you can make to your life—an insertion or deletion—that would make you a more effective trailer for Jesus?
- What anxieties are driving you to the manger this Christmas season? How does Jesus bring Christmas Cheer in the face of these anxieties?

Take some time to pray together and for each other.

- Bring both your anxieties and heart-longings to God.
- Pray for the people who sit on the front row of your life.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would help you live as a great trailer for Jesus.
- Ask God to give Coastline a great Christmas season.