

Explore It

FOR LEADERS



AN ANSWER TO PRAYER

Luke 1:5-20 Zechariah and Elizabeth

In today's story we start to discover God's amazing answer to Elizabeth and Zechariah's prayer. They desperately wanted a child and God promised they would give birth to a boy who would play a special part in the life of Jesus. We will also start to learn our memory verse for this month, found way back in the Old Testament in the book of Isaiah. God made a promise to his people that he would send a Messiah, and today we start discovering more about how that promise was fulfilled.

Each child will need:

- Memory verse wristbands
- Memory verse picture
- Pens/pencils and paper

You will need:

- Christmas Charades clues folded up and placed in a container – see Start It section
- Large copy of the memory verse to display

Start It

- **Say:** In our Bible story today the main character is silenced by God – more on that later! So, we are going to play a game where you are not allowed to speak. We are going to play Christmas Charades.

Divide the group into two teams and let the children take turns acting out the Christmas clue for the rest of the team to guess. Keep a tally of the scores and see which team can guess the most Christmas words. You could either swap between teams each time or give them a certain amount of time to complete as many clues as possible.

Write a selection of Christmas-themed clues (examples below) prior to the session, fold them up and put them in a container.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| → Baby Jesus | → The Nightmare Before Christmas |
| → Angel Gabriel | → Hark! the Herald Angels Sing |
| → Three Wise Men Shepherd | → All I want for Christmas is you |
| → Father Christmas | → Ebenezer Scrooge |
| → Elves | → How the Grinch Stole Christmas |
| → Frosty the Snowman | → Arthur Christmas |
| → Silent Night | → Polar Express |
| → Deck the Halls | → Home Alone |
| → Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer | |

Sing It

- **Say:** Our memory verse for this month comes from the Old Testament. It lets us know that the people had been waiting a long time for Jesus to be born.

Display the memory verse in the room where you meet, so that the children can regularly refer to it as they learn the words. Give each member of the group a memory verse wrist band.

Read:

**'For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**

— (Isaiah 9:6 *NIV*)

🗨 **Say:** Over the coming months we will aim to learn Isaiah 9:6 from memory. Today's song will help you get started.

'Isaiah 9:6' memory verse song by Quest-Nairobi Chapel (1 min 10 secs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQ2HS5zElo4>

Tell It

🗨 **Say:** In Isaiah 9:6 we discover that the people had been waiting a very long time for their Messiah to arrive. The Christmas story tells of the birth of Jesus and how God answered the prayers of his people. We usually start telling the Christmas story by hearing about the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary, but today we are going to go a bit further back and meet some people who played an important part in the story of Jesus. Their names are Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Ask: What do you already know about Zechariah and Elizabeth?

Video

🗨 **Say:** Let's watch a clip which sums up the story, and then we will look at the first part of the story in more detail.

Zechariah and Elizabeth by Faith Kids Video (1 min 42 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFHOiI6Vf0

🗨 **Say:** Now that we have an overview of the story, let's look in the book of Luke in the New Testament, to find out more.

Read:

'During the time Herod ruled Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. He belonged to Abijah's group. Zechariah's wife came from the family of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. Zechariah and Elizabeth truly did what God said was good. They did everything the Lord commanded and told people to do. They were without fault in keeping his law. But Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children. Elizabeth could not have a baby and both of them were very old.'

— (Luke 1:5-7 *ICB*)

Ask:

- ➔ What do we find out about Zechariah in these first few verses?
- ➔ Zechariah and Elizabeth were very old. What do you think the chances were of them being able to have a baby?

Read:

'Zechariah was serving as a priest before God for his group. It was his group's time to serve. According to the custom of the priests, he was chosen to go into the Temple of the Lord and burn incense. There were a great many people outside praying at the time the incense was offered. Then, on the right side of the incense table, an angel of the Lord came and stood before Zechariah. When he saw the angel, Zechariah was confused and frightened.'

— (Luke 5:8-12 *ICB*)

🗨️ **Say:** There were around 18,000 priests in Jerusalem at the time and only 14 were chosen each year to burn incense in the Temple.

Ask: How do you think Zechariah felt about being chosen to burn incense in the Temple?

🗨️ **Say:** This would have been a very special day for Zechariah. He had been looking forward to it since he became a priest.

Ask: Do you understand Zechariah's reaction to seeing the angel? If so, why?

How do you think you would have reacted if you had been there?

Read:

'But the angel said to him, "Zechariah, don't be afraid. Your prayer has been heard by God. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son. You will name him John. You will be very happy. Many people will be happy because of his birth. John will be a great man for the Lord. He will never drink wine or beer. Even at the time John is born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will help many people of Israel return to the Lord their God. He himself will go first before the Lord. John will be powerful in spirit like Elijah. He will make peace between fathers and their children. He will bring those who are not obeying God back to the right way of thinking. He will make people ready for the coming of the Lord."'

— (Luke 5:13-17 *ICB*)

🗨️ **Say:** The angel told Zechariah that his prayers had finally been answered and that his wife, Elizabeth, would give birth to a son. The angel told Zechariah to name the baby John.

Ask: What have we discovered about John so far?

Read:

'Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I know that what you say is true? I am an old man, and my wife is old, too."'

'The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand before God. God sent me to talk to you and to tell you this good news. Now, listen! You will not be able to talk until the day these things happen. You will lose your speech because you did not believe what I told you. But these things will really happen."'

— (Luke 1:18-20 *ICB*)

Ask:

➔ Why did God remove Zechariah's ability to speak?

➔ Why do we sometimes find it difficult to believe that God can answer our prayers?

🗨️ **Say:** The story of Zechariah and Elizabeth reminds us that God answers prayer.

Action It

🗨️ **Say:** Just as God promised Zechariah that he and his wife would have a son, so our Bible verse for this month reminds us of God's promise to his people.

Let's read the memory verse together.

**'For to us a child is born,
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Memory verse picture

Give each child a copy of the memory verse handout for this month. Discuss with the children what the verse means and clarify any words they are unsure about.

Explain to the children that they are going to create pictures around the text to help them remember the memory verse. They need to use their imagination and lots of colour as this will help them to remember each part of the verse. If you have time within the session, you may also choose to create some actions to go with the verse to help the children to remember it.

Once the children have created their picture of the verse, read the verse together. Encourage the children to try and remember the verse without looking at the sheet.

Pray It

● **Say:** Zechariah had a lot of time to be quiet and listen to God's voice. Sometimes it is important for us to take time to be quiet, especially when we live in such a noisy world.

Ask:

→ Do you ever feel like you need peace and quiet?

→ How do you find it?

● **Say:** Finding time to be quiet and spend time with God is really important if we want to have a close relationship with him. Rather than punishing Zechariah, God was giving him time to listen and be quiet.

● **Say:** We are going to have a time of peace and quiet together, where we can pray to God and listen to what he has to say to us. Find a space in the room and make yourself comfortable. As the gentle music plays, spend time with your eyes closed, relaxing in God's presence.

Listen

'What child is this' (piano & electric cello) by The Piano Guys (3 mins)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ_o85Byb-g

When the music is finished, bring the quiet prayer time to a close with a prayer for the whole group.

Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

Explore It

IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

ADVENT
SESSION 01

AN ANSWER TO PRAYER

 Luke 1:5-20 Zechariah and Elizabeth

FOR ME

TOGETHER



Remember

Our memory verse for this month reminds us of the promise God made to the people way back in the Old Testament. Read through the memory verse out loud. Perhaps you can add some actions as you read. Have a look at the memory pictures you created in this week's session and start learning the verse for this month.



Share

There may be children at your school who don't know the real story of Christmas. Share this clip with them and let them know what Christmas is all about. It's not about presents, Father Christmas, or gifts under the tree. Christmas is about the birth of Jesus.

The Mystery of Christmas by Hillsong Kids
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yz4TYe0NYv4



Song for the week

'Isaiah 9:6' memory verse song by Quest-Nairobi Chapel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQ2HS5zEIo4>



Memory verse

**'For to us a child is born,
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KIDS ALIVE! ONLINE

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive>

Kids Alive! The UK's only weekly Christian comic – is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!

