Two Birth Announcements



GOD LOOKS FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE HIM TO BE PART OF HIS BIG STORY.

MEMORY VERSE

"For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

Word of the Week—Surrender:

To surrender is to be willing to give up your own ideas, wants, or possessions. To allow or trust someone else to make decisions for you.

This week's lesson is based on Luke 1 and Matthew 1:18-21; *The Desire of Ages,* pp. 31-38; 97-100; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 5, pp. 668-694. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story,* vol. 7, pp. 9-22.

SUNDAY

The Time Had Come

God's story for us, recorded in the Bible, is the greatest true story there is. It is a love story, an adventure story, and best of all, it will end as a happily-forever-after story. It begins with God. The Bible says, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). He knew and chose you—yes, *you*—before He created Adam and Eve and gave them life! And the ending is not really an ending at all—how's that for a good story? It's forever with God, enjoying the love and friendship He created us for.

But the story gets messed up in between. After sin entered heaven and our world, things became dark and ugly. Satan tried to ruin the story. God immediately made a promise to destroy Satan and sin (Genesis 3:15). But Satan still continued to do his best to convince people that God was a cruel and unforgiving judge whom they couldn't trust. He filled hearts with doubt, discouragement, pain, and suffering. And worst of all, he encouraged people to blame God for all the badness.

But God was still in control of His story; He would never let it be ruined! He would always fulfill His promises. God would show that Satan was wrong—*very* wrong. God would show people His true character up close, in a way they could understand. He would show them that "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

And so, when the world was at its very worst and Satan thought he'd almost gotten everyone on his side, God chose willing people to play a very special part in His big story. He chose people who really loved Him to help Him fulfill the big promise He had made to Adam and Eve; the promise to send His Son to the earth to stand in the place of all people and die for their sins. Satan—that enemy who had tried to ruin our story—would be crushed. The time had come. The world needed a Savior right away!

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *How do you feel, knowing you have a special part to play in God's big happily-forever-after story?*

Pray: Thank God that you are part of His big story.



☐ MONDAY

A Big Surprise

Old Zacharias and Elizabeth closed their eyes and began to pray. They were praying and waiting, waiting and praying. The faithful couple from Hebron in the land of Judah were waiting for God's promised Savior.

The couple knew they wouldn't have to wait too long. God had given His prophets a message about the future—called a prophecy. God had told Daniel when the promised Savior would come (Daniel 9:25). That time was now! What did God tell His prophet Isaiah? **Read Isaiah 9:6.**

Zacharias and Elizabeth had read another beautiful prophecy in the Bible scrolls too. Before the Savior came to the earth, God would send a great preacher to help people's hearts to accept Him (Isaiah 40:3-5). The couple eagerly prayed and perhaps wondered, *When, oh, when will it happen?*

Then one day as priest Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, a bright shining angel appeared beside the altar and lit up the room. The angel gave Zacharias a message. What was it? **Read Luke 1:13-17.**

For a moment Zacharias doubted the message. He said, "How can I know that what you're saying is true? I am an old man, and my wife is old, too" (Luke 1:18, ICB). Too old to have a baby!

The angel explained that he was Gabriel, sent from God. The angel told Zacharias that because he had spoken his doubt aloud, he wouldn't be able to talk until after the miracle baby was born.

Zacharias' face lit up with joy. God had chosen his family to be God's special helpers! They would be part of God's big story! He would surrender—give up—his doubts and trust God. Zacharias left the temple unable to speak but with his face glowing.

Do: Stay silent for two minutes while a family member talks and asks you questions about your favorite hobbies. Think about how hard it was for Zacharias to lose his speech for at least nine months.

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *Why did God choose Zacharias and Elizabeth? Read* **Luke 1:6.** *Imagine how they felt, becoming the parents of the one who would make people ready for the coming of the Lord!*

Pray: Ask God to help you surrender (give up) your doubts and trust Him.



☐ TUESDAY

An Angel Visitor

Mary swept the floors, careful to catch the dust that hugged the corners. It was an ordinary day. She didn't know something extraordinary was about to happen.

Suddenly the room was filled with beautiful light. Mary was stunned! A dazzling angel, Gabriel, stood before her. "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" said Gabriel (Luke 1:28). Mary could hardly believe her eyes. *What was happening?*

"Don't be afraid, Mary," said the angel. He had the best news ever! What did he say would happen to her? **Read Luke 1:31-33.**

"How can this be?" asked Mary (Luke 1:34). She wasn't married to Joseph yet—only engaged. Gabriel kindly told her that the Holy Spirit would cause Mary to become pregnant and that the baby would be called the Son of God. Wow!

Mary stood in awe before the angel. Many mothers in Israel had longed to be the mother of the promised Messiah, yet God had chosen *her*. God had looked for a gentle, loving, humble woman to be the mother of His dear Son, Jesus. And He had found Mary. What a wonderful privilege!

In quiet surrender, Mary said, "I am the servant girl of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" (Luke 1:38, ICB).

Mary shared the news with Joseph. He felt worried about her being judged and shamed for being pregnant before she was married. So God sent an angel to him in a dream. What did the angel say? **Read Matthew 1:20, 21.** Joseph quietly surrendered to God's plan too. What wonderful parents Mary and Joseph would be.

God has great plans for each of us. He calls us to surrender to Him, and then He gives us the privilege of having a special part in His big story, just like Mary.

Fast Fact: Gabriel was the angel that took Lucifer's place in heaven (*The Desire of Ages,* pp. 779, 780).

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *Read your memory verse. How does it apply to Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, and Joseph?*
- *What would it look like for you to surrender to God? (Think about the Word of the Week definition to help you answer this question.) Ask your parents what surrender means to them.*

Pray: You can surrender to Jesus right now by saying, *"Lord, take my heart and fill it with Your love. Thank You, Jesus. I love You."*



WEDNESDAY

Mothers-to-Be

Mary hummed to herself as she walked along in the warm sunshine. It was a long trek to her cousin's home, but she was excited. Her cousin Elizabeth would have a special miracle baby—in three months' time. Mary couldn't wait to share her baby news too!

Finally Mary arrived at Zacharias' home with a cheerful hello. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, she was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth knew Mary's news before she could even tell her! "God has blessed you more than any other woman. And God has blessed the baby which you will give birth to," she said (Luke 1:42, ICB).

Elizabeth rested a hand on her tummy. "When I heard your voice, the baby inside me jumped with joy (Luke 1:44, ICB).

Mary's heart filled with happiness. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior," she said (Luke 1:46, 47). What else did Mary say? **Read Luke 1:48-55.**

Old Elizabeth and young Mary sat down together to share their stories, and to share their thanks to God. He had been so kind to both of them.

Mary and Elizabeth held each other's hands tightly. They would soon be mothers! They knew other people might not share their joy. People might think and say such things as, *Look at that old woman. She's far too old to have a baby!* Or *Mary's pregnant? But she's not married!* But these two women just kept smiling. They wouldn't worry about what other people said. They wouldn't let gossip or mean talk steal their joy. God loved them! He had chosen them to be an important part of His big story, and that was all that mattered.

Do: How many things can you praise God for in one minute?

Think . . . Then talk about it

- *What made Mary speak such beautiful words of praise to God?*
- *How do you feel when others wrongly judge you?*
- *What could help you not to worry about what they say?*

Pray: What are three good things God has done for you? Thank God for showing His love to you.

THURSDAY

Birth of a Miracle Baby Boy

A baby's cry split the air. Friends and family crowded around to rejoice at the birth of Elizabeth's newborn son. What would she call him? John. The happy crowd looked puzzled. Sons were often named after other relatives, but no one in their family was named John.

Zacharias reached for his writing tablet. He wrote, "His name is John" (Luke 1:63). Immediately he could speak. Zacharias explained that God Himself had named their little baby John, which means "Jehovah (God) is gracious." What a miracle! The people were sure God had big plans for this baby. They spread the amazing news everywhere.

Precious baby John had an important part to play in God's big story: He was to be "the forerunner of Christ" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 97). In ancient times a forerunner's job was to let everyone know that someone very important was coming behind them. For example, when people lined the roads to catch a glimpse of their king, a forerunner would run ahead shouting, "The king is coming!" Then everyone would eagerly look back down the road for the king.

What was John, as a forerunner, to do? **Read Luke 1:76-79.**

Luke 1:17 also tells us, "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" (ICB). What an important job, to prepare people's hearts to accept God's Son.

We can be like John and, in word or quiet action, help others come to know and love Jesus too.

Parent Faith Talk: Share how someone has helped you accept or grow in Jesus.

Do: What could you do this week to help a friend or neighbor know more about the love of Jesus? Look for an object in your home that you could use to do something kind for them, for example, a broom or a cooking pot. Pray for an opportunity to use this object to be a blessing in their lives.

Pray: Thank God for those who have helped you come to know and love Jesus.

Think . . . Then Talk About It

- *Luke 1:66 says of John, "And the hand of the Lord was with him." What do you think this means?*
- *Who has helped you get to know and love Jesus? What did they do? Why not thank them?*



FRIDAY

The Stage Is Set

Elizabeth held her miracle son close to her heart. Her prayers had been answered—in such an amazing way. God's Savior was on His way. And her little one would grow up to help prepare everyone to surrender their hearts to Him.

The stage was set in God's amazing story. Jesus was coming! This was the best news sinful people could ever hear. Read this good news in **John 3:16.** The tiny baby growing inside of Mary would one day give eternal life to everyone who loves God.

We are living near the end of God's big story, and He will soon give us the eternal life John spoke of. Jesus is preparing for that time right now. John 14:2-4 says, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Hebrews 6:20 tells us something else about Jesus in heaven. It says, "Where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus . . . " Pause and think about that: Jesus is *our forerunner*!

What a surprising and beautiful thing! One day soon Jesus may tell all of heaven something like this: "Look at the people coming behind Me; look at all these faithful people from the earth! They have loved Me and surrendered their lives to Me. Now they're coming to join us in heaven."

John was Jesus' forerunner. Jesus is *our* forerunner.

Think . . . Then Talk About It

- *What will you say to Jesus when you get to heaven, knowing He is your forerunner?*

Friday Night

Share and Praise

- Think about all the characters in the story who were surrendered to God. As a family, take turns miming something a story character did that showed they were surrendered.
- How is surrendering to God different from surrendering to an enemy during a war, for example?
- Mary, Elizabeth, and Zacharias all praised God. Psalm 63:3 says, "Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You." Have each family member draw a pair of lips and fill a speech bubble with things they personally praise God for. Share together.

Family Journal

- What have you learned about God and His big story from this week's lesson?
- What surprised you in this story?

Pray

Choose a prayerful song you know well. Close your eyes and sing it to God together.



SABBATH

All to Jesus

Judson Van DeVenter struggled over the problem in his mind yet again. For five long years he had wrestled with the dilemma: become a recognized artist or work as a minister for God?

Born in 1855 in the U.S. state of Michigan, Judson had always been passionate about art and became an art teacher. He also loved Jesus and was very busy in his church, especially when revival meetings were being held.

His friends noticed his strong faith and his work for the church. They tried to encourage him to give up his art teaching and become an evangelist. But his love for art was too strong, and he kept on teaching.

For five years God kept tugging at his heart.

Finally he gave up the struggle and surrendered all. He left teaching and became a full-time preacher. God rewarded Judson with a new creative talent. Thinking about that point in his life, he said, "A new day was ushered into my life. I became an evangelist and discovered down deep in my soul a talent hitherto unknown to me. God had hidden a song in my heart, and touching a tender chord, He caused me to sing."

This is why Judson wrote the hymn "I Surrender All." It became well known wherever he preached in America, England, and Scotland. It is now a favorite all over the world and is included in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (no. 309). Judson is fondly remembered as a kind, deeply spiritual gentleman, all because he lived the words of his hymn and surrendered all to Jesus.

I Surrender All

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live;

I surrender all, I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasure all forsaken;
Take me, Jesus, take me now.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit,
Truly know that Thou art mine.

For You, Parents: Ask God for wisdom so that you can model a life to your children that enables them to commit their lives to God. "The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 173).

