

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Luke 1:5-25 aloud.

1. How do you think Elizabeth responded when Zechariah “told” her about his vision? How do you think the conversation went, considering that Zechariah could not speak?

You can have a ton of fun with this. Help the group imagine themselves in the place of this older couple and re-play the conversation. Resist the urge to make Viagra jokes, if you can.

Charades – ask your most outgoing male to explain the vision to his wife without speaking, and ask her to play the part of the wife who gave up on pregnancy years ago.

2. Verse 7 says that Elizabeth was barren. How does this word make you feel?

What were the implications of barrenness in ancient times?
Many considered it to be a curse from God.

How does infertility affect a couple?
Be prayerful - this question might uncover deep pain. That is wonderful, as long as the leader is spiritually prepared to facilitate the discussion.

What are some ways that people experience barrenness today?

3. Why was it difficult for Zechariah to believe the angel's words?
*Years of unanswered prayers.
Biology – Elizabeth was too old.
Visions are rare, even in the Bible.
Self-doubt – why was I chosen? I am not worthy.*

What happens to a prayer that goes unanswered for years?

What dreams have you given up on after many prayers?

4. What is the longest time you have gone without speaking?

How do you think a year of listening affected Zechariah?

5. How did Elizabeth feel about her pregnancy (25)?
It was too good to be true!

How do you think God felt about this pregnancy?

What do you think it feels like for God when he can give us the deepest desires of our heart?
It is one of his greatest joys – those deep desires are from him, and he delights in giving gifts to his children.

What are some reasons God does not give us all the good things we ask of him?

Sin in our lives causes us to miss blessings.

We are not yet ready.

God intends to give us something better (you could play the Garth Brooks song, “Unanswered Prayers”).

It is a broken planet – people make bad choices, and others suffer.

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

What is the deepest desire of your heart? What would you love to see happening in your life, and how does that desire fit with God's will?

Resources

Bible notes

- I Chronicles says there were 24 divisions of priests, and each one served at the Temple two weeks out of the year. This was probably a once-in-a-lifetime experience for Zechariah.
- This passage shows many themes that are common in Luke – women, prayer, and the Holy Spirit.
- Verses 16-17 sound very similar to Malachi 4.

Prayer ideas –

Thank God for coming into our world.

Praise God for the news that is too good to be true (but is true)!

Ask for faith to believe God's promises.

Invite each person to verbalize one of their long-term unanswered prayers.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Play a game of charades, where each person acts out a Bible story and the others try to guess the story.

Read Luke 1:5-25 aloud. Help the group re-tell the story in their own words.

Why did Zechariah struggle to believe?

How do you think Zechariah and Elizabeth felt about having a child when they were old? How long do you think they had prayed for a child?

What are some things you have prayed about a long time, and God has not yet answered? What do you think is going on with that?

What helps you to believe and obey God?



December 14, 2008

LIFE Group Guide

Luke 1 – Too good to be true!

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this meeting: **God delights in giving us the deepest desires of our hearts.**

This week's guide comes from Luke 1, where God gave Zechariah and Elizabeth news that seemed too good to be true. There is lots of good news in the LG ministry as well...

Thanks for the amazing response to the HeadStart grocery boxes. You gave so much that we donated extra food to the compassion center. Help us distribute the goodies on Dec. 13 at 9.

Your group has an opportunity to host the VIP LG on a fourth Sunday night in 2009. Check the LG website for info and call Peggy Bell (453-1604) to sign up. Great service project.

LG training is January 7, 14, and 21 at 7. Bring a future leader with you. So far 8 new leaders have agreed to attend! Praise God!

Leadership tip: Recognize and affirm the leadership gifts God has invested in women. Small groups present situations where most men are less gifted than women, such as the question about infertility. One of the many reasons to develop a leadership team of both genders for your group.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ Our congregational theme for 2009 is "Pursuing the heart of God: A year of compassion, outreach, and growth." What do you think of this theme? What expectations does it create?
- ❖ How would you feel if the Titans won the Super Bowl?
- ❖ When have you heard news that was too good to be true? How did it turn out?