

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. If you want more participation assign different roles from the text to members of your group.

1. What strikes you about this story of John’s birth?

Why do you find this word, phrase, detail, or image significant?

If nothing struck you from the text then was there something Kevin said this morning that you found to be helpful or challenging?

Why did you need to hear that today?

2. Luke begins with a story of an ordinary couple (5-25). What is happening with them when God breaks into their lives?

What does this teach us about how God works and who God chooses to use in the world?

What are some modern day examples of when people might feel like God could not use them? What might they say? Have you ever had one of these experiences? Please share.

What might you say to someone based on this story that would give him or her hope that God can still work in his or her life?

3. In response to this breaking in of God Zechariah and Elizabeth react in very different ways. How would you describe each?

Do you identify more with Zechariah or Elizabeth’s response based on where you are in life right now? Why?

What might we learn from their responses about how we should respond to God? *Hint: Note that there might be lessons on what not to do.*

4. The way God says he is going to work is through John the Baptist. What are the ways he says he is going to use John (13-17)?

One way is through bringing people joy (14). Why is John’s birth a joyful moment for the people of God then...and now?

What kinds of things do you think stand in the way from allowing people (even Christians) to experience joy over God’s good news?

How do you think Christians can recover a sense of this joy in their day-to-day lives? Is there anything specifically that helps you? Are there any hints in this story?

5. Another role of John indicated here is to make the people of God “a prepared people” for the entrance of Jesus. How does the angel say John will prepare the people of God (16-17)?

What do you think it looks like to turn back to God and/or to have your heart turned back in the relationships around you?

Why is turning back an important thing for God’s people?

Describe a time in your life where you experienced a “heart-turn” back to God or those around you. What happened?

5. One focus of the sermon this morning was the role of fathers in their family’s life of faith. Why do you think their role is important?

What would it look like for a father (or mother) to faithfully lead their family closer to God? Be specific.

What hope is found in this text about growing close to God for those who may not have fathers (parents) or had good father (parent) experiences growing up?

✠ **The million-dollar 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.*

Where in your life right now do you feel like you need to have a “heart-turn” moment? Is it with God or a relationship around you? How can your LIFE Group pray for you and help you make this turn?

Resources

Bible notes

Before Luke begins telling this story of John the Baptist's birth he notes why he is writing this book in the first place (1:1-4). Make sure you read his rationale before starting in on the given text for this week. Then ask yourself: why do you think Luke begins the story of Jesus with John?

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.*

"The John Says" Game

Delivery 1: This week tell the kids they are going to talk about John the Baptist. To introduce him either read or paraphrase Luke 1:5-25. Whichever you decide make sure you read aloud the prophecy of the angel about John's role (Luke 1:13-17).

Ask: What do we learn about John's role from the angel? What was the point of his coming to the world? How was he supposed to prepare the people of God?

Delivery 2: As a way to remember John's role we are going to play a game. Have one of the adults play the role of John and stand on one side of the room. Have the kids line up on the other side. Then have them play "John says" using the same rules as "Simon says."

Have the adult pick a variety of "John says.." phrases. In addition, have them pick several phrases from the story that describe John's arrival and role for God's people. For example, "John says...rejoice!" "John says...turn!" "John says...be obedient!" Actually, it might fun to pick some random phrases from the story and see how the kids respond. You might even give each of the kids a turn being John.

After playing the game gather the kids together and ask them some more questions: based on our game do you think John's role was easy or hard? Why? Do you think it was easy or hard for the people to listen to John's instruction for them? Why? What can we do to make sure we are preparing ourselves to be obedient to God?

Pray: God help us this week to be people who love you in all that we do. Turn our hearts back to you and to one another. Amen.

LIFE Group Guide

Luke 1:5-25 – A People Prepared

By Wilson McCoy (wilson.mccoy@gmail.com)

The theme: The entrance of John the Baptist into the world is a moment of preparation for the people of God. Before they can receive Jesus they must turn their hearts back to the Lord. John's birth account is a reminder that this turning back is never a solo effort. God works through those around us to prepare us to receive him. In the same way the people of God needed John to serve as a forerunner so do the people of God still need fathers, mothers, friends, and church communities to help draw them back to a posture of faithfulness today.

On this Father's Day weekend Kevin gave special attention to the prophecy given by Gabriel to Zechariah about John—he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children. Family relationships are central to developing a people of faith. However, a deeper point is that to become a person of faith you need other people to help you in your journey. In other words, to be a person of faith means you need a people of faith around you.

Leadership tip: One benefit of narrative texts like the one this week is the variety of characters you experience in the story. As you work through the questions this week try to "stand in the shoes" of everyone involved in the story. Often you will find one of the characters in a similar position to where you find yourself in life right now. Encourage you group to do the same.

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.*

- ❖ Who knows a good joke? Share them with the group and see who has the best one.
- ❖ The official first day of summer is only two days away (June 21st). Name one of your favorite summer activities.
- ❖ What is one of the best things that has happened to you over the last week?