



LC STUDY GUIDE: DONE IN SYNC WITH THE “ADVENT CONSPIRACY” SERMON SERIES

The Passage – Luke 1:5-25

For LCs meeting 12/1/13-12/14/13

These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading and not to be distributed to the entire group (it limits conversation). Not all these questions need to be used in your LC meeting. Best to consider this a head-start and customize these for your LC study.

Study’s BIG Idea: Hope

Luke 1:5-25

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. **6** Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly. **7** But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

8 Once when Zechariah’s division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, **9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. **13** But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. **14** He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.

16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. **17** And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

18 Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

19 The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. **20** And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. **22** When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home. **24** After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. **25** “The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

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O – What do we learn about Zechariah & Elizabeth in the first few verses?

I – Some have speculated that Elizabeth was not able to conceive because they were destined for this miracle. Others have suggested that God could have performed a miracle for a barren couple and accomplish His will without being the causing agent for their infertility. It is impossible to know for sure but what can we learn about God and the nature of hope here?

(Among many things, God is always listening, watching, close by. Further, He is always blessing. God’s will is not bound by infertility, old age, or our lack of faith – He is the God of hope.)

O – What does the angel tell Zechariah?

O – How does Zechariah reply back to Gabriel?

O – How would you have responded to the angel Gabriel?

I – Why does Zechariah, a Hebrew priest well studied in the Old Testament who has an ancient pre-enlightenment worldview need “proof” from the angel?

(Most likely, so his wife would believe him. I mean, have you ever informed an older, barren woman she was pregnant and you weren’t a healthcare professional?)

I – Why does the angel silence him?

(Partially due to his lack of belief but also to give him “proof.” From the reaction in verse 22, it worked.)

A – It may not have been through an angel, but have you felt God telling you something then hesitated because you needed more proof? What can we learn from Zechariah here?

A – Who around you needs hope? What kind of hope are most people looking for? How can we help people realize the greater hope that God offers?

Key: O – Observation. I – Interpretation. A – Application

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.