

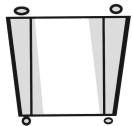
References

Matthew 3;
Mark 1:1-12;
Luke 1:5-25, 57-80;
John 1:15-34;
The Desire of Ages,
pp. 97-113



Memory Verse

"You will go on before
the Lord to prepare
the way for him"
(Luke 1:76).



Objectives

The children will:

- Know** that we prepare
the way for God
when we serve others.
- Feel** a desire for God
to use them.
- Respond** by choosing
every day to be part
of God's plan to
save others.



The Message

We prepare the
way for Jesus when
we serve others.

His Name Is John

Monthly Theme

We can serve God wherever we are.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Zechariah is an elderly priest who is on duty at the Temple in Jerusalem. An angel appears on the right side of the altar of incense and tells Zechariah that his wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son. Zechariah doubts this message, and the angel Gabriel tells him that he will not be able to speak until his son is born. The next year his son is born. Zechariah's voice comes back when he insists that the boy be named John. The child grows up in the desert, where he gets ready for his special work of preparing the way for Jesus.

This is a lesson about service.

Like John, we can prepare the way for Jesus in people's hearts. When we serve people—meeting their needs and teaching them—they are more open to receive Jesus when He knocks on their heart's door. Children can tell others about Jesus in ways adults cannot, and should be encouraged to do so.

Teacher Enrichment

"The offering of incense was considered the most sacred and important part of the daily morning and evening services. . . . The privilege of officiating at the golden altar on behalf of Israel was considered a high honor. . . . This privilege usually came to each priest but once in a lifetime, and was therefore the great moment of his life. As a rule no priest might officiate at the altar more than once, and it is possible that some of the priests never had this opportunity" (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 672).

Room Decorations

See Lesson 5.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>Charades</i> B. <i>Name Game</i>	Bible, paper, pen, basket or bowl book of names, cards, marker
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	none <i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> wooden bowl none
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	Bible-times costumes, incense, something on which to burn incense, small table, flashlight (also used in lesson 12), baby doll (also used in lesson 11), paper and pencil Bible Bibles
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	A. <i>Preparing the Way</i> B. <i>Putting Yourself in the Story</i>	Bible, large basket, toy, article of clothing, food item, dust cloth, toy rake, brush/dustpan, etc., other small household items none
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Celebration Trumpets</i>	construction paper, scissors, crayons or markers

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Have them begin the Readiness Activity of your choice.

1

Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- Bible
- paper
- pen
- basket or bowl

A. Charades

Write the name of different Bible characters on small slips of paper and have each child choose one from a basket or bowl. Without talking, each child is to try to get the others to guess the character named on the paper they have drawn.

Debriefing

Ask: **How does it feel to try to communicate when you can't talk?** (frustrating, it's fun, etc.) **How would you like it if this went on for nine months? That's what happened to Zechariah. God had a special plan for Zechariah, but he doubted God. God has plans for all of us.** Read aloud Luke 1:76. **What is that plan?** (to prepare the way for others to receive Jesus) **Today's message tells us how to start:**



WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- book of names
- cards
- marker

B. Name Game

In advance, try to find out what all the children's names mean. Write each name on the front of a card and the meaning on the reverse.

Give each child their name and ask them if they know what it means. Help them read the meaning of their name. Or choose some Bible names and look up their meanings in a Bible dictionary.

Debriefing

Ask: **Did you know what your name meant? Was anyone named after someone? Some names are family names that are repeated in every generation. In the Bible, names were very important. In our story today a Mom and Dad had a hard time persuading their friends that their little boy should not be named after his father. As he grew up, their son had a special work to do. We have the same work today. Let's learn what it is from our message:**



WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS.

Say that with me.

Prayer and Praise

Any
Time



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Review the memory verse and allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

"Teach Me, Lord" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 110)

"Trust in the Lord" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 111)

"In His Time" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 42)

"I Want to Be" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 124)



Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Say: **Missionaries are part of God's plan. They serve people to prepare the way for God to come into people's lives.**



Offering

Say: **God wants every person to know about Jesus and be saved. Your offering goes to "prepare the way" for others to know of God's plan to save them.**

You Need:

- wooden bowl



Prayer

During prayer time, ask the children to raise their hands if they want to ask God to use them in His plan to save the world. Then make a circle and invite three children to pray the prayer below out loud. Then pause while the other children pray this prayer silently. (Practice the prayer ahead of time.)

"Lord, use me to _____ for _____ so that he/she will want to know You."

Have an adult pray that God will use the children in the class to prepare the way for Him to save those around them.

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- Bible-times costumes
- incense
- something on which to burn incense
- small table
- flashlight
- baby doll
- paper and pencil

Experiencing the Story

Dress the children in Bible-times costumes and involve them in the Bible story.

Characters: Zechariah, angel Gabriel, Elizabeth, crowd/neighbors (rest of students)

Props: Incense, a small table, a flashlight, baby doll

Read or tell the story.

Zechariah was an old priest serving at the Temple in Jerusalem. (*Bring Zechariah up front to stand in front of the table.*) There were a lot of priests in Judea—too many for them all to work in the Temple each day—so they took turns.

Only once in his entire life was a priest allowed to go into the holy place. There he burned incense on the altar and prayed for the forgiveness of sins for all the people. He also prayed for the coming of the Messiah. Today was Zechariah's day; he was proud and excited.

After placing the incense on the glowing coals, Zechariah watched in awe as the cloud of sweet-smelling incense rose and filled the holy place. (*Help "Zechariah" light the incense.*) He felt so close to God there.

Suddenly an angel appeared beside the altar. (*Position angel on right side of the table.*) Zechariah was terrified! When an angel stood on the right side of the altar, it meant good news. But Zechariah forgot that. He trembled as the angel spoke.

(*Prompt angel to repeat the lines after you.*) "Don't be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will

help people get ready for the Lord."

But Zechariah doubted the angel's words. (*Prompt Zechariah to repeat the lines after you.*) "How can I be sure of this? My wife and I are well along in years."

The angel answered (*prompt angel*). "I am Gabriel. God sent me to tell you this good news. But now you will be silent and unable to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words."

The angel disappeared (*the angel sits down*), and Zechariah tried to offer his prayer for the people, but just as the angel said, he couldn't speak. (*Prompt Zechariah to try to speak, but have no sound come out.*)

By now the people outside the Temple were wondering what had happened to Zechariah. He was taking a very long time. (*Prompt the rest of the students.*)

"What is taking Zechariah so long?" they whispered. Finally he came out. "What happened?" the people asked. But Zechariah couldn't answer.

When Zechariah returned home, Elizabeth was puzzled. (*Bring Elizabeth up front.*) Through motions and writing (*Zechariah pretends to write*), Zechariah soon explained to Elizabeth what had happened. And just as the angel said, Elizabeth had a baby boy the next year. (*Give Elizabeth the doll.*)

Soon it was time to name the baby. "Name him Zechariah, after his father," the neighbors said. (*Prompt the rest of the children to encourage Elizabeth to name the baby Zechariah.*)

"No, we're going to name him John," Elizabeth declared. (*Prompt Elizabeth.*)

"But there's no one in your family named John," the neighbors protested. (*Prompt the neighbors.*) "Choose a family name."

Zechariah motioned for something

to write with. (*Prompt Zechariah; Elizabeth gives him paper and pencil.*) Zechariah wrote, "His name is John."

As soon as Zechariah finished writing the words, his tongue was loosened. He could speak again!

God had a special place for John in His plan to save the world. John would prepare the way for Jesus' work. John invited people to repent of their sins and be baptized so they would be ready to meet Jesus when He came.

God has a special place in His plan for you and me, too. We can prepare the way for Jesus by serving others and meeting their needs. Then they will be more willing to learn about Jesus.

Debriefing

Say: **God had a plan for each person in today's story. What was God's plan for the angel?** (to tell Zechariah about his special son) **For Zechariah?** (to be the father of John; to teach John about God and His plan for him) **For Elizabeth?** (to be John's mother; to teach John about God) **For John?** ("You will go before the Lord to prepare the way for Him.")

For you? (To serve others; we prepare the way for God when we serve; we can tell people that Jesus is coming again; we can serve people who don't know God so they will want to learn more about Him.) **How does that make you feel?** (special, needed) **Let's say our message together:**



WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS.

Memory Verse

Read the memory verse (Luke 1:76) and encourage everyone to say it with you. Then form circles of fewer than 10 people.

Play "Plus One" as follows: The leader says the first word of the verse; the person to the leader's left says what the leader said plus the next word. Continue to the left, with children taking turns to say what has already been said plus one more word, until the verse is done. Repeat as needed.

Bible Study

Say: **Eight days after his son John was born, Zechariah got his voice back and shared a prophecy about his son. It is called "Zechariah's Song." You will find it in Luke 1:67-79.**

Have the children read Zechariah's prophecy together—the boys reading the odd-numbered verses and the girls the even-numbered verses. Read verse 80 all together.

Debriefing

Say: **Zechariah's son was named "John." What was John to be called?** (verse 76—A prophet of the Most High) **Why?** (For he would go before the Lord to prepare the way for Him.)

How would you feel if you were called to be "a prophet of the Most High"? (awestruck, scared, unworthy, honored, not ready to do that work, etc.) **However, you can help prepare the way for God to come into people's lives. How?** (By being kind and helpful, and telling people about salvation and forgiveness of their sins, etc. [verses 77-79].) **It's time to say our message again:**



WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS.

You Need:

• Bible

You Need:

• Bibles

Applying the Lesson

You Need:

- Bible
- large basket
- toy
- article of clothing
- food item
- dust cloth, toy rake, or brush/dustpan, etc.
- other small household items

A. Preparing the Way

Place the items in the large basket. Have each child take one item out of the basket and tell how they could use it to help prepare the way for someone to accept Jesus. Some examples follow:

1. Being kind and sharing with friends helps to prepare the way. (toy)
2. Telling friends Bible stories about Jesus helps to prepare the way. (Bible)
3. Giving clothes to someone who needs them helps to prepare the way. (article of clothing)
4. Taking food to homeless people helps to prepare the way. (food item)
5. Helping others helps to prepare the way. (dust cloth, toy rake, or brush/dustpan, etc.)

Debriefing

Ask: **What did you learn about preparing the way for Jesus from what you just did?** (There are many ways to prepare people to accept Jesus into their hearts.) **When you do the things that we just talked about, how do you feel?** (happy to make other people happy) **What do you plan to do this coming week to prepare the way for a friend to love Jesus?** (Be kind, share with friends; tell someone that Jesus loves them; help the poor; help my neighbor rake his/her yard; etc.) **What is today's message? Let's say it together:**



WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS.

B. Putting Yourself in the Story

Say: **Jesus is coming again. He has asked us to warn people, so they will be ready to receive Him. Tell what you**

can do in the following situation.

You go to a neighbor's birthday party. Jessica, a child you have not met before, deliberately gets in your way all the time. She trips you up in every game you try to play. The adults are busy and do not notice, so you have to solve this on your own.

What will you do? (Take responses.) **What if she makes you angry?** (Responses should involve ideas for staying calm and being patient/kind.) **What if you knew that God has a plan for you to help Jessica want to know about Him?** (You would: do something kind; try to serve Jessica; ask Jesus to help you show her God's love.)

Debriefing

Say: **Before any great event, God always sends someone to prepare the people. Who prepared the people for the Flood?** (Noah) **Who led Israel to the Promised Land?** (Moses) **the coming of Baby Jesus?** (angels, shepherds, prophets)

What great event in God's plan is coming next? (the Second Coming) **How can we prepare the way for Jesus to come again?** (By cheerfully serving others and telling them that Jesus loves them and wants to take them to heaven with Him, etc.) **What do you think about being in God's plan?** (I don't know; good; OK; great; I want to be in His plan.) Assure the children that it is always exciting to be part of God's plan. **What important message are we going to remember this week? Let's say it together:**



WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS.

Sharing the Lesson

Celebration Trumpets

Say: **We feel good knowing that our mighty God has a special plan for our world.**

Jesus is coming again, and He will make a new world! He asks us to tell the world about His love and to prepare the way for His coming.

How many of you want God to use you to help prepare the way? (Invite the children to raise their hands if they desire to be part of God's special plan.) **So let's make a "trumpet" and celebrate Jesus' love and that He is coming again!**

Give each child a sheet of construction paper. Help them trim the paper so it is square, then make colorful stripes on it. Roll the sheet diagonally, from one corner, to make a cone. One end will be narrower than the other. Have them repeat the memory verse as if shouting it through the trumpet.

Debriefing

Encourage the children to form a procession and march around the room while saying the memory verse through their "trumpet." Commission them to prepare the way for someone to know Jesus this week.

Ask: **How do you plan to prepare the way for God by serving others this week? What exactly will you do to help someone and tell them about Jesus?** (Accept answers.) **When someone asks what the trumpets are for, tell them the memory verse and say that Jesus loves everyone and wants everyone to be ready when He comes again. Let's say the message together:**



WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS.

Closing

Pray a prayer of dedication for the children as they "prepare the way" in the coming week.

You Need:

- construction paper
- scissors
- crayons or markers

His Name Is John

References

Matthew 3;
Mark 1:1-12;
Luke 1:5-25, 57-80;
John 1:15-34;
The Desire of Ages,
pp. 97-113

Memory Verse

"You will go on
before the Lord to
prepare the way
for him"
(Luke 1:76).

The Message

We prepare the
way for Jesus when
we serve others.

Bella was excited! She had just received a message from her grandmother.

"I'm coming to visit you next month and I will have a surprise for you."

Such excitement! I must help Mother get things ready, Bella thought.

Bella ran to the kitchen. "Mother," she begged, "I want to help get ready for Grandma's visit. Please say I can help. Tell me what to do."

One day, in another time, an angel delivered a message to an old man. It was a message that would help change the world.

Elizabeth and Zechariah had longed for a baby for many years. But when they grew old, they gave up hope.

Zechariah was one of many Temple priests. They took turns serving for a week at a time in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Only once in his life was a priest likely to go into the holy place. It was an honor to burn incense on the golden altar there. Then he would pray for the forgiveness of sin for all the people. He also prayed earnestly for the soon coming of the Messiah.

Zechariah had looked forward to this day all his life. Now an old man, he was thrilled when his turn came.

Zechariah solemnly sprinkled the powdered incense on the glowing coals. A cloud of sweet-smelling smoke rose and filled the holy place.



Suddenly Zechariah sensed he was not alone. He opened his eyes, and *there stood an angel at the right side of the altar!* Zechariah trembled in fear!

"Don't be afraid, Zechariah, God has heard your prayer," the angel said. "Your wife Elizabeth will have a son. You will call him John. He will go before the Lord to prepare the way for Him."

A baby boy at *his* old age? Zechariah doubted the angel's words. So the angel gave him a sign. "Because you did not believe my words, you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens." Then the angel vanished.

Zechariah opened his mouth to begin the prayer for the people, but nothing came out. He couldn't say a word.

By now Zechariah had been in the holy place a long time. The people outside were beginning to wonder what had happened to him. When he finally came out, his face was strangely glowing. Quietly Zechariah motioned to them that he had seen an angel.

Zechariah hurried home. He tried to tell Elizabeth what had happened, but he could not speak. He had to write and use hand signals. They would have a child, a boy to be named John. An angel had told him so!

Months later their baby was born. Elizabeth's friends gathered around. "His name will be John," Elizabeth announced.

"John? No one in your family is named John. Why not call him Zechariah?" the friends and family urged.

Elizabeth turned to her husband. Zechariah shook his head. Quickly he wrote so all could see: "His name is John." Immediately the old priest's voice returned. He spoke to the people and praised God for this blessing.

Zechariah must have told John about the angel at the altar. "God has a special work for you," Zechariah said. "You will go before the Lord to prepare the way for Him."

When John grew up, he invited people to repent of their sins and be baptized. He helped many people get ready to meet Jesus.

God has a special place in His plan for you too. We can prepare the way for Jesus by serving others and meeting their needs. Then they will be more willing to learn about Jesus.

Daily Activities

Sabbath

- With your family, go for a nature walk and look for birds' nests, or look in a bird book. Talk about how birds prepare for their young. Find out how different birds make their nests.
- Read your lesson together. Who would grow up and prepare the way for Jesus' coming?
- Read Luke 1:76 together. Then ask God to help you prepare the way for someone to know Jesus.

Sunday

- Read Luke 1:5-25 aloud for family worship. For two minutes don't say anything out loud. You may move your lips, use hand signals, or write notes, but don't make a sound! Think of Zechariah. Was it a game for him? Thank God for the gift of speech.
- Look in a mirror and say the memory verse out loud. Can you look at your mouth the whole time?

Monday

- During worship, talk about how your family felt when they knew you would be born. Together, look at some of your baby pictures.
- Read Luke 1:13 together. Talk about how Zechariah and Elizabeth must have felt when they learned that baby John would join their family.
- Sing "In His Time" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 42).
- Say your memory verse together. Thank God for your parents.

Tuesday

- During family worship, read Luke 1:57-66. Ask your family to tell about the name they chose for you. Do you know what your name means? One meaning of John's name is "God's gracious gift."

Thank God that He knows you by name.

- Luke 1:66 says that "the Lord's hand was with him [John]." What do you think this means?
- Make up a tune for your memory verse. Sing it with your family.

Wednesday

- To begin worship, read Luke 3:2-6, 15, 16 together. What special work did John do when he grew up? Name three things. Why is he called John the Baptist? When will you be baptized?
- Talk with your family about the lifework God might have for you. Draw a picture of yourself when you grow up.
- Sing "Right Now" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 123) and pray together about your future.

Thursday

- Your memory verse is part of a song that Zechariah sang. Ask your family to help you say or sing the verse.
- Ask God to show you how you can serve someone now. Pray for that person. Make a plan with your family and do it. Read Galatians 6:2 together.

Friday

- Make believe that you are Zechariah or Elizabeth. You are keeping a diary of Baby John's birth and childhood. In the diary, write some of the main points of this week's lesson story. Illustrate with pictures. Write your memory verse on the cover. Use your diary to tell the story to your family during worship.
- Read Jeremiah 1:7 together. Pray with your family about the people you will reach for Jesus.
- Sing "We Are His Hands" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 129).