

LUKE

New Hope, New Joy

26 STUDIES FOR INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS



ADA LUM

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People of Hope

Luke 1

The couple in California made front-page news. They were in their mid-sixties, and she was expecting their first child! A week later we saw a photo of the fine-looking immigrant couple from the Philippines and their beautiful baby daughter. After forty years their dreams came true.

GROUP DISCUSSION. What thoughts rush into your mind as you consider the story of the California couple?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Think of an extraordinary personal experience that you could not account for apart from God's unique intervention. What bigger view of God did you learn from that?

Luke begins his Gospel with sensational news. For over four hundred years God's people have heard no prophetic voice. The people wonder, Has God forgotten us? Has he reneged on his many promises to send Messiah to deliver us? No. God is about to break through Israel's darkness with powerful light, and he does this through very unlikely people—an elderly, childless couple and a teenage girl engaged to a peasant carpenter. *Read Luke 1:5-25.*

1. God chose this elderly couple for an extraordinary job. Several factors in verses 5-10 give hints of God's reasons for this choice. What might those reasons be?

2. For better or for worse, angels have recently become quite popular. But in what ways is the angel here different from how angels are depicted in popular culture (vv. 11-17)?

3. Do you find yourself sympathetic or critical of Zechariah's response of unbelief (vv. 18-22)? Explain your view.

4. The circumstances of the birth of the Messiah's forerunner were very unusual. Why do you think God wanted this particular birth to be unusual?

5. Read *Luke 1:26-56* for Gabriel's second birth announcement. In what ways is it even more extraordinary than the first?

6. How would you compare and contrast Mary and Zechariah's responses?

7. Which would you find easier to believe—a promise from God through an angel or a promise through the Bible? Why?

8. From Mary's song of response (vv. 46-55), how does your concept of God compare with hers?

9. Read Luke 1:57-80. Note that Luke describes people's spontaneous reactions to John's birth three times. What might be Luke's purpose in repeating this fact?

10. The Holy Spirit has sharpened Zechariah's faith to see (1) the great acts that God's Redeemer will do (vv. 68-75) and (2) his child's unique relation to this Redeemer (vv. 76-79). Suppose you were one of the neighbors listening to his prophecy. As a devout Jew, which part would have especially stirred you? Explain.

11. Zechariah and Mary expressed their hope in God differently. What in their interaction with God gives you hope as you also seek to trust God totally?

Thank God for being the only source of true hope.

Now or Later

Luke records Jesus' birth with Mary's perspective. Consider Joseph's perspective in Matthew 1:18-24; 2:13-16, 19-23. Jesus' adoptive father also had unique faith! What did he go through?

To expand your angelology: Hebrews 1 gives an overall understanding of angels (to people who then were tempted to worship them). See especially verse 14. They were active throughout the Old Testament. They witnessed creation (Job 38:7), destroyed evildoers (Genesis 19:1ff.), have warlike potential (Genesis 32:1-22), restrained a false prophet (Numbers 22:21-35), mediated God's law to Moses (Acts 7:38, 53), served as God's messengers (Judges 6:11-23), aided his servants (1 Kings 19:5-7), gave military assistance (2 Kings 19:35). They strengthened Jesus in temptation (Mark 1:13; Luke 22:43) and were present at his resurrection and ascension (Luke 24:4-7; Acts 1:9-11). They guided the apostles in evangelization (Acts 8:26; 10:3-8; 12:7-10; 27:23).

What should we study next?

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I Am
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God's Comfort
God's Love
The 23rd Psalm
Miracles
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Images of God
Images of the Spirit

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