

An Angel Visits Zechariah

(Luke 1:1-18)

Introduction

Can you think of anything that is impossible, like flying or running 100 MPH? (Lick your elbow, touch your tongue to the end of your nose, or pull yourself up with a strap.) [Teacher, bring a belt or strap and step on it with both feet to demonstrate how you can't pull yourself up. Let the children try it!]

There are many things that are impossible for us to do. But, did you know, that if God wanted you to fly or run 100 MPH, He could do it?!

Before Jesus was born, God made two things that weren't possible, become possible. God chose two special women to become pregnant and have babies.

In our lesson today we are going to learn about Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist; next week we will learn about Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Opening Prayer

Father, truly with You there is nothing that is impossible! Nothing is too hard for You to accomplish! You have no problem keeping every promise that You've made. Sometimes we have a hard time trusting You because our little minds cannot figure out how You can possibly be so great and awesome. Open the eyes of our understanding so that we may see You in Your power and might! In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

For with God nothing will be impossible. (Luke 1:37)

Lesson

Today we begin lessons from the New Testament. The first four books of the New Testament are called the Gospels, and they were written by four different men that knew Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The word "gospel" simply means "good news". These 4 books tell us all about Jesus. This is where we learn the amazing facts about His birth, life, death, and resurrection. They are called "gospels" because they tell us the *good news* that Jesus came to save us from our sins.

Our very first lesson is from the book of Luke. He begins the story of Jesus before He was even born. It starts with two people named Zechariah and Elizabeth, relatives of Jesus.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and they had never had a child.

Luke 1:6-7

Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. (7) They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.

What did we just learn about Zechariah and Elizabeth?

Zechariah was a priest. He and his wife Elizabeth were very good people. And, while Zechariah was serving in the temple, something amazing happened to him. Suddenly, the angel Gabriel appeared to him.

If an angel suddenly appeared to you, how would you react?

Luke 1:12-14

Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. (13) But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. (14) You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,

What was the news the angel gave to Zechariah?

Wow! What kind of a child would this be? Why was John the Baptist's birth so important that it was announced by an angel? What was John the Baptist going to do? Verse 16 tells us...

Luke 1:16

And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God.

It had been over 400 years since the children of Israel had heard any messages from God. Many people had given up believing in Him. So, God sent John the Baptist to come ahead of Jesus to help prepare the people for Jesus' arrival.

But Zechariah didn't believe Gabriel, he thought it would be impossible for Elizabeth to have a baby because they were so old.

Luke 1:18

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."

For his unbelief in the angel's announcement, Zechariah was stricken silent, unable to speak until the child was born.

Zechariah stayed a long time in the temple and people wondered what had happened to him.

Luke 1:22

When he finally did come out, he couldn't speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary.

Zechariah could hardly wait to tell Elizabeth the good news. When he arrived home, he wrote on a piece of paper: "We are going to have a son!"

In a very short time, Elizabeth got pregnant after all the years of waiting! And when it was time for the baby to be born, it was a boy just as the angel had said. Zechariah probably shouted for joy when the baby was born and he could speak again.

Zechariah doubted God, because to him having a child at his age seemed impossible. Sometimes we doubt God, too, and make the mistake of trusting our own thoughts and ideas. But with God, nothing is impossible.

What seems impossible to you in your life? What is your biggest fear? [Teacher discuss things that worry the children, such as fear of the dark, taking tests at school, scary dreams, hearing parents argue, etc.] Do you have any big problems in your life? (bully at school) Do you have any bad habits you want to break? (nail biting, anger)

God will help you have courage to face your fears and overcome your bad habits. He has a plan for your life! Trust that He will lead you and guide you and protect you.

Elizabeth was very old, much too old to become pregnant. But that didn't stop God. God wanted Elizabeth to be the mother of John the Baptist, so God gave her the ability to have a healthy baby boy.

It can be difficult to understand how something that is impossible can suddenly become possible. Usually, when we think something is impossible, that's it, our thinking stops right there. I can't run 100 MPH. You can't sprout feathers and fly home. But there is something very important we are not thinking of. Do you know what it is? God! Elizabeth didn't just get pregnant. God made it happen!

Can you think of any other impossible things God has made happen? (God made the world, the animals boarded Noah's ark, the parting of the Red Sea, God sent manna from heaven, the wall of Jericho fell down, a whale swallowed Jonah, Daniel was safe in the lion's den, three men were safe in the fiery furnace, Jesus came back from the dead.)

If God wanted you to sprout feathers and fly, you would. And if God wanted me to run 100 MPH, I would be ready for the Olympics! Because if God wants it that way, God will make it that way. Because NOTHING is impossible with God.

Closing Prayer

Father, you are so great, so mighty and powerful, I should never doubt that you are always with me and that you have all the right answers. I ask you to lead me and guide me though my life. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Silent Draw (Like Pictionary)

Prepare: Write one impossible thing God has made happen on individual index cards. (See list above for ideas.)

Play: Today we learned that God made Zechariah silent for a long time because he didn't believe God. During that time, Zechariah had to write or draw his messages. Let's play a game where we take turns drawing one of the Bible miracles we have learned about this year. Remember, you cannot talk or write words, you must draw (or act out) the miracle.

You will have 1 minute to get the other children to guess the miracle. If a child guesses correctly, he or she is the next to draw. If that child has already drawn, he or she may choose someone else to draw. [Teacher, if no one guesses correctly, tell the children what the miracle is and choose a child to draw the next miracle.]

Or, use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. What are the two sections of the Bible? (Old Testament and New Testament.)
2. What are the four gospels? (Four different stories about Jesus told by four men: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.)
3. What had Zechariah and Elizabeth been praying for, for many years? (A baby.)
4. Who visited Zechariah when he was serving in the temple? (The angel Gabriel appeared to him.)
5. What news did the angel bring to Zechariah? (His wife, Elizabeth would have a child in her old age.)
6. What would John grow up to do? (He would turn many people to the Lord their God.)
7. Why had the people's hearts turned away from God? (They hadn't heard from him in over 400 years. People had given up their faith in God.)
8. Why did Zechariah doubt God? (Having a child at their ages seemed impossible.)
9. What happened to Zechariah when he doubted Gabriel's message? (He was struck silent, unable to speak.)
10. Has God ever done something that you thought was impossible?

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