

ADULT STUDY GUIDE

Unit 7: Jesus Comes for Us



ADULT STUDY GUIDE

This is the adult component of the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum. This piece follows the **same scope and sequence** as the other levels: **Early Childhood, Elementary, and Youth**. This alignment presents some amazing opportunities.

- First of all, it helps all ages speak a **common theological language**.
- Second, it helps God's people build an understanding of the **lifelong nature of learning God's Word**—that we don't just learn the narratives once or twice before moving on to other matters.
- Third, and critical to this curriculum, it helps **equip households** to teach the faith at home.

If parents and other adults spend time meditating and discussing the narratives of the Bible while the younger generations in the congregation study the same narratives, then there will be greater opportunity throughout the week to **reflect together** on what the narrative says and what it means. In other words, studying the narratives of the Bible as adults is a blessing in and of itself, but it also helps **equip parents and faith leaders** to be more confident and feel empowered to extend those conversations into the household.

FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

This study guide is meant to provide some guidelines and springboards for discussion in your Bible study groups.

- The **first page** of each lesson provides the central focus statements, not only for the Adult level, but also for the other levels. Use this as a way to orient yourself to the **main themes and goals** of the lessons across all levels. You'll also find helpful **tips for preparation**.
- The **middle two pages** begin with an introductory **"Launch"** section, which provides prompts for beginning the study and an open-ended reflection question to kick off group discussion. The following **"Learn & Live"** section breaks down the text into three to five narrative sections. Each one of these sections has some additional commentary, a reflection question, and some helps to better understand possible answers to the reflection question. The **"Leave"** section provides prompts for a final reflection question and some other considerations to close the lesson. The **sidebars** include leader tips and bonus activities to help you think through options for extending the lesson.
- The **final page** of each lesson is the student piece. Copy one lesson handout per learner, and distribute this at the beginning of class.

TIPS FOR USE

This study guide is designed primarily to help give you, the leader, some thoughts and prompts to help guide and assist facilitation of the class. Below are some tips for how to use it.

- This is meant to be a Bible study, so each learner will need access to a Bible. Encourage your learners to bring their own to class.
- Don't neglect the lesson handout. The primary reason for this page is to create some space for each learner to reflect and engage the questions on his or her own. Often, any given group will have one or two vocal learners and others who may not speak up. Consider using techniques to help engage all learners in the process, such as having each learner write down his or her reflection privately before sharing, having each learner share with a partner before opening up discussion, or changing the seating arrangements to create small groups.
- Use the opening reflection question as a time to build community. Adult learners, generally speaking, desire to share their experience with one another, and this lesson starter provides an opportunity for this.
- For each narrative section, ask volunteers to read the text aloud while the rest follow along. Don't force anyone; adults, like children and youth, may be self-conscious about their reading or public speaking ability.
- Download the Enduring Faith Page from the online digital resource center and hand out copies to your learners. Near the end of the lesson, talk through the prompts, which help the learners extend the lessons in their households throughout the week. Encourage learners to take this page home along with the lesson handout to be used throughout the week.

AN ANGEL ANNOUNCES

Jesus' Birth
Foretold
Luke 1:26–56
4 BC

BIBLE TRUTH

God promised to send His Son.

LEARNER GOAL

I can examine the text of the angel announcement for insights into how Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promise in Scripture.

BIBLE VERSE

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Luke 1:46–47

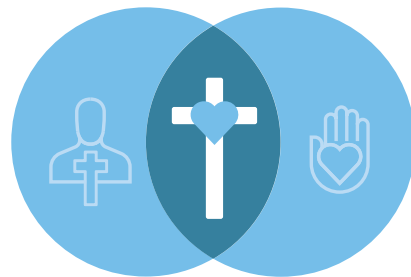
LAW & GOSPEL

Like Mary, I deserve nothing from God because of my sinfulness.

God gives me unmerited grace and favor because of His Son.

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Mary receives an angelic announcement telling her that, despite her virginity, she will give birth to the long-awaited Savior. The child in Elizabeth's womb leaps within her when the mother of the promised Messiah approaches. Elizabeth rejoices in the reaction and welcomes Mary to stay with her for a time. Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat, resounds in the Church to this day.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

Our God announces the coming fulfillment of His promise, given to Adam and Eve at the fall.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can trust God to keep His promises. He calls me to share this Good News with others.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on learning for each age.

ADULT

I can examine the text of the angel announcement for insights into how Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promise in Scripture.

YOUTH

I can describe the importance of the angel's message that Mary would bear the Son of God.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that God promised to send His Son, Jesus.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God kept His promise to send Jesus to be my Savior.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

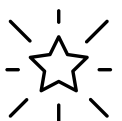
MORE TIME Read over the Second Article (Part 1) with questions in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2017) for more on Jesus' two natures.

IN DEPTH Read Hannah's song in **1 Samuel 2:1–10** and study notes in *TLSB*.



LEADER NOTE

Consider using this as an opportunity for paired or small-group discussion before opening up for large-group discussion. The point is to get people thinking about the nature of promises—why people make them or don't make them. Often, we don't like to make promises because we have become jaded to liars or disappointment, or simply because we can't predict the future. God, throughout His Word, makes many promises to redeem His people. He never disappoints or fails to keep them. As you go into this text, remind your learners of this truth: God is faithful even when humans aren't.



BONUS ACTIVITY

If you have time, consider skimming over the Second Article of the Creed, (Part 1), in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2017) for more on Jesus' two natures, or ask your learners to look this over for more on the teaching after class if they have questions.

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

OPENING REFLECTION

Are you the kind of person who makes promises? Why or why not? What role do promises play in the Bible?

LEARN & LIVE

LUKE 1:26–33

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Almost five hundred years have passed since God spoke to His people through the prophet Malachi. In those centuries of waiting, much had happened to God's people. They had been conquered first by the Greeks, then found themselves in disputed territory battled over by the Greek successors; they had won their independence for almost a century, then were conquered by the mighty Roman Empire. Now, in an unlikely place and an unlikely time, God once again sends His messenger, the archangel Gabriel, last seen in the Book of Daniel, to speak God's Word of promise. He is sent to the young woman Mary, or Miriam in Hebrew, of the ancient kingly line of David. Though she is likely still a teenager, Gabriel announces to her that she should not fear his appearance but instead rejoice. She has found favor with God, and through her, God will now fulfill His promise to send the long-awaited Savior, the Messiah of old, the Promised One who has been the focal point of God's plan of salvation since the fall. Though the kingly line of David has not been on a throne for centuries, Mary's Son will reestablish the throne for all people, for all time.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Why, do you suppose, would Mary fear the angel? How did the angel quell Mary's fears?

REFLECTION HELPS

Like almost every person approached by an angel before her, Mary feared God's holy messenger. Gabriel quelled her fears by telling her his appearance was not to tell of God's judgment but of God's plan to fulfill His promises.

LUKE 1:34–38

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Mary responds with surprise since she is a virgin. Gabriel tells her that the child will come from the Holy Spirit and will be both God and man. At her hearing of the Word, she conceives, for nothing is impossible with God. To add to the assurance that God is at work fulfilling His promises, Gabriel tells Mary that her cousin Elizabeth, though old, will also bear a son. Mary, in true humility, identifies herself as God's servant. In the child who will come through this young woman, all the promises of God will come to pass.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Think of other times in Scripture when God's presence overshadowed or covered something. How does that connect to what is happening with Mary here?

REFLECTION HELPS

Answers may include God at Mount Sinai, God's presence in the pillars of cloud and fire in the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord covering the temple. When God overshadows something, He is present and at work. Through Mary, God's presence is coming to earth in a special way.

LUKE 1:39–45

BIBLE COMMENTARY

After the announcement from Gabriel, Mary goes to visit her elderly cousin Elizabeth. God had previously announced to Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah, through the angel Gabriel that Elizabeth would conceive a child of promise in her old age. Since Zechariah is a priest in the temple, their town is likely close to Jerusalem. At Mary's greeting, two things happen. First, Elizabeth's unborn son, John, now in the womb for six months, is filled with the Holy Spirit and leaps for joy. Second, Elizabeth, too, is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies over Mary. Elizabeth exclaims that she is honored to be greeted by the mother of her Lord, the Messiah, and announces blessing after blessing on Mary. Though likely already dear friends and relatives, though separated in age by decades, these two women now share a special bond. One is bearing the Messiah and the other His herald.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What is the role of the Holy Spirit here? How is it similar to how the Holy Spirit worked at different points in the Old Testament?

REFLECTION HELPS

The Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth, and she prophesies about the child who will be born of Mary. John, in Elizabeth's womb, is also filled with the Holy Spirit and he leaps for joy. Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit fills prophets who then speak God's living and active Word. Both Elizabeth and John serve as God's messengers, echoing all those whom God has used before to prophesy the coming Messiah.

LUKE 1:46–56

BIBLE COMMENTARY

In this moment of rejoicing, Mary sings a now-famous song of God's faithfulness. Much of the language of this song, which we know as the Magnificat, reminds us of Hannah's song from 1 Samuel 2:1–10. She rejoices that God has remembered His promises to His people for the Messiah, and she is honored to be included in that plan of salvation. After proclaiming her epic song, Mary stays with Elizabeth for three months—possibly to stay with her cousin for the remainder of her pregnancy and the birth of her son, possibly for mutual comfort and support. Then, Mary returns home to Nazareth.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Pinpoint different words or phrases from this song that reflect God's character and how He was faithful to His promise to send the Messiah. How do you see those characteristics playing out in what God does for Mary?

REFLECTION HELPS

Answers may include the following: God is mighty, He is merciful, He brings down the mighty, He exalts the humble, He reverses the state of the rich and the poor, He helps His people, and He is faithful to His promises forever. Mary is a humble maiden who is raised up by God to fulfill His promise to forgive His people in Jesus.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

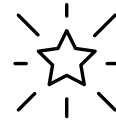
Examine the text of the angel announcement for insights into how Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promise in Scripture.

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Page.

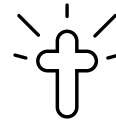
CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray as you prepare to leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

For looking over Mary's song in verses 46–56, have your learners open up to Hannah's song in **1 Samuel 2:1–10** and compare the two. What do they have in common? Why do you think Mary would recall many of these words for her song of joy over the unexpected pregnancy? What does that tell us about how God works, even though these songs are separated by about a millennium?



CHRIST CONNECTION

God visited Mary and made her a great promise. That promise has been fulfilled for us in Jesus, who offers us forgiveness, life, and salvation.



LEADER NOTE

Insights include the angel Gabriel showing up to Mary, God remembering His covenant to Abraham, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and Mary's song evoking Hannah's song. In Christ, God connects both the Old and New Testaments.

AN ANGEL ANNOUNCES

BIBLE TRUTH

God promised to send His Son.

LEARNER GOAL

I can examine the text of the angel announcement for insights into how Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promise in Scripture.

BIBLE VERSE

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Luke 1:46-47

Jesus' Birth Foretold

Luke 1:26–56

REFLECTIONS

OPENING REFLECTION Are you the kind of person who makes promises? Why or why not? What role do promises play in the Bible?

LUKE 1:26-33 Why, do you suppose, would Mary fear the angel? How did the angel quell Mary's fears?

LUKE 1:34–38 Think of other times in Scripture when God’s presence overshadowed or covered something. How does that connect to what is happening with Mary here?

LUKE 1:39–45 What is the role of the Holy Spirit here? How is it similar to how the Holy Spirit worked at different points in the Old Testament?

LUKE 1:46–56 Pinpoint different words or phrases from this song that reflect God’s character and how He was faithful to His promise to send the Messiah. How do you see those characteristics playing out in what God does for Mary?

FINAL REFLECTION Examine the text of the angel announcement for insights into how Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promise in Scripture.

NOTES

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SILENCE BEFORE A SON

John Is Born
Luke 1:5–25,
57–66
3 BC

BIBLE TRUTH

God sent John as His messenger.

LEARNER GOAL

I can describe how the events surrounding John the Baptist's birth relate to key Old Testament themes and promises of God.

BIBLE VERSE

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people. Luke 1:68

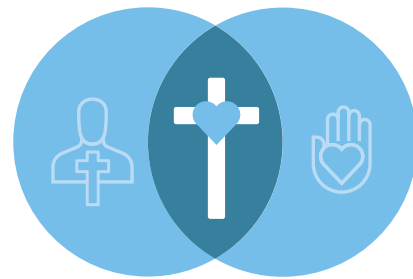
LAW & GOSPEL

As a child of the first parents, Adam and Eve, I am sinful and in need of salvation.

John, and others who proclaim the Good News, point me to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Doubting the angel's announcement of his coming son, Zechariah finds himself silenced until the boy's birth. Upon writing, "His name is John," Zechariah regains his voice and prophesies concerning his son's work.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God sends His messengers to His people, and they bring His Word to all humankind.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can trust the promises given by God's messengers.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on learning for each age.

ADULT

I can describe how the events surrounding John the Baptist's birth relate to key Old Testament themes and promises of God.

YOUTH

I can show how John was God's promised messenger who pointed to Jesus.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that God sent John as His messenger.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God sent John to get people ready for Jesus.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

MORE TIME Read Zechariah's prophecy and the study notes in **Luke 1:67–79** of *TLSB*.

IN DEPTH Read the article "The Temple in Luke" in *TLSB*, page 1705.



LEADER NOTE

We receive messages every day via conversation, text, email, and so on. Often, however, how well that message is received depends on how it's communicated. For example, being fired from a job is bad enough if it's done in person, but if it's done via text message, then certain other signals are sent. The same goes for dating or other relationships. In this lesson, we get the backstory of the birth of John the Baptist, the herald of the Messiah. God sets up the early life of John in such a way as to bridge the gap between the Old and New Testaments in his life and work. Remind your learners of the importance of the messenger, John the Baptist, as you dig into the lesson.



BONUS ACTIVITY

As a group, review **Malachi 4:5–6**, an Old Testament prophecy about the coming of John that refers to him as the Elijah who is to come.

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

OPENING REFLECTION

If you're receiving an important message, how much does the person giving the message affect how well you receive it?

LEARN & LIVE

LUKE 1:5–10

BIBLE COMMENTARY

The Gospel of Luke kicks off with a return to the temple. The stage is set. During Herod the Great's reign in Judea, we see an aging husband and wife, without children, both Levites from the priestly line of Aaron. Though not perfect, as nobody is, they are pious and upright before the Lord. The husband, Zechariah, is a priest—one of the likely thousands of priests who live in the countryside villages not too far from Jerusalem, where the temple of the Lord is. On one occasion, Zechariah is chosen by lot to perform the select and privileged duty of burning the incense of the Lord in the temple itself. This is a potentially once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the aging priest. As he goes into the temple, a multitude pray at the altar right in front of the curtain that separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, which contains the ark of the covenant, the chosen throne of God on earth.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What do you suppose is so significant about the Gospel of Luke (including this account) beginning in the temple with the priests? In what ways does this help connect the Old and New Testaments?

REFLECTION HELPS

Answers include the following: the temple was the site of worship and sacrifice in much of the Old Testament, it was where God offered His forgiveness to His people, and it set up the reality that, in Christ, God would dwell among His people in a new and special way. Jesus serves as the new temple in the new covenant.

LUKE 1:11–17

BIBLE COMMENTARY

While Zechariah is performing the sacred burning of incense, the angel Gabriel appears to him. Like almost all who have come before him, the sinful Zechariah shrinks back at the approach of God's holy, angelic messenger. Gabriel tells Zechariah not to fear. Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, will bear a son, John (meaning "the Lord has shown favor"), who shall be great. As part of his special status, John will spend his life following the vows of the Nazirites (Numbers 6:1–21). His life shall be a living testimony to the Messiah's coming. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, as had been the prophets of old. Like Elijah, his message of repentance will turn the hearts of the people.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Connect this announcement to other narratives and people of the Old Testament. Where have we seen announcements like this before?

REFLECTION HELPS

Connections include the announcement of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah, the birth of Samuel, or any instance where an angel appears to a prophet to announce God's hand in fulfilling His plan of salvation.

LUKE 1:18–25

BIBLE COMMENTARY

As Sarah had done some two thousand years before him (Genesis 18:1–15), Zechariah, because of his old age, questions the announcement that he will have a son. As He had done with Sarah, God confronts Zechariah's disbelief. In this case, Zechariah will be mute until God's promise comes true. God's Word always accomplishes what God says it will, regardless of human doubt or fear. During this whole episode, the people outside the Most Holy Place, likely fellow priests, grow in their wonder and anxiety over Zechariah's delay. When he finally emerges, they are all astonished at his mute state, and Zechariah must communicate through signs and writing. He remains for his time of service, likely an additional week or two, before returning back home to the countryside outside of Jerusalem. There, as God had promised, Elizabeth conceives. She hides herself for five months, marveling at what God has done for her and likely what He will do for His people through her son.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What do you think is the significance of God making Zechariah mute? What different kinds of messages and signals does this send? Who does it send them to?

REFLECTION HELPS

Though we can only speculate, this is interesting to consider. Possibilities include a sign to Zechariah to trust God's Word, a sign to the people that something special was happening, a sign to the world that God keeps His promises—especially the promise to send the Messiah.

LUKE 1:57–66

BIBLE COMMENTARY

After Mary conceives, she (with Jesus in her womb) visits and stays with her relative Elizabeth for three months. Sometime after Mary leaves, Elizabeth gives birth. Great fanfare and anticipation characterize the numerous relations who have come to see the miracle of a baby being born to a woman of advanced years. After John's birth, he is circumcised on the eighth day in the custom of the people. He is named at this time, and when Zechariah names his son, the muteness goes away, and all the people marvel. John is a special child, and his life will be one that points solely to the greater promise: the coming of the Messiah and the fulfillment of all of God's promises through Him for all time.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What details from this section anticipate the life and mission of John the Baptist? Brainstorm as many as you can.

REFLECTION HELPS

These might include his special status as a miraculous child of promise; his inclusion in the covenant of God's people through circumcision; his name, indicating that God will show favor to His people; the awe and anticipation of what this child will do and be; and the fact that the hand of the Lord was with him from birth.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

Describe how the events surrounding John the Baptist's birth relate to key Old Testament themes and promises of God.

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Page.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray before you leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

If you have time, finish up the lesson by looking over or studying Zechariah's prophecy after the birth of John the Baptist in **Luke 1:67–79**. As a group, pinpoint words or phrases that continue to elaborate not only on the nature of the John's work but also how he helps connect major themes of the Old and New Testaments together in anticipation of the Christ.



CHRIST CONNECTION

John was God's special messenger who came to prepare the world for the Messiah, Jesus Christ.



LEADER NOTE

Events include the angel in the temple, the promised child, the disbelief, and the effectiveness of the Word to do what God commands. Try to get each learner to make personal connections before brainstorming as a group.

SILENCE BEFORE A SON

BIBLE TRUTH

God sent John as His messenger.

LEARNER GOAL

I can describe how the events surrounding John the Baptist's birth relate to key Old Testament themes and promises of God.

BIBLE VERSE

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people. Luke 1:68

John Is Born
Luke 1:5–25, 57–66

REFLECTIONS

OPENING REFLECTION If you're receiving an important message, how much does the person giving the message affect how well you receive it?

LUKE 1:5–10 What do you suppose is so significant about the Gospel of Luke (including this account) beginning in the temple with the priests? In what ways does this help connect the Old and New Testaments?

LUKE 1:11–17 Connect this announcement to other narratives and people in the Old Testament. Where have we seen announcements like this before?

LUKE 1:18–25 What do you think is the significance of God making Zechariah mute? What different kinds of messages and signals does this send? Who does it send them to?

LUKE 1:57–66 What details from this section anticipate the life and mission of John the Baptist? Brainstorm as many as you can.

FINAL REFLECTION Describe how the events surrounding John the Baptist's birth relate to key Old Testament themes and promises of God.

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