



Use Week of:

Unit 19 • Session 2

John Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Luke 1

STORY POINT:

John was born to prepare the way for Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Is Jesus God or a human? As the Son of God, Jesus is both fully God and fully human.

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LEADER Bible Study

Some of the last words of the Lord recorded in the Old Testament are found in Malachi 4: “Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah ... he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers” (vv. 5-6). The Book of Malachi was written more than 400 years before Jesus was born. For centuries, God’s people did not hear from Him. They were back in their homeland but were subject to other ruling nations. Eventually, the Romans took over.

The Roman emperor installed Herod as a leader over Judea and surrounding regions such as Samaria and Galilee. To gain the people’s favor, King Herod replaced Zerubbabel’s temple in Jerusalem with a beautiful marble temple constructed by 10,000 workers. This was the temple in which Zechariah, a priest from the family of Abijah, served the Lord. This was the temple in which God, through the angel Gabriel, broke His silence after so many years.

Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were both “righteous in God’s sight” (Luke 1:6), living by faith in God’s promise to send a Messiah. Like Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18, they were getting along in years and did not have any children. Elizabeth’s barrenness was a point of disgrace for her among the community (Luke 1:25) and God graciously answered this couple’s prayers.

An angel appeared to Zechariah in the temple sanctuary and delivered good news: “Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear a son.” Echoing Malachi’s prophecy, the angel declared this son would “turn the hearts of fathers to their children” (Luke 1:17)

For his doubting, Zechariah was rendered mute until the promise came to pass. When John was born, Zechariah could speak again. He praised God and prophesied. John was born to prepare the way for Jesus. John would point people to Jesus, the Savior God promised.

The BIBLE Story

John Was Born

Luke 1

Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were old and had no children. They lived outside of Jerusalem in the hill country and **did what was right.** Zechariah was a priest and at that time, King Herod ruled over Judea. **Twice a year, Zechariah went to the temple in Jerusalem to carry out his duties as a priest.**

Many priests served in the temple.

One day, Zechariah was chosen to go into the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. People gathered outside to pray, and Zechariah went inside the sanctuary. **Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared. Zechariah was terrified!**

“Do not be afraid, Zechariah,” the angel said.

“God heard your prayer.

Your wife will have a son, and you will name him John. His birth will bring you joy. God will be with Him. The Holy Spirit will fill him even before he is born.”

The angel said that John would help many people turn back to God.

John would go ahead of the Lord and get people ready for His coming.

Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I know this will happen? I’m old, and my wife is old.”

The angel said, “God sent me to tell you this good news. Because



you did not believe my words, you won't be able to speak until these things happen."

Zechariah left the temple. The people outside realized he had seen a vision and could not talk. When he was done serving in Jerusalem, **Zechariah went home to Elizabeth. In time, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son.** Her neighbors and relatives rejoiced.

Zechariah and Elizabeth named their son John. Suddenly, Zechariah could speak again. He began praising God. The people who lived nearby could tell that God was with John. **The Holy Spirit filled John. Zechariah praised God and told the people God's words: "God has come to help His people. He will save us through David's family. He will rescue us from our enemies."** Then he spoke to John: "And you will be called a prophet of the Most High. You will go before the Lord to prepare the way for Him."

The time had come. God was going to bring His light into the darkness of the world. Peace was coming for God's people.

John grew up and lived in the wilderness until God called him to get the people ready for Jesus.

Christ Connection: When Zechariah believed God's word, he praised God. John was born to prepare the way for Jesus. John would point people to Jesus, and they would praise God for keeping His promise to send the Savior.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Make eye contact:** As you tell the story, make eye contact with kids to draw them in. Pause at appropriate points to build anticipation when the angel appears to Zechariah.
- **Dress in costume:** Wear Bible times clothes as you tell the story. Act out the role of Zechariah.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: John Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 1

STORY POINT: John was born to prepare the way for Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: John 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Is Jesus God or a human? As the Son of God, Jesus is both fully God and fully human.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share their routines for getting ready for school in the morning. What happens if they aren't ready on time?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "His Name Is ..." activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "His Name Is ..." on the activity page. Guide kids to complete the dot-to-dots to find the name of Zechariah's son.

SAY • What name did you discover? (*John*) The name *John* means "The Lord is gracious." He shows us grace—undeserved favor. Today we will hear a story from the Bible about a baby who was born long ago. An angel told a man named Zechariah to name his baby John.

LOW PREP

- hula hoops
- music

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Musical hoops

Arrange several hula hoops at the front of the room or in a circle. Invite kids to play a game similar to musical chairs, except kids should move when there is no music and find a

hoop to put one foot inside when you begin playing music. Explain that more than one kid can use a hoop. Before stopping the music to play another round, remove one hoop. More kids will have to share the remaining hoops. Play until one hoop remains and all kids try to share it.

SAY • That was a different way to play musical chairs. You waited for me to break the silence by playing the music. When you think of our game, remember that 400 years passed between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. In those years, God was silent. He did not speak directly to His people. But in today's Bible story, God broke the silence. We'll find out how.

OPTION 2: Before and after cards

Print and cut apart the "First and Second" cards. Mix up the cards and arrange them facedown on a table in a grid.

• "First and Second"
printable

Invite kids to play a memory game, turning over two cards at a time to find cards that match as a set of first and second cards. Help kids determine if the cards form a pair. If so, the player keeps the cards and play continues. If not, the player turns the cards facedown again and play continues.

SAY • Malachi, the last prophet in the Old Testament, said that someone would come before Jesus. The person who would get people ready for Jesus was John! We will learn more about John today.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Is Jesus God or a human? As the Son of God, Jesus is both fully God and fully human.

Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- camera
- backpack
- family photo album
- alphabet blocks

[Leader enters carrying a camera and a backpack. The backpack contains a family photo album with baby photos and a Bible. Blocks that spell out JOHN are arranged on a table.]

LEADER • Hi there! I'm [*your name*], studio photographer.

I have to tell you, I've taken pictures of people from age 0 to 99, but one of my favorite groups of people to photograph is new babies.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Earlier this week, I took photos for a family who recently welcomed a baby boy into their family. This might surprise you, but newborn babies are not that difficult to work with. They are really sleepy, so I can gently pose them with some special props their parents have chosen and they usually stay put for the perfect photo. *[Show some baby photos.]* In this last shoot, the parents brought some blocks that I set up to display the new baby's name: J-O-H-N. I haven't finished editing those photos yet.

[*Retrieve a Bible.*] I'm excited for you to hear a story today about a baby from the Bible. Can you guess what his name was? [*Allow kids to respond.*] His name was John! Let's get started.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Does anyone remember our big picture question and answer? [*Allow kids to respond.*] That's right. ***Is Jesus God or a human? As the Son of God, Jesus is both fully God and fully human.*** God's plan to rescue sinners was for God the Son to become a human, live the perfect life we failed to live, and take the punishment we deserve for our sins by dying on the cross in our place. Keep our big picture question and answer in mind as we hear today's Bible story.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • Can anyone tell me whose family we learned about last week? Yes! We learned about Jesus' family. You can find stories about many of the people in Jesus' family throughout the Old Testament. God promised to send a Messiah from the Jewish people. The New Testament begins with God's keeping that promise.

Between the Book of Malachi (the last book in the Old Testament) and the Gospels (the first books in the New Testament) God was silent. He did not speak directly to His people for 400 years. A lot changed for God's people during that time. The rulers in Rome took over, and some people might

have wondered if God forgot about His people. Did God forget? No! In today's Bible story, we will hear what God said when He finally broke the silence.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- "John Was Born" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Open your Bible to Luke 1. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "John Was Born."

LEADER • Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were old, and they did not have any children. Zechariah was doing his job as a priest in the temple when he saw an angel! The angel Gabriel told Zechariah that he and his wife were going to be parents!

Do you think Zechariah was excited? He probably was! Then Gabriel told Zechariah to name his son John. Maybe this news sounded too good to be true! Zechariah wasn't sure if he could believe the angel. Was Gabriel telling the truth? Wasn't Elizabeth too old to have a baby? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Gabriel told Zechariah that he wouldn't be able to talk until these words from God came true.

When Zechariah left the temple, he couldn't talk. He had to gesture with his hands to communicate. Elizabeth found out she was going to have a baby. She knew the baby was a gift from God.

God was planning for this baby to be a prophet. God's people had not heard from God since the prophet Malachi, but God had not forgotten His plan to save people from their sin. After 400 years of silence, how did God speak? Look at Luke 1:13. [*Allow kids to read the verse and respond.*]

John was born to prepare the way for Jesus.

John would grow up and remind people about the Messiah God had promised to send. John was going to get people ready to meet Jesus.

Christ connection

LEADER • God’s people hadn’t heard from God for 400 years, but God didn’t forget His plan to save people from their sin. Zechariah believed God’s word, and he praised God. **John was born to prepare the way for Jesus.** John would point people to Jesus, and they would praise God for keeping His promise to send the Savior.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 29 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 19, Session 2” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about angels. Guide them to discuss why God made angels. What message does God give us to share with the world? Choose a kid to read aloud 2 Corinthians 5:20-21.

• “Unit 19, Session 2” questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • **John was born to prepare the way for Jesus.** Have you ever thought that you were born to prepare the way for people to know Jesus? God wants us, no matter our age, to love Jesus and tell other people about Him.

We’re going to hear from two missionaries in Brazil who are preparing the way for people in São Paulo to know about Jesus.

Show the “Relentless Love (Part 1)” missions video and pray for missionaries in Brazil.

• “Relentless Love (Part 1)” missions video

- Key Passage Poster
- “The Word Was God (John 1:1-2)” song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 1:1-2.

LEADER • The Word was with God. Whoa. Did you know God has never been lonely? God created man to be in relationship with Him, but not because He needed a friend. God the Father, God the Son—who is the Word, and God the Spirit have always been together. Lead kids in singing “The Word Was God (John 1:1-2).”

Sing (4 minutes)

- “Jesus Messiah” song
- Bible

Open your Bible and read aloud Malachi 3:1.

LEADER • Hundreds of years before John was born, the prophet Malachi said that a messenger would come to get people ready for the Messiah. John is the messenger that Malachi spoke of. **John was born to prepare the way for Jesus.** God kept His promise; He always keeps His promises! Let’s sing. Sing together “Jesus Messiah.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord God, You are good and Your plans are good. Thank You for giving us Your Word so we can know what is true about You and about ourselves. You gave Zechariah and Elizabeth a son in their old age to bring them joy and gladness. **John was born to prepare the way for Jesus,** who brings us joy and gladness by rescuing us from our sins. Help us share this joyful news with others! Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



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KEY PASSAGE: John 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Is Jesus God or a human? As the Son of God, Jesus is both fully God and fully human.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- beanbag or foam ball

Instruct kids to stand in a circle. Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading John 1:1-2 aloud together.

Give one kid a beanbag or foam ball. Prompt him to say the first word of the key passage and then toss the beanbag to another player. That kid will say the next word, toss the beanbag to another player who will say the next word, and so on. Encourage kids to toss the beanbag to players who have not yet received it before a player gets a second turn.

For an added challenge, remove or cover the key passage poster so kids must say the key passage from memory.

SAY • Good work, everyone. Our key passage teaches us about Jesus, who is God the Son. He has always existed. **John was born to prepare the way for Jesus.** God the Father planned to send His Son to be the Savior of the world.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Luke 1. Explain that the Book of Luke is the third book in the New Testament. Remind kids that Zechariah was at the temple in Jerusalem when an angel appeared to him.

[Point to Jerusalem (H4) on the New Testament Israel Map.]

Then choose a volunteer to read aloud Luke 1:16-17.

SAY • The angel Gabriel told Zechariah that his son, John, would do some very important things: He would help people turn back to God. John would go ahead of the Lord and get people ready for Him. John would lead people who were disobeying God to turn back to God and follow Him. **John was born to prepare the way for Jesus.**

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What did Zechariah do after his son was born?
Prompt kids to recall that Zechariah named the baby John, just as the angel commanded. Then he was able to speak, and he prophesied about John, saying he would go before the Lord and get people ready for Him.
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 1:76-68.)
2. The name *John* means “the Lord is gracious.” Where do you see God’s grace in the Bible story or in your own life? *Encourage kids to give examples. Help them recognize God’s grace in giving a son to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Guide them to consider undeserved favor in their lives, especially the gracious gift of salvation through Jesus.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ex. 34:6.)
3. In what ways can we get people ready for Jesus’ return? *Invite kids to share their ideas. Emphasize that Jesus commanded all believers to make disciples among the nations. (Matt. 28:19) We can all be involved by telling others about Jesus in our own communities, supporting missionaries through prayer or giving, or obeying God’s call to go to the nations.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Pet. 4:7-11.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

• beanbags or small smooth stones, 5

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

• index cards
• marker

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Cinco Marias

Introduce the Brazilian game “Cinco Marias” (or “Five Marias”). The game is similar to jacks and is usually played with small, smooth stones. Scatter four beanbags on the floor. Invite a volunteer to throw one bag into the air, grab one bag from the floor, and catch the tossed bag before it lands. Repeat, trying to grab two bags from the floor, and so on. Allow time for every kid to have a turn.

After everyone has a chance to play, take the five beanbags and brainstorm as a group five ways to pray for missionaries. Place one bag on the floor for each prayer request and ask for a volunteer to say a prayer aloud.

SAY • It’s fun to learn something about a different culture, like this game from Brazil. We can be a part of God’s mission to reach the nations by learning and praying. We are helping to prepare the way for people to know and love Jesus.

OPTION 2: Team charades

Before the session, write several actions on separate index cards. (Examples: *skateboarding, opening a gift, walking a dog, building a sandcastle, playing baseball*)

Form two teams of kids. Choose one player from each team to come to you, and discreetly show both of them a prepared word card. Both players may begin performing motions to help their teams guess the action. Instruct kids that they may not speak. Teams may call out their guesses. Award a point to the first team to guess correctly. Then choose two different players to perform the next action.

SAY • Why was Zechariah unable to speak in today’s Bible story? (*He did not believe the angel’s message from*

God.) Zechariah believed God's word, and he praised God. **John was born to prepare the way for Jesus.** John would point people to Jesus, and they would praise God for keeping His promise to send the Savior.

Acting out a message is one way we can communicate besides talking. We can also write words, draw pictures, or use sign language. Think of someone you can share today's story with this week and then make time to tell that person!

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, praising God for the Bible and asking Him to help kids trust His Word. Thank Him for providing salvation through His Son, and ask Him for opportunities to serve others this week and show them the love of Jesus.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Missing Words" on the activity page. Kids should fill in the blanks with the correct words from the word box.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• "Missing Words"
activity page,
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.