

LEADER'S HELPS FOR CHAPTER 1.

First Stop!

Elizabeth: Blameless and Barren

2. If they are having trouble, have them see if they can discover anything about Elizabeth's relationship with God from Luke 1:6-7 (a blameless life in the midst of the pain of barrenness); Luke 1:24-25 (she probably was seeking God to prepare for this calling); Luke 1:42-45 (this was a prophecy from God, but may simultaneously reflect Elizabeth's faith and joy in God); and Luke 1:56 (how welcoming she was to Mary.)

7. It was a very long walk, about seventy miles – and Mary seemed to be alone. *Why*, Elizabeth must have thought, *has she come?*

10. This is certainly a blow to anyone who says the baby in the womb is not a person! John the Baptist is actually jumping for joy at the sound of Mary's voice. That is what the Holy Spirit says! God gave this child a recognition of something – perhaps His Messiah in Mary's womb, perhaps the mother of the Messiah, perhaps an anticipation of the purpose of his life!

11. V. 42: Tell friends how we see them being blessed by God. V. 43: Show friends how glad you are to see them – if you are! V. 44. Tell friends how God has worked in your own life. V. 45. Encourage friends when you see them believing God.

15A. If they are having trouble, have them see if they can discover anything about Zechariah and Elizabeth's relationship from Elizabeth's silence about Zechariah (She praises Mary's faith but does not criticize Zechariah's lack of faith) or from Luke 1:59-60 (Despite the fact Zechariah had been struck mute, he had communicated to Elizabeth that the baby was to be called John, and she made sure that took place).

15B. Despite being chastised by God, when Zechariah finally *can* speak, it is this prophetic song of praise. He also makes sure that Gabriel is obeyed in naming the son John.

19. Perhaps she explained that you could be a good man, like Zechariah, and still have a weak moment. Perhaps she explained that because women are intuitive, sometimes they believe a bit faster than men. Perhaps she encouraged Mary to trust in God, for God could handle any man. God had a plan that would not be frustrated. Perhaps she reminded Mary that "nothing is impossible with God."

Second Stop! **Mary Believed God**

3B. You might be able to prime the pump for some honest sharing by making yourself vulnerable. Share was your *natural* response is when someone hurts you. Often you want to hurt back, if not openly, at least by withdrawing and being cool. Share a time when you did that! Then show how faith in God would have you respond differently.

4C. Zechariah says, "How can I be sure of this?" He doubted God could do it. Hence, the discipline. Zechariah had nine months to think about his lack of trust. Mary asks "How," As well, but it is a different "How." It is "How are you going to carry out what you have told me?" She was curious, but not doubting God's ability.

5. Surely Mary must have been curious, after hearing from Gabriel, if Elizabeth was really pregnant! Is it possible that Mary wondered, *Did this all really happen? Did Gabriel really come and tell me I'm going to be the mother of God?* If she had any doubts, wouldn't that have made her want to see Elizabeth? She probably also knew Elizabeth, for they were relatives, and knew of her faith, her godliness, and her kindness. How wonderful if we can seek out those kind of women when we need help.

13. Did they talk about how to raise boys? Did they make blue layettes? Did they pray together? Did Mary watch Elizabeth and learn how to be a godly wife? Probably!

Third Stop!
Detectives for the Divine

17. The Messiah is destined to divide and reveal hearts. Peoples' reactions to Him will lift them up or bring them down. He will be a sign spoken against, the cornerstone over whom many will stumble. Peoples' reactions to Him reveal their hearts. Mary is going to experience great sorrow one day as she watches this baby grow to be a man who is despised, rejected, and crucified.

26. Astonished ; "Treated us like this" Anxiously

Fourth Stop!

Who Is This Who Even Forgives Sins?

2. Luke 7:9 (Commending the faith of a Gentile over the faith of Jews); 7:14 Touching a coffin and raising the dead; Luke 7:32-35 Won't dance the Pharisees dance, is following God's will – and that includes being a friend of sinners Luke 7:40 Could read Simon the Pharisee's thoughts; Luke 7:49 "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

20. Allow there to be some silence after this question, though silence is often uncomfortable. Pray God will give someone the courage to speak up during that long pause.

Fifth Stop!
Who Is This Who Stops Storms?

3A: Only the last soil produces fruit. Jesus has said elsewhere that we will know genuine believers by their fruit.

3B. The lamp is a metaphor for the Word. Those who truly *listen* also respond. Their light affects others. “How do you listen?” Is it for knowledge only, or so your life will be changed? This is true faith.

3C. True mothers and brothers of Jesus are not so much the biological ones, but the ones who exercise true faith, hearing *and* obeying.

4. It often happens in Scripture that when the disciples truly realize *who* Jesus is, they are overcome by fear.

17. How often Jesus involves His disciples, though obviously He could have simply had the food appear at each person’s place. We learn by doing. When we have the ability to do something, but allow someone less experienced in the faith to do it, under our supervision, they grow. Also, it is interesting that we better remember what we take part in. This is a strong reason for having some interactive teaching, having not only lectures, but responses. With children, they will learn better if they can somehow participate.

21. A true prophet always made a “near” prophecy to validate His later prophecies. How clearly Jesus prophesies His suffering, rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Sixth Stop! **Mary of Bethany**

2. Remind them that observations may lead them to more questions, but that is good. You may want to take a little time to throw out some of their “new” questions to the group for reflection and discussion.

7. They are working hard, not tolerating wicked men, testing false teaching, persevered and endured hardships! So many good things – yet they had missed the most important thing. They didn’t love Jesus the way they did at first. Jesus tells them in Rev. 2:5 to “remember the height” from which they have fallen. How they loved Him once! Then they are to repent (the U-Turn) and do the things they did when they were so in love. It is easy to get so busy serving God that we forget what it is all about – we forget the most important thing. Mary did not, and she was commended, protected, and remembered.

15. One of the purposes of fasting is to give that person time to truly seek the Lord. Many of us could really benefit from a television fast, an e-mail fast, a telephone fast...

19B. Perhaps they thought Lazarus would not die. Sometimes Jesus speaks in riddles.

Seventh Stop! **Praying Effectively**

6 A He is our Father

B His name should be set apart, His Kingdom will come

C We ask for provision (bread) forgiveness for sins and to be protected from temptation.

8 E In the more complete Matthew version, we see the complete parallelism of the last part: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Both phrases in parallelism poetry mean the same thing in different words – so not to be led into temptation does mean to be delivered or protected from temptation.

11 A Principle True religion is not about appearing righteous but being righteous

B Principle Don't obey the letter of the law and miss the Spirit of it

C Principle Don't let leadership go to your head so that you love the praise of man, Lord it over those learning, and end up distorting and adding to the Word

Eighth Stop!

Fear God and Nothing Else

Ninth Stop!

Parables That Women Love

3. The words joy, rejoice, be glad will help you discover the theme!
6. When the son wouldn't go in: "Therefore his father came out" When the son thought the prodigal had more: "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours" When the older son seemed to forget that this was his brother "for your brother," and what his state was "lost, dead."

Tenth Stop! The Savior's Farewell

2. The battle against evil is clear in all these verses in Luke 22: 2; 3-6; 21-22; 24; 31; 34; 40; 42-44; 45; 47-48; 50; 52; 56-62; 63-65; 67; and 71.

8B Christ was a male, a lamb without blemish, he died on the 14th day of Nissan, God caused the earth to grow dark, or be “twilight,” and his blood must be applied to set us free.

9. Verse 19