

# PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

## SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 2 December 8, 2024  
“God is Gracious”

### OPENING PRAYER

Before you, Holy God, we sometimes fall silent in humility and awe. At other times, we cannot help but shout and sing your praises. In this time of study, help us listen – in the scripture, in our discussions with each other, and in our hearts – for your Word, that we may learn how to more faithfully echo and embody it, for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh. Amen.

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

#### Luke 1:13, 17-20 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

<sup>17</sup> And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

<sup>18</sup> Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

<sup>19</sup> The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. <sup>20</sup> And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”

#### Luke 1:39-40 (NIV)

<sup>39</sup> At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, <sup>40</sup> where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth.

#### Luke 1:57-64 (NIV)

<sup>57</sup> When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. <sup>58</sup> Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

<sup>59</sup> On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, <sup>60</sup> but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

<sup>61</sup> They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.”

<sup>62</sup> Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. <sup>63</sup> He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.” <sup>64</sup> Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.

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## INTRODUCTION

When the Angel Gabriel told Zechariah his wife was going to have a child, Zechariah responded in disbelief and the angel took away his ability to speak because of his doubt. When Elizabeth did become pregnant, she went into seclusion for 5 months and then was visited by her relative Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus. Finally, when Elizabeth’s baby was born, Zechariah named him John. So what lessons can we learn from this part of the Christmas story?

Like Zechariah, we will all have doubts and questions in life including our faith. But, when our faith is well placed, our doubts or questions should lead us to a deeper faith. Zechariah’s inability to speak is a reminder to us that this is the appropriate response when being in God’s presence. And Mary and Elizabeth’s special relationship is a reminder that we all need an Elizabeth in our lives. Finally, the name of the child, John, mean ‘The Lord is Gracious.’ One of God’s main attributes is grace and in response to his grace we are called to live a life of grace toward others.

## QUESTIONS

1. How long do you think you could keep silent? How easy, do you find it to keep silent? Why?
2. Read Luke 1:13, 17-20. What do you think about Zechariah’s response to Gabriel’s announcement (v. 18)? When if ever have you asked or wanted to ask God “How can I be sure?” What happened?
3. There are very few things we can be absolutely sure of; most decisions require a leap of faith. What “leap of faith” decisions in your life do you remember the most?
4. Do you have a mentor or friend like Mary had in Elizabeth? Are you an Elizabeth for anyone?
5. Christians believe that Grace is a defining Characteristic of God. How do you define Grace?
6. Our response to God’s grace is to give grace toward others. When was a time you experienced grace? When was a time you extended grace to another person?

## FINAL APPLICATION

This week, extend grace toward someone.