



MEN on a MISSION

Lessons for Christian Men from Men of the Bible

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Introduction

This men's Bible study focuses on the lives of four men mentioned by name in the story of Jesus' birth. While at first glance these men may seem to have nothing in common with the 21st-century men of today, upon closer inspection of the Scripture texts, the thoughts, words and actions of these men actually sound quite universal in nature and can be readily applied to the roles of men in contemporary society.

Each session highlights the mission of a specific male figure who played a part in the story of Jesus and his birth and then delves into what Christian men can learn about themselves from these stories of men on a mission for Jesus. First, participants will read the Scriptural accounts that refer to each male figure to set the stage for the session. Then Sharing Time provides a way for participants to interact with one another in a more personal way about something revealed in the reading. Questions about the specific verses in the reading provide background information and give participants a more in-depth sense of these men's missions and their place in history. A Mission Moment is included with suggestions for practical action ideas in which to engage during between sessions. Each session ends with a Closing Hymn and Prayer that provide insights into what was learned in each session.

How to Use

AS A BIBLE STUDY

One way to use this resource is as a four-session Bible study for men at church on Sundays or a weekday or at home in a men's small group. Make copies of each week's session for each participant to use and fill in answers on their own. Call on various participants to read aloud the Scripture texts printed herein. Encourage participants, as they feel comfortable, to share their personal stories related to the questions, discussion topics or the role of Christian men in modern society, and invite them to take part in the action prompts at the ends of every session. This study can be done any time of the year.

AS A RETREAT

Another way to offer this resource is as the framework for a weekend or midweek men's retreat. Invite participants to gather for an all-day or multiday event at a retreat center, convention hall or church camp for relaxation and refreshment in God's Word. The four sessions could be spread out and used throughout the day or days of the retreat along with other community-building activities.

AS A PERSONAL DEVOTION

This resource can also be used as a guide for personal devotion for a week or several weeks over the summer, in December or any time of year. The format of this study allows space for personal journaling and the recording of faith moments related to being a brother in Christ. This is a helpful tool to instill a routine for regular spiritual reflection on God's mission.

Zechariah

The Silent Type

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, you gave us the example of Zechariah the priest to show us how to live as the silent type when you call us to be faithful to you even if we don't always understand why things are happening the way they are. Thank you for showing us through Zechariah what it means to be devoted to you in our prayer life, reverent in our service to you, dedicated in our relationships with our spouses and respected by the community. Amen.

HYMN

(Tune: Nicaea 11 12 12 10)

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee. Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee, Though the eye made blind by sin thy glory may not see, Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee, Perfect in pow'r, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea. Holy, holy, merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

SHARING TIME

Talk with each other about an uplifting, moving or special moment you experienced in worship, a time when you felt especially close to God.

PART 1: NOT YOUR NORMAL DAY AT THE OFFICE

• Read Luke 1:5-25:

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

1.	What do you sense about Zechariah's work ethic and his approach to his job as a priest?
2	What can we learn from Zechariah about the way we go about our tasks at work?
2.	What can we learn from Zecharian about the way we go about our tasks at work.
3.	How would you react if an angel came to greet you while you were at work?

4.	Why is it understandable that Zechariah would have questions about Gabriel's message and would want some proof?
5.	Traditionally, how are men expected to react to surprising or disturbing news?
6.	Why is being silent in an unusual situation sometimes a good thing?

7.	When is it bad to keep quiet about something shocking?
8.	What type of husband do you think Zechariah was to Elizabeth?
9.	How would you cope with not being able to speak to your wife for nine months?

10. How do you think he and Elizabeth communicated during this time?
11. What do you think Zechariah learned about the relationship he would have with his son from Gabriel's description of John?
12. Why do you think God chose Zechariah to have the mission of being the father of John th Baptist?

13. To what mission has God called you in your work?	
14. To what mission has God called you in your family?	
15. Zechariah's encounter with Gabriel happened by the altar in the Holy of Holies. What does the say about their encounter?	is
16. How are we as men called to live holy lives?	

PART 2: LIVING OUT LOUD ... AGAIN

• Read Luke 1:57-66:

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

1. What does the fact that Zechariah came with Elizabeth to have his son circumcised on the eighth day say about his faith?

2. What does the fact that Elizabeth knew that the name of the child should be John say about Zechariah and Elizabeth's relationship?

3.	What does it say about Zechariah that his friends and relatives gathered around him to celebrate the birth of his son?
4.	What does it say about the attitude friends and relatives felt toward Zechariah that they came to him to ask him his thoughts on what his son's name should be?
5.	If you are a father, how did you choose a name for your child or children?

6.	What is important in a name?
7.	What does the Bible tell us about our names, no matter what they are?
8.	What do you think it felt like for Zechariah to speak again?

9.	What would have been your first words after nine months of silence?
10.	At what times must you speak out?
11.	Do you think that there are certain expectations about what is appropriate for a man to say about his faith?

12. Do you feel you are not allowed to be as expressive of your faith because you are a man?
13. What does it mean to you to "live out loud" at work and within your family?
14 11 1:17 1 :1 (1
14. How did Zechariah "live out loud" the day his son was born?
15. How does being a parent change what you say and when you say it?

16	6. How does being a parent affect the way you communicate with friends, co-workers or your spouse?
17	7. In your opinion, what affects your reputation the most in our culture today—what you say or what you do?
18	8. Which do you value most in others—words or actions?

19. Which has the most impact on your children—your words or your actions?
20. What words of your father or other male figure in your life do you remember most?
21. What actions of a male figure in your life have affected the way you are as a man today?

PART 3: ZECHARIAH'S SONG

• Read Luke 1:67-79:

And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

1. What does this song ten as about the type of man Zeenarian		What does this so	ng tell us	about the type	of man	Zechariah	is
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2. What does this song reveal to us about the kind of father Zechariah would be to John?

3.	How would you describe the relationship that Zechariah has with God at this point in his life?
4.	What does this song express to us about Zechariah's faith at this point in his life?
5.	What can we learn from this song in our walk as Christian men in this world?

PART 4: MISSION MOMENT

1.	What is something you learned today from Zechariah's story that you can incorporate into your mission as a man of God and a follower of Christ?
2.	If you had to choose a song that summed up what you see as your mission, what would it be?
3.	What can you do the next time you go to church to show your reverence for God and your dedication to the mission to which he has called you?

A CLOSING HYMN

(Tune: Ach Gott Und Herr 447 447)

Draw us to you, and we will do what you have taught forever And hasten on where you have gone to be with you, dear Savior.

Draw us to you, each day anew. Let us depart with gladness That we may be forever free from sorrow, grief and sadness.

Draw us to you, that we stay true and walk the road to heaven. Direct our way lest we should stray and from your paths be driven.

A CLOSING PRAYER

Help us, Lord, to trust in you no matter how surprising the twists and turns of life may be. Give us strength to be better husbands, better fathers and better friends to the people around us. Teach us, as you taught Zechariah, to hold fast to the promises of God and walk in the ways that you have designed for us. Amen.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT SESSION

Read Luke 3:1-18 to prepare for Session 2: John the Baptist, the Outspoken Type.