

### References

Luke 1:5-38;  
Matthew 1:18-21;  
*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 97–101



### Memory Verse

“The Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name”  
(Luke 1:49, NIV).



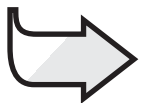
### Objectives

The children will:

**Know** that God’s gifts bring us joy and happiness.

**Feel** loved by God.

**Respond** by celebrating God’s promises to us.



### The Message

God’s gifts of love fill me with hope and joy.

# Promised Babies

## Monthly Theme

God’s grace gives us hope and joy.

## The Bible Lesson at a Glance

The priest, Zechariah, is visited by the angel Gabriel as he ministers in the temple. The angel tells him not to be afraid. He promises him a son who will do a special work for God. Zechariah doubts, and, as a sign that the promise is from God, he is unable to speak until the baby is born. Gabriel, the angel, also visits Mary and promises her that she will give birth to the Son of the Most High. The angel also speaks to Joseph in a dream, promising that Joseph will be the earthly father of Jesus.

## This is a lesson about grace.

God has made many promises (gifts of grace) to us in His Word, the Bible. The best promise is the gift of a Savior. These promises give us hope and joy.

## Teacher Enrichment

Apparently, Joseph was a widower. He had at least six other children (Matthew 12:46; 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3) and all would have been older than Jesus.

An engagement was as legally binding as a marriage at this time. Joseph clearly tempered his desire for justice by mercy. He could divorce Mary in one of two ways: a public trial; or just by saying that she no longer pleased him without giving any reason.

Before the angel spoke to him, he had decided to adopt the latter course of action. It is important to note the difference between the way the angel announced to Joseph that Mary would have a son and the way the angel told Zechariah. “The angel did not tell Joseph that his ‘wife’ would bear him a son, as he had told Zechariah concerning John (Luke 1:13). Jesus was to be born ‘the Son of God,’ not the son of Joseph” (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 283). See also commentary on verses 19 and 20.

## Room Decorations

Keep the outdoor scene. Use twigs for a “camp fire.” Create a stable with toy animals and a manger.

Bulletin board ideas: pictures of Bethlehem, map tracing Mary and Joseph’s journeys, picture of heaven with pictures of each of the children connected to “heaven” by yarn, felt nativity scene, etc.

## Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
<b>1</b> Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>Baby Joy</i> B. <i>Silent Messages</i> C. <i>Surprise Gifts</i>	mothers and fathers none two baby dolls, two boxes, gift wrapping paper
<b>Any Time</b> Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	none <i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> gift box gift shape for each child (see p. 152), gift wrapping paper, pencils, glue
<b>2</b> Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse  Bible Study	Bible-times costumes, white robe chalkboard or large sheet of paper, chalk or marker Bibles, six pictures of babies
<b>3</b> Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Celebrating God's Greatest Gift</i>	<i>Sing for Joy</i> , shakers, musical instruments (optional)
<b>4</b> Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	A. <i>Christmas Project</i>  B. <i>Angel</i>	information on community Christmas project, stop watch or watch with second hand, letter to parents angel outline for each child (see p. 152), glitter glue, markers, scissors, paper and/or fabric scraps

\*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

# TEACHING THE LESSON

## Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Listen to last week’s memory verse and encourage the children to share any experiences from last week’s lesson study. Have them begin the readiness activity of your choice.



## Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

### You Need:

- mothers and fathers

### A. Baby Joy

Invite two or three mothers and fathers to tell the children about how they felt when they found out they were going to have a baby, and how they prepared for the baby’s arrival. Invite them to bring pictures, etc. Say: **Today, [insert name] has come to tell us about a very exciting time in their family.**

### Debriefing

Ask: **Do you have any pictures of when you were a baby? Can you remember any stories your parents told you about who came to visit when you were born?** Allow time for children to share. **In our story today we are going to learn about two families who were surprised and excited to learn that they were going to have a baby. Their babies were gifts from God. And today’s message is about God’s gifts to us:**



**GOD’S GIFTS OF LOVE FILL ME WITH HOPE AND JOY.**

Say that with me.

### B. Silent Messages

Ask: **Have any of you ever had a bad cold and lost your voice? I need a volunteer.** To the volunteer, say: **Pretend that you have lost your voice. I will give you a word to try to mime for the rest of the group. It may be an object or an action. The child who guesses the word mimes the next word.** Whisper words to do with babies. For example: baby buggy, rocking a baby, crawling, a rattle, etc.

### Debriefing

Ask: **What idea connected all the words?** (babies) **What do you think about communicating without words? How easy is it?** (Some things are easier than others.) **What other ways might you communicate if you cannot speak?** (write, draw) **In our story today we are going to learn about a man who lost his voice in an unusual way, and how God’s gift of a baby helped him regain it.**

Today’s message is:



**GOD’S GIFTS OF LOVE FILL ME WITH HOPE AND JOY.**

Say that with me.

### C. Surprise Gifts

In advance, put each of the baby dolls in a box and wrap the boxes as a present. Say: **I have two presents here. Can you guess what is inside?** Let the children come and feel, shake, etc., the boxes and guess what is inside. Ask two children to come and open the boxes.

#### You Need:

- two baby dolls
- two boxes
- gift wrapping paper

### Debriefing

Ask: **How can a baby be a gift?** (Every baby is a gift from God.) **In our story today, God told two families that He was giving them a gift of a baby boy. God still gives us gifts to make us happy today. Today's message is:**



**GOD'S GIFTS OF LOVE FILL ME WITH HOPE AND JOY.**

Say that with me.

## Prayer and Praise



### Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Allow time for sharing from last week's lesson study and review last week's memory verse. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



### Suggested Songs

- "There's a Song In the Air" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 82)
- "Joy to the World" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 81)
- "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 70)
- "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 72)



### Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Emphasize that God's grace extends to everyone everywhere in the world, regardless of their circumstances.



### Offering

Say: **Giving our offering to help others learn about God is one way to show how much we appreciate His gifts of grace.**

#### You Need:

- gift box



### Prayer

Give each child a gift-shaped paper (see page 152) and ask them to write something for which they would like to thank and praise God. Attach the gift shapes to a sheet of wrapping paper. Leave them on display during December. Thank God for His gifts and for the best gift of all—His Son, Jesus.

#### You Need:

- gift shapes (see p. 152)
- gift wrapping paper
- pencils
- glue

## Bible Lesson

### You Need:

- Bible-times costumes (adult male and female)
- white robe (for angel)

### Experiencing the Story

**Characters:** Angel Gabriel, Zechariah, Mary

The story is told from Gabriel's perspective. Invite someone to dress up as the angel Gabriel and either tell the story or mime it as you tell the story. Invite a senior citizen to play or mime the part of Zechariah and a teenager to be Mary.

### Read or tell the story.

My name is Gabriel. I am one of God's angels. I have seen many things, but the most exciting was something that happened over 2,000 years ago. It began when God asked me to deliver three very special messages.

After Adam and Eve sinned, we knew that God had a plan to put things right. Now the time had come. I could hardly wait to deliver my messages.

The first person I visited was an old priest called Zechariah. He was doing his priestly duties in the temple in Jerusalem. He and his wife Elizabeth loved God and served Him faithfully. The one thing that made them sad was that they did not have any children. But that was about to change.

I waited until Zechariah came into the temple to burn incense on the altar. Then I stepped forward. When I appeared beside the altar, Zechariah was startled and afraid.

"There is no need to be afraid," I said. "I have good news. God has heard your prayers. Elizabeth, your wife, will have a baby boy. You are to call him John. Many will be happy and celebrate when he is born.

"He will be great in God's sight. He must never drink wine or any other alcoholic drink. From the day he is born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will lead many people in Israel back to God. He will help to prepare people for the coming of the Lord."

Zechariah looked at me. I could see the question in his eyes. "How can I be sure that what you are saying is true?" he asked. "Both my wife and I are old. How can we have a child?"

I told him, "God sent me to give you this good news. Because you did not believe God's message, you will be unable to speak until after the baby is born."

Outside in the courtyard everyone was wondering what had happened to Zechariah. Usually, the priest who is burning the incense returns to the people right away. But Zechariah did not return for some time. And when he did, he was not able to speak. He made signs to try to explain what had happened, and the people understood that he had seen a vision.

Everything happened just as God had planned. When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, I was sent to Nazareth to talk to one of her relatives, a young girl called Mary, who was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter.

When I appeared to Mary, I quickly said, "Greetings. You are favored by God. The Lord is with you!"

Mary was startled. She wondered what I meant, so I quickly continued. "Do not be afraid. God is pleased with your life. You will have a son. When He is born, you will call His name Jesus. He will be God's Son, and He will rule forever."

Mary did not doubt what I said, she just asked how it would happen.

I explained. "God will send His Spirit,

so that your baby will be the Son of God. Your elderly relative, Elizabeth, is also going to have a baby. She is now six months pregnant. With God nothing is impossible.”

Mary thoughtfully replied, “I am the Lord’s servant. Whatever He asks, I am willing to do. I will do my part as you have said.”

I then went to visit Joseph, the man Mary was engaged to. I told him that Mary’s baby was a gift from God. He, too, accepted my message with great joy.

When I left Mary and then Joseph, I rejoiced, as did all the other angels. God’s plan to save humankind was being put into action.

### Debriefing

Ask: **What would you think if an angel suddenly appeared to you in church?** (I would be surprised, afraid, etc.)

**Why did Zechariah find it so difficult to believe the angel?** (He and Elizabeth had prayed for a long time for a child; now they were too old.) **What was special about their baby?** (He would lead people back to God.)

**What was the difference between Mary’s and Zechariah’s reaction?** (Mary accepted what Gabriel said; Zechariah questioned it.)

**Both babies were special gifts from God. God sent them because He loves us. Let’s say our message together:**



**GOD’S GIFTS OF LOVE FILL ME WITH HOPE AND JOY.**

### Memory Verse

Write the memory verse on the chalkboard or a large sheet of paper. Say the verse together. Repeat it and mouth the first

#### You Need:

- chalkboard or
- large sheet of paper
- chalk or marker

word instead of saying it aloud. Continue repeating it until you “say” the whole verse silently. The memory verse is: **“The Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name” (Luke 1:49, NIV).** Repeat until all know the verse.

### Bible Study

Before Sabbath School, hide six pictures of babies around the room. Write the texts listed below, one each on the back of the pictures.

Form six small groups. Say: **God loves babies, children, and adults. All are special to Him. The Bible tells about some special babies.**

**Six pictures of babies are hidden around the room. When I give the signal, each group is to find a picture and look up the text written on the back.**

**Be ready to tell the rest of the class who the baby was and what made that baby so special.** Adults assist as necessary.

Exodus 2:1-10 (Moses)

Judges 13:6, 7, 24 (Samson)

1 Samuel 1:17-20 (Samuel)

2 Kings 4:11-17 (Shunammite’s son)

Genesis 21:1-3 (Isaac)

Genesis 30:22-24 (Joseph)

Allow time for each group to report, naming the baby and the special circumstances of its birth.

### Debriefing

Ask: **Does God have special plans only for Jesus, John, and the other babies we have just learned about? Why?**

**Yes, God has a special plan for**

#### You Need:

- Bibles
- six pictures of babies



each of us. He promises to show us the way.

**Let's look up Proverbs 3:5, 6.**

Have one of the children read it. **How can we be sure that we are following God's special plan for us?** (We can study the Bible, listen to messages in church and Sabbath School, learn His plan by asking others to help us under-

stand it, etc.)

**When we read the Bible, we discover more about the wonderful gifts of love God gives to each of us. Let's say our message together:**



**GOD'S GIFTS OF LOVE FILL ME WITH HOPE AND JOY.**

### 3

## Applying the Lesson

#### You Need:

- *Sing for Joy* songbook
- shakers/rhythm instruments (optional)

#### Celebrating God's Greatest Gift

Spend some time singing Christmas songs and songs reflecting our joy about God's gift of Jesus, our Savior, to us.

#### Debriefing

Ask: **What songs did you like to sing? Why?**

**What happens to you when you sing?** (It usually makes you feel better, happy, joyful, etc.)

What is the best gift that God has given to us?

**Yes, He sent His Son Jesus to come to this earth. Jesus showed us how to live. When He comes again, He wants to take us to be with Him in heaven. Aren't you glad for that wonderful gift?**

**Let's say our message together:**



**GOD'S GIFTS OF LOVE FILL ME WITH HOPE AND JOY.**

## Sharing the Lesson

### A. Christmas Project

Find out about a Christmas project in your area. Talk with the leader of your church's community services. Discuss the project with the children, invite them to participate, and during the month of December collect what is needed.

Prepare a letter to parents soliciting their support of the children as they participate. Ideas: Have the children wrap presents and/or make cards as appropriate for your project.

#### Debriefing

Ask: **How many gifts from God can you name in a minute, starting now?** Stop the children after a minute.

**God has given us many gifts. What do you think about these gifts? How do God's gifts make you feel?** (happy, joyful, grateful, glad, etc.)

**By taking part in [name project], we can share our joy in Jesus. Take this letter to your parents and tell them about our project. Ask them to help you take part.**

**Let's say our message together:**



**GOD'S GIFTS OF LOVE FILL ME WITH HOPE AND JOY.**

### B. Angel

Have the children cut out and decorate their angel. (See page 152.) On the angel write the memory verse: "The Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name" (Luke 1:49, NIV).

Form pairs. Say: **Think of things that seem difficult or make you sad. Share them with your partner. Your partner then holds up their angel and says, "The Mighty One has done great things for me. He gives us gifts of love and hope."**

**Take your paper angel home with you and share it with someone this week. Tell them about Jesus, God's gift to you and to them, and say your memory verse for them.**

#### Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **Who is the "mighty one" who does great things for us? How do you feel about a God who is so powerful?** (happy, secure, grateful, glad, etc.) **How does God show His love for us?** (He gives us gifts of love.) **What is God's greatest gift to us?** (Jesus) **How does that make you feel? Let's say our message together:**



**GOD'S GIFTS OF LOVE FILL ME WITH HOPE AND JOY.**

### Closing

Gather the children in a circle. If appropriate, pray for your Christmas project. Thank God for His gifts, especially His gift of Jesus, who gives us hope and joy.

#### You Need:

- information about a community Christmas project
- stop watch or watch with second hand
- letter to parents (see activity)

#### You Need:

- outline of an angel for each child (see p. 152)
- glitter glue
- markers
- paper and/or fabric scraps
- scissors



## Promised Babies

### References

Luke 1:5-38;  
Matthew 1:18-21;  
*The Desire of Ages*,  
pp. 97-101

### Memory Verse

“The Mighty One  
has done great  
things for me—holy  
is his name” (Luke  
1:49, NIV).

### The Message

God’s gifts of love  
fill me with hope  
and joy.

*Has your Mom or Dad ever promised you something special? Something that you have wanted for a long time? How did you feel when it happened? That might have been how Zechariah felt when God sent Gabriel to give him a promise.*

Zechariah, a priest, was serving in the temple. The priests took turns, and it was his week to serve. Every day that week he was to enter the Holy Place. There he would burn incense and lift up the prayers of the people to God. One day he entered the Holy Place as usual. But this was not to be a “usual” day. A strange thing happened.

Zechariah was standing before the golden altar. The cloud of incense was rising up before God. Suddenly, an angel appeared on the right side of the altar. Zechariah was startled and filled with fear. Then the angel spoke. “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah. God has heard your prayers. Your wife will have a baby boy. You are to name him John. The Holy Spirit will be with him. He will lead many people to change their lives, to be ready to meet the Lord.”

Zechariah couldn’t believe what he was hearing. He and his wife Elizabeth did not have any children. For many years they had prayed for a child. But they were too old now. People of their age did not have children.

“How do I know that what you say is true?” he asked. “My wife and I are old, too old to have a baby.”

The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. God sent

me with this special message for you. Because you did not believe, you will not speak until your son is born. That will be the sign that what I have said is true.” Then the angel disappeared.

People in the temple courtyard were wondering what had happened to Zechariah. When he left the Holy Place, he tried to tell the people what he had seen. But just as the angel had said, he could not speak. He could only write and try to use sign language.

Soon after the angel’s visit, Elizabeth became pregnant. God had kept His promise. And when the baby was born, Zechariah could speak again. “His name shall be John,” he told their friends and neighbors.

Six months after visiting Zechariah, Gabriel brought good news to another person, Elizabeth’s young cousin, Mary.

“Greetings, God is with you,” Gabriel said to the young woman.

Mary was startled. She wondered about this stranger. Why did he say, “God is with you”? She felt nervous and a bit afraid.

Gabriel continued. “Don’t be afraid. God is going to give you a son. You must name him Jesus. He will be known as the Son of God. And He will reign over a kingdom that will never end!”

Mary was very young, and she was nervous. She wondered how this could be. How could she have a baby?

“Your child will be created by God,” Gabriel said. “Your cousin, Elizabeth, is also having a baby. Nothing is impossible for God.”

Mary believed Gabriel. “I am God’s servant,” she said. “Let it be as you have said.”

Gabriel then went to visit Joseph, the man Mary was to marry. He told Joseph that Mary would have a baby—the Son of God. And Joseph believed his message. He would be the earthly father of the Son of God.



This is grace—a promise that God gives for something that seems impossible. God has promised to send Jesus to us again, that we might live with Him forever. He promised a son to Zechariah and Elizabeth. And He kept His word. He promised a son to Mary and Joseph. And He kept His word. God keeps His promises. Jesus will come again!

## Daily Activities

### Sabbath

- If possible, go for a walk or ride. Count the churches you see. How are they different from the temple in Jesus' day? How are they different from your church?
- Share your lesson story with your family. Write your memory verse on a long strip of paper. Roll both ends toward the middle to make a scroll. Use it to teach the verse to your family.
- Ask your family: How many gifts can you think of that begin with the letters of the word *angel*? (For example: A—animals, aunt, apple.)
- Sing songs of praise, then thank God for His many gifts and a place to worship.

### Sunday

- For family worship, read and discuss Luke 1:5-25. Why couldn't Zechariah speak? How did he communicate with the people? With Elizabeth?
- Ask your family not to speak during one meal today. How will you ask people to pass something to you?
- How many ways can you send a message to a friend you can't talk with?
- Thank God that you can speak.

### Monday

- Read and discuss Luke 1:57-66 during family worship. Did God's promise to Zechariah come true? What did Zechariah tell their friends and neighbors? Why? To learn more about John, read Matthew 3:1-16, Mark 1:1-12, or Luke 3:1-18.
- Ask your parents to show you your baby pictures and talk about when you were a baby. Plan to visit someone who has a baby or toddler today. Do something to help care for that child.
- Thank God for Jesus and John.

### Tuesday

- For family worship today, read and discuss Luke 1:67-80. What did Zechariah say his son

would be called? What would he do with his life?

- Write or sing your own song of praise. Ask each family member to begin by saying, "I praise God for . . ." Put their sentences together to make a psalm of praise.
- Sing some praise songs, then offer prayers of thanksgiving.

### Wednesday

- For family worship today, read and discuss Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-24. What did you learn about Mary? About Jesus? About Joseph? What is the meaning of "his kingdom shall never end"?
- What does it mean to be "the Lord's servant"? How can you use your voice to be the Lord's servant? Sing songs about serving God; then thank Him for helping you do so.

### Thursday

- Ask if you can help make angel-shaped cookies today. Share them during supper.
- Read and discuss Luke 1:39-56 with your family. What did Elizabeth say about Mary? What did Mary say about herself? About the Lord? Who is "the Mighty One"?
- Ask your family: "What has the Mighty One done for us?" Make a list, then thank God for His wonderful gifts.

### Friday

- Act out your Bible lesson during family worship. Who will be the angel Gabriel? Zechariah? Elizabeth? Mary? Joseph?
- Ask each person to name their favorite Bible promise and tell why. Find and read each one. Does God keep His promises? How do you know?
- Sing praise songs; then thank God for keeping His promises. Tell Him how you feel about living in heaven with Him. And ask Him to send Jesus soon.