

**The Thoughtful Gift**  
Lesson 01 in the series, "The Gift"

**I. God gave Zechariah and Elizabeth an amazingly thoughtful gift in their old age.**

"When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old. One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, 'Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.' Zechariah said to the angel, 'How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.' Then the angel said, 'I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.'" Luke 1: 5-20 (NLT)

a. God had been planning his amazing gift to Zechariah & Elizabeth for a long time.

"The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said, 'He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, prepare the way for the LORD's coming! Clear the road for him!'" Matthew 3:3 (NLT) (Isaiah 40:3)

"I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives. His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers."

Malachi 4:5-6 (NLT)

*Life Application:* God has been thinking about me for a long time.

"You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand!" Psalm 139:16-18 (NLT)

- He understands me. "The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unending love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. For his unending love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust." Psalm 103:8-14 (NLT)
- He delights in me. "God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure." Ephesians 1:5 (NLT)
- He has a purpose for me. "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

b. God gives amazingly thoughtful gifts ever because He is amazingly thoughtful.

"Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! For who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice?" Romans 11:33-34 (NLT)

"O LORD my God, you have performed many wonders for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. You have no equal. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them."

Psalm 40:5 (NLT)

*Life Application:* We must wait for God to answer our prayers and trust his timing.

“Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires. Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you... Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act.” Psalm 37:4-7 (NLT)

## II. God’s thoughtful gift to Zechariah and Elizabeth brought many people to salvation.

“When it was time for Elizabeth’s baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her... they wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth said, ‘No! His name is John!’ ‘What?’ they exclaimed. ‘There is no one in all your family by that name.’ So they used gestures to ask the baby’s father what he wanted to name him. He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s surprise he wrote, ‘His name is John.’ Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God. Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood... Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, ‘What will this child turn out to be?’ For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way. Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy: ‘Praise the Lord, the God of Israel... He has sent us a mighty Savior... just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago... And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins.’” Luke 1:57-77 (NLT)

*Note:* “John” means “The Lord is gracious.” (giving undeserved kindness)

“God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News.” 2 Timothy 1:9-10 (NLT)

*Life Application:* We must give careful thought as to how we can reflect God’s thoughtfulness to others.

“If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work. Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. Again I say, don’t get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people’s hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil’s trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.” 2 Timothy 2:21-26 (NLT)

John Schmidt • 11-27-16 • [john@centeringlives.com](mailto:john@centeringlives.com)

## Discussion Questions

1. What is the most thoughtful gift you have ever received? What made it so special?
2. What is the most thoughtful gift you have ever given to someone else? Why did you put so much time and effort into giving it?
3. Read Luke 1:5-20. Why was Zechariah so skeptical? How would you have responded to Gabriel's announcement if you had been in his shoes? Has God ever surprised you by answering a prayer request on which you had given up? If so, what happened?
4. Read 2 Timothy 1:9-10. How does it make you feel to know that God was planning the first Christmas before time began? Now read Ephesians 2:10. How does it make you feel to know that God has plans for you that he has been making before time began? Share with your group some of the things you are sure God wants you to accomplish?
5. Read Matthew 3:3 & Malachi 4:5-6. What was John the Baptist's role? Why would God choose an old priest and his wife to raise him?
6. How will you keep Christ in Christmas at your house this year?
7. Read Psalm 27:14 & 37:4-7. What does it look like to wait on the Lord? Why does it take courage to do so? Share one prayer request regarding a relationship or circumstance that is causing you to wait on the Lord? Spend some time praying for each other.

8. Discuss the following quotations:

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son..." Paul in Galatians 4:4

"I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time." The Angel Gabriel in Luke 1:19-20

"God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say 'thank you?'" William Arthur Ward

"Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given." G. Campbell Morgan

"And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins." Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, in Luke 1:76-77 (NLT)