

A Good Shepherd Story of Jesus

Birth of John the Baptizer

Adapted by:
Brenda J. Stobbe

**Illustrations by:
Jennifer Schoeneberg**

2nd Edition
coGood Shepherd, Inc. 1991, 1992
Good Shepherd, a registered trademark of Good Shepherd, Inc.
All Rights Reserved
Printed in U.S.A.

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER MA TERIALS

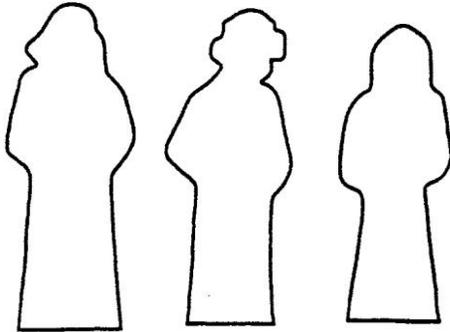
- medium wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden Zechariah figure
 - wooden Elizabeth figure
 - 3 wooden onlooker figures
 - wooden angel figure
 - wooden temple



Zechariah



Elizabeth



Onlookers



Angel

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER ... LUKE 1:5-80

ACTIONS

After speaking, go to the shelf holding this story and carry the basket back to the circle. Place it in front of you on the floor.

After speaking, allow 10-15 seconds of silence as you reverently touch one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place Zechariah figure to left of center. Place Elizabeth (baby side away from view) next to him.

Shake your head sadly.

Place the temple in the center and move Zechariah to it. Place the angel next to Zechariah.

Shake your head and smile.

Lean forward and look puzzled.

Lean forward and look puzzled.

Put your hand to your lips and shake your head. As you say "born", put angel back into the basket.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. Will you please make silence with me so I can find all the words to the story?

Before Jesus was born there was a priest named Zechariah. His wife was named Elizabeth.

Elizabeth couldn't have any children.

One day in the temple when Zechariah was praying an angel of God came to him. Zechariah was afraid when he saw the angel.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid. God heard your prayer and Elizabeth will have a son and you will name him John. He will be very special and will make the people ready for the Lord. "

Then Zechariah asked, "How will I know this is true? Elizabeth is very old and so am I."

The angel said, "I'm Gabriel and I was sent by God to bring you this good news. But because you didn't believe me, you won't be able to speak until the day the baby is born."

Place the three onlookers near the front of the temple. Lift your hands as though you don't understand.

Point to your lips and shake your head showing that you can't speak.

Move Zechariah and Elizabeth away to the right.

Nod your head and smile.

Touch your lips and shake your head.

Nod your head.

Place your right hand in your curved left arm as though holding a baby.

Turn Elizabeth around so baby shows, then bring the three onlookers close to Elizabeth.

Shake your head firmly.

Place Zechariah near the group. "Write" on an imaginary tablet in your palm.

Touch your lips and nod and smile.

Hold your palms out and up.

The people outside wondered what was taking Zechariah so long.

When he came out he made signs to them because he couldn't speak.

The people thought he had seen a vision.

Elizabeth did become pregnant.

While she was pregnant her husband, Zechariah, couldn't speak at all.

Elizabeth had a visit from her cousin Mary during this time.

Mary was pregnant, too.

When it was time for Elizabeth to give birth, she had a son.

All of her friends and relatives wanted to call the baby Zechariah, like his father.

But Elizabeth said, "No, his name shall be called John."

Then to settle the issue, Zechariah took a writing tablet, because he still couldn't speak.

On the tablet he wrote "His name is John."

Then suddenly Zechariah could speak again.

The words he spoke were words of joy and prophesy.

He told the people that John was the one who would make ready the way for the Messiah.

The baby named John grew to be the man called John the Baptizer.

He spent much time making the people of God ready for Jesus,

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder how Zechariah felt when he couldn't talk?

I wonder what Elizabeth thought when her husband couldn't speak?

I wonder what Mary and Elizabeth talked about when they visited?

Put all the wooden pieces back into the basket.

After speaking, stand and carefully carry the basket back to its shelf. Return to the circle.

Be sure all children have had an opportunity to choose the work they will do before dismissing them as a group,

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so if you choose to work with this story today you will remember how to use them.

Watch carefully where I return this story. Then, if you choose to make this your work today or another day, you will always know where to find them.

I wonder what you will do for your work today? Will you do the craft or paint? Or will you try to make another story your own? I would love to hear it when you are ready to tell it. Let's go around the circle and choose our work.

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER ••• TEACHER HELPS

The life of John the Baptizer is a bridge between the Old Testament and the New. He is as much fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament as is the Savior. The author of Luke saw the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5 in the birth of John (note: Luke 1:17). This special baby is given to his parents after many years of barrenness. By this time we should begin to understand that a child born to a barren woman was an important birth. In the Old Testament

the births of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph keep the promises of the covenant alive from generation to generation. The Old Testament judge, Samson, lived under the same set of Nazarite laws (no strong drink, hair not to be cut, not to go near a dead body) as does John in his lifetime (New Testament).

John, Jesus' second cousin, is to be the forerunner, the messenger for the Messiah. His task was to ready the people of God for the words of the Messiah. His birth to the old priest and his wife was a sign that he was special and his tasks in life would be special.

The priests took turns with responsibilities in the temple in Jerusalem. It would appear that it was now Zechariah's turn to offer incense alone in the temple. This was considered a great honor. (Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible, edited by David and Pat Alexander, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973, p. 515) While Zechariah was alone in the temple the words of the Lord came to him, promising an end to Elizabeth's barrenness. Zechariah doubted because of his and Elizabeth's age and wanted to know how he could be sure. The angel, identified here as Gabriel, told the old priest that his inability to speak could be his sign.

During her pregnancy, Elizabeth was a special source of strength to her cousin, Mary, who was also pregnant. Mary's own questions may have been set to rest a great deal by her time with Elizabeth.

When a child was born it would have been customary to name him after his father or grandfather. The name John, ordained by the angel, surprised the people who gathered to celebrate the birth of the child to the priest and his wife. The words of Zechariah when he could once again speak were God's words to the people about what John would become.

John lived, not only to preach repentance to all who would listen, but to baptize many. He lived to baptize Jesus and then, later on, question the work of Jesus. He wanted to know if Jesus was really the Messiah. (See Luke 7: 11-30) John did not live to see Jesus' death, but was beheaded by Herod at the request of Herod's niece.

The emphasis for the children is that God was in the events of John's birth and God had special plans for this son born to an old priest and his wife. It also helps to say to the children that Jesus and John were second cousins. This is a comfortable and common understanding that will help them realize the relationship between the two men.

The first two wondering questions have to do with the feelings and thoughts of Elizabeth and Zechariah when Zechariah couldn't talk. Ask the children how they would communicate if they couldn't speak. Some of them will probably respond in sign, as they are becoming more and more comfortable with it. Others may say that they would write things down, like Zechariah. They may also respond that Elizabeth and Zechariah knew something was going to be special about their child.

The final question is a wonderment I've had for years. Mary and Elizabeth no doubt were each other's moral support through these last months of Elizabeth's pregnancy and the first ones of Mary's. The children will probably say that they talked about the babies they were going to have, the special angel who came to them, and the fact that Zechariah couldn't speak. Let them imagine these conversations, it will only help them grow and not harm their knowledge or theology at all.

SUGGESTED DISCURSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

According to the Bible, John was chosen to be the man to tell people that the Messiah had arrived. Do you believe John was predestined to be the "forerunner" of Jesus? Did he have any choice about what to do with his life?

Take turns trying to tell someone something without talking. How did you feel? Imagine Zechariah waiting almost 9 months to talk! How do you think he felt?

Do you think Zechariah was being punished by God for doubting? Why would God have made him unable to speak?

When Zechariah was finally able to speak again the first thing he did was praise God. Think of times when you couldn't do something because of a broken bone or illness. What was the first thing you did when you were well again?