John the Baptist Is Born • Lesson 1



# Bible Point - All things are possible with God.

# **Bible Verse**

"For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

# **Growing Closer to Jesus**

Students will

learn that with God all things are possible, imagine "impossible" things God might help them do, and think of ways to rely on God in difficult situations.

# **Teacher Enrichment**

# **Bible Basis**

John the Baptist is born.



The story of the birth of John the Baptist has several parallels to the birth of Jesus. It was a miraculous birth (Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and barren), it was announced by an angel, John's name was given by God in advance as was Jesus' name, and both of the boys were the fulfillment of prophecy, destined to fulfill certain purposes before God.

Think about the penalty Zechariah paid for his lack of faith: He was unable to tell anyone the exciting news that the angel had announced to him. Any soon-to-be father would be proud

to announce the great things his son would to do, but Zechariah couldn't speak. And on top of that, he probably had a rough time explaining why he couldn't speak!

God performed miracles in the two births we're looking at this month. He made Zechariah unable to speak, and then made him able to speak again. He sent angels with announcements to Zechariah and to Mary and Joseph. Our God is a miracle-working God, and anything is possible with him. Use this lesson to help your students begin to understand and trust in God's power.

Other Scriptures used in this lesson are Matthew 18:19-20 and Luke 18:27.

## Prayer

- Read Matthew 3:1-3. How does this description of John's actions compare to the angel's prophecy about him in today's passage?
- What "impossible" thing would you like to have God do for you right now?
- Pray: God, use me to teach your children to trust in your power when they...

### **Before the Lesson**

Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed on the chart.

Make photocopies of the "Hands-On Fun at Home" handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your students. Pray for your students and for God's direction as you teach the lesson.

# This Lesson at a Glance

	What Students Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Attention Grabber	Picture This!—Tell teammates good news without speaking.	Index cards, markers, paper	
Bible Exploration & Application	What Will the Neighbors Say?—Read the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth from Luke 1:5-23, 57-66, and describe what happened from neighbors' points of view.	Bibles, "The Neighbors Are Talking" handout (p. 19), scissors, paper, pencils	
	<b>Crazy Clown Toss</b> —Attempt an impossible feat; read Luke 1:13-14, 18, and 37; and listen to the Key Verse song.	Bibles, 2 cups, masking tape, CD player	
L'IVOIL!	<b>Mission Impossible</b> —Create a strategy to help them face difficult situations, and read Matthew 18:19-20 and Luke 18:27.	Bibles, newsprint, markers, CD player	
Closing	It's Possible!—Write on shapes the "impossible" things God might help them do.	White poster board, utility knife (for teacher use only) or scissors, list from "Mission Impossible" activity, markers, CD player	

12





Explain to the kids that whenever you ring the *clanging bell*, they are to stop talking, raise their hands, and focus on you. Explain that it's important to respond to this signal quickly so the class can do as many fun activities as possible. Practice the signal two or three times.

# Attention Grabber Picture This!

#### **SUPPLIES:** index cards, markers, paper

Form groups of no more than four. Give each group four index cards, markers, and paper.

Say: You'll have three minutes to think of some really exciting news you'd like to tell someone right away. It might be something that happened at school or something you got in the mail. Write one example on each of your group's index cards.

After three minutes, ring the *clanging bell* and wait for kids to respond. Then have one person from each group collect the cards and exchange them for another group's cards.

Say: Take turns choosing one of the cards your group received, but don't show that card to anyone else. Each of you will take turns giving clues to your teammates so they can guess the good news that's written on your card. There's only one catch: You can't say or write a word. Use your markers and paper to draw pictures of your good news, or act out the good news without talking. You have five minutes to see how many good news messages your group can guess.

After five minutes, ring the *clanging bell* and wait for kids to respond. Then ask any groups who guessed all their good news to stand and take a bow as everyone applauds.

Ask: • What was it like when you had something important to say but you weren't able to talk or use words? (It was silly; I was upset; I felt smart, because I found a way to tell my team without talking.)

Say: Today we're going to read about a man named Zechariah who lost his voice after an angel told him his wife Elizabeth was going to have a baby. For nine months—a whole school year—Zechariah couldn't talk.

Ask: • How was this activity like what happened to Zechariah? (He had great news to tell, but he couldn't talk; he probably had to draw or act things out to get his messages across.)

Say: Telling something important without being able to talk may have seemed impossible at first. But even without your voices, you were able to communicate your good news to your friends. We should think twice before we say something can't happen. Even when things seem impossible to us,  $\blacktriangleright$  all things are possible with God.



It's important to say the Bible Point just as it's written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point over and over throughout the lesson will help kids remember it and apply it to their lives.



Get to know the students in your class. When you meet your students for the first time, call them by name. Find out about their lives away from church. Learn and recognize their strengths. Make affirmation a regular part of your class. Be sure to compliment your students when you see them practicing what they've learned.



Circulate among groups and offer ideas. Encourage kids to speak quietly so other groups don't overhear their discussions.

As groups exchange cards, be sure each person will have a new card to draw. You may need to take an extra card from one group and give it to another.





If you have groups of three or fewer students, have students fill more than one role. If you have groups of five or more students, assign more than one student to be an Encourager.



SUPPLIES: Bibles, "The Neighbors are Talking" handout (p. 19), scissors, pencils, paper

Before class, photocopy "The Neighbors Are Talking" handout. Cut apart the neighborhood assignments. Say: Let's find out more about what happened to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Distribute Bibles, and ask several volunteers to read aloud Luke 1:5-20. Assign each volunteer three to five verses. Have other kids follow along in their Bibles.

Say: Imagine you're one of Zechariah and Elizabeth's neighbors. One day everything seems normal, and the next day this older couple down the street is going to have a baby! You see this whole story taking place, and you have lots to say about it! After you receive your assignment, you'll have five minutes to read your passage, discuss it, and practice telling your section of the story from the neighbors' points of view.

Form four "neighborhoods," and give each neighborhood paper, a pencil, and an assignment from the handout. Tell each group to choose a Reader to read its Bible passage to the group, a Recorder to write responses to the questions, an Encourager to urge everyone to participate in the discussion, and a Reporter to share the neighborhood's comments with the class.

As students work, be ready to offer help to any groups that may need guidance to complete the assignment.

After five minutes, ring the *clanging bell*, and gather the neighborhood groups in a circle to tell the story. Beginning with Neighborhood A, have the Reader read the verses that describe the events his or her neighborhood witnessed. Then have the Reporter share the neighbors' reactions. Other group members may help if the Reporter omits details. Continue with Neighborhoods B, C, and D. When all the groups have reported, ask:

• Why do you think people were so interested in Zechariah and Elizabeth's baby? (Because Zechariah and Elizabeth were too old to have a baby, but they had one anyway; because Zechariah lost his voice.)

• What do you think people must have thought about God after seeing these things happen? (That God can do anything; that you never know what God might do; that God is powerful.)



Say: God did something very special when he gave Zechariah and Elizabeth a baby boy named John. If people hadn't seen this happen, they might have thought it was impossible. But God was making preparations for another amazing birth, the birth of Jesus. If we didn't know about Elizabeth's baby, we might think it was impossible for Mary to have a

baby. But now we know that  $\blacktriangleright$ <u>all things are possible with God.</u> And because of that we can look forward to the miraculous birth of Jesus.



# Crazy Clown Toss

SUPPLIES: Bibles, 2 cups, masking tape, CD player



Make a line on the floor with masking tape, and set the two cups six feet away from the line. Gather kids together.

Say: The angel's message must have surprised Zechariah. Let's look at that part of the story again. Ask volunteers to read the angel's message in Luke 1:13-14 and Zechariah's response in Luke 1:18 as other kids follow along in their Bibles.

Say: The idea of Elizabeth having a baby seemed impossible to Zechariah. His first words to the angel show that he didn't understand how this could happen. I wonder what you'd say if you were asked to do something you thought was impossible.

Form two teams, and have each team form a line behind the masking tape. Give each team five *stacking clowns*. Say: When I say "go," the first person on each team should try to toss the *stacking clowns* into the cup. See if you can get all five clowns into the cup in 15 seconds. When I ring the *clanging bell* and say "change," you must immediately gather the *stacking clowns* and give them to the next person in your line. Oh...and you'll need to keep your eyes closed while you're throwing. No peaking!

Begin the activity, and ring the *clanging bell* and say "change" every 15 seconds. Give kids each several turns, if you have time. Then collect the *stacking clowns*, and place them out of sight.

Have kids stand in a circle. Say: **Raise your hands when you think of an** answer to each question I ask. I'd like to hear lots of different, interesting answers. When someone gives an answer you've thought of and you don't have anything more to add, you may sit down. When everyone is seated, I'll ask you to stand again for the next question.

Ask: • What was your reaction when I told you the rules of the activity? (I thought it sounded impossible; a little excited; I didn't think I'd do very well.)

• Did you think there was any way you could get all the clowns in the cup? Why or why not? (No way, it was too challenging; no, not even with my eyes open; maybe I'd get one or two.)

• How is the way you felt about the clown toss like the way Zechariah may have felt when he heard that Elizabeth would have a baby? (He thought it was impossible; he didn't understand how that could happen.)

• What are some ways we could get all the clowns in the cups if we tried again? (Not have our eyes closed; stand a little closer; give each person more time.)

Say: Sometimes things seem impossible to us, like our clown toss challenge. We don't always see how things might work out. We can understand how Zechariah might have felt. But let's take a look at how God sees these things.

Have children turn in their Bibles to **LUKe 1:37**, and ask for a volunteer to read the verse aloud: ► **"For nothing is impossible with God."** 

Say: Even when things seem impossible to us,  $\blacktriangleright$  all things are possible with God. Let's listen to a song to help us remember that. Play "Nothing Is Impossible" (Luke 1:37) (track 2) on the *CD*. If you have time, play the song a second time as you lead kids in singing along. Lyrics are in the back of this teacher guide.



As you teach third- and fourthgraders, keep in mind the following aspects of their mental development:

- They can read well.
- They like to be challenged but don't like to fail.
- They need to feel independent and don't always want help from teachers.
- They understand cause and effect and like to arrange and organize information.



**Bible Insight** 

Luke alternated the stories of

Jesus and John the Baptist as

a literary device to link these

stories to the prophecies

the promised Messiah.

of the Old Testament. In so

doing, Luke clearly identified

John as a continuance of the prophetic line and Jesus as

#### HANDS-ON BIBLE

Give each student two glasses of water and a cork. It would be wise to have towels on hand as well! Make sure kids have their *Hands-On Bibles.* 

Have students turn to Luke 1 in their Bibles and complete the "Is That Possible?" activity found there. When kids are finished, ask:



• Did you think it would be possible to make the cork float in the middle of the glass? Why or why not? (No, because it kept bumping against the sides; yes, I knew there had to be some way.)

• How can this experiment help you remember that nothing is impossible for God? (I can remember that even when things seem impossible, God can still find a way; I can remember that I don't always know how things can work out, but God does know; God can make anything work out; nothing is too hard for God.)



# Mission Impossible

SUPPLIES: Bibles, newsprint, markers, CD player



Form a large circle. Write the heading "Impossible Missions" on the newsprint, and choose a volunteer to list ideas as kids mention them.

Say: Have you ever said, "That's impossible"? We may think lots of things are so difficult they could never happen. Let's make a list of difficult or impossible situations you might face each day. For example, spending an entire day without arguing with your brother or sister may seem impossible to you. What other impossible situations can you think of?

Allow time for kids to think of impossible situations and for the volunteer to list them. Then say: **Just because something's impossible for people doesn't mean it's really impossible. I'll show you what I mean.** Distribute Bibles, and ask a volunteer to read aloud **Luke 18:27**. Have other students follow along in their Bibles.

Ask: • Why do you think God can do things that are impossible for people? (Because he's God; God is more powerful than people; God knows everything.)

• What are some ways God can help you do things that seem impossible? (God can change my heart so I won't get angry at my little sister; God can give me patience when I have to wait for something.)

Form no more than four teams. Say: Look over our list of impossible situations, and pick the three you think would be hardest. You'll have about two minutes to decide.

Play "Mission Impossible" (track 3) on the *CD* as teams work. When the music stops, call for kids' attention by ringing the *clanging bell*. Wait for kids to respond, and then have a representative from each group put an X next to the situations on the newsprint that his or her group decided were most difficult. Count the number of X's next to each situation, and then announce the four most impossible situations. Assign each team one of the four situations. Say: **You've just been assigned to a Mission Impossible team. Your assignment is to develop a plan to help us rely on God when we face the situation you've been assigned.** 

Distribute markers and newsprint. Have each team choose a Recorder who will listen to the team's suggestions and write its plan and a Reporter who'll share the plan with the class. Encourage students to choose roles different from those they had in the previous activity.

#### Say: You'll have about four minutes to create your plan. Go!

You might play "Mission Impossible" (track 3) or "Nothing Is Impossible" (Luke 1:37) (track 2) on the *CD* again while students are working. After three or four minutes, ring the *clanging bell* and wait for kids to respond. Then form a large circle. Have each team's Reporter share the team's plan with the class. Then ask:

• Was it easy or difficult to think of a plan for handling these impossible situations? Explain. (Easy, there are lots of ways to learn to trust God; difficult, we don't like to face difficult things.)

• How can God help us handle these impossible situations? (God will help us know what to say and do; God can make things turn out for the best.)

Say: Believing that God can do anything can have amazing results in our lives. Listen to what Jesus says about the power of faith. Have a volunteer read aloud Matthew 18:19-20 as other kids follow along in their Bibles. Then ask:

• What does this passage say about asking God for help? (If two believers agree on what they ask God, he will do it; Jesus promises to be with us whenever two or three of us gather together.)

Say: Whenever we face a situation that seems impossible to us, we need to remember that we're not alone.  $\blacktriangleright$ <u>*all things are possible with God,*</u> and we can pray and ask God to help us. Find a partner, and take a moment to pray for the impossible situations you talked about with your teams.

Give kids a minute or two to pray for the situations. Then close by saying "amen!"



If students seem stumped, ask questions such as, "What's the hardest thing about making friends?""What's hard about getting along with people?" "When is it tough to do what your parents say to do?" By asking such questions, you'll help kids think of their own examples.

To enhance this activity, you might want to play the role of a secret agent, complete with trench coat, sunglasses, and briefcase. When you hand teams their newsprint, you could take it out of a file labeled "Top Secret."



# Closing It's Possible!

**SUPPLIES:** white poster board, utility knife (for teacher use only) or scissors, list from "Mission Impossible" activity, markers, CD player



Before class, use the utility knife to cut the poster board into 5-inch shapes, such as circles and squares. Make sure your shapes are "plump" enough for kids to draw pictures inside; stars and triangles are not recommended. You'll need one shape for each student.

Say: Whenever we face a situation that seems impossible to us, we might feel like we're alone in the dark. But we're not really alone, because  $\blacktriangleright$  <u>all things</u> <u>are possible with God.</u> Let's make something to remind us of this wonderful truth.

I want you to look at our list of impossible situations again. This time, think about one of the situations that may be true in your life. Maybe you're going through one of these situations that make you feel like you're alone in the dark, and you just need God's light to guide you through it.

As kids consider impossible situations, give each one a poster-board shape.





Say: The next thing you're going to do is make a picture that shows your impossible situation. This can be an actual drawing of your impossible situation. Or you could draw a symbol that shows how you feel in that situation. For example, you could have dark colors swirling together into a big glob.

Provide markers, and give kids time to decorate their shapes with pictures or symbols that remind them of impossible situations. Instruct kids to leave a small border around the shape to write on later.

As kids draw, circulate with the *glow pen* so that students can write "All things are possible with God" around the border. Play "Christmas Music Medley" (track 4) and "Nothing Is Impossible" (Luke 1:37) (track 2) on the *CD* in the background as children work.

When everyone has had a chance to draw and write, say:

When you feel like you're in the dark with an impossible situation, you can always turn to God. He will light your way. You used *glow-in-the-dark ink* to write on your crafts. Take these crafts home, and place them near a lamp. Every time you turn off your lamp or light, you'll be reminded that  $\blacktriangleright all$  things are possible with God.

Find a partner, and take a moment to pray for the impossible situations you drew. Ask God to guide you with his light as you face these situations.

Give kids a minute to pray, and then close by thanking God for his awesome power.



# Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

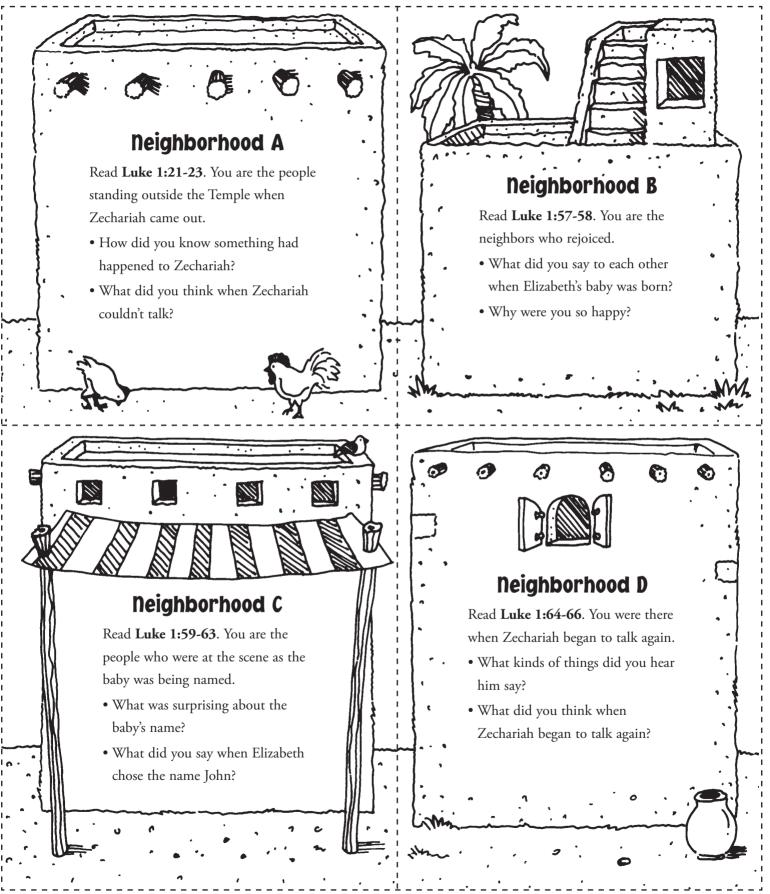
Photocopy the "Hands-On Fun at Home" handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your kids. Encourage kids and parents to use the handout to spark meaningful discussion on this week's topic.





Instead of having kids write directly on their shapes with the *glow pen*, squirt a small amount of the glow paint onto a piece of cardboard or a small plate for a group of three or four kids to share. Have kids dip toothpicks into the paint and write with them. This will ensure that no kids are waiting around, and it makes it easier to write with a fine tip.

# The Neighbors Are Talking



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Bible Verse: "For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

# Possibilities

Practice seeing new possibilities by playing this game. Choose three or four common objects in your house, such as a spoon, a box, a sock, and an envelope. Let everyone take turns suggesting a different way to use each object. Name as many new possibilities for each object as you can. Then go on to the next object. Finish by taking turns naming something you think each of your family members might do well someday.

"Adopt" someone who's alone in your community this Christmas season.

Check with your church or community agencies for names of people who don't have families living nearby. Talk about ways your family could show God's love to those people. Plan to do something for or with that person once a week during the Christmas season.



Ask each person in your family to fill out a list like the one below. One night after dinner, share your lists as a family. Then celebrate God's faithfulness by having an ice cream "praise party"!

**God + Me = Possibility!** What possibilities do you think God might have in mind for you?



Faith ]

Walk

Give family members each a sheet of white paper, and have them fold and cut the paper into a paper snowflake. When everyone has finished cutting a snowflake, have each person in your family name a difficult situation

he or she might face this week and write it on a snowflake. For example, maybe someone is working on a hard project at work or school, or someone might need to apologize for something he or she has done wrong. Hang the snowflakes on your Christmas tree to remind you to pray for one another.





