



Zechariah Prophecies About Jesus Luke 1:68-79

Third- and fourth-graders are old enough to understand the difference between right and wrong. However, kids this age may not completely understand the concepts of sin, repentance, and forgiveness. Use this lesson to help kids understand that they need Jesus and he loves them.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	Surprise Gifts <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Give and receive white elephant gifts, and discuss things they need versus things they want.	1 small paper bag per child, pens	
2 Bible Exploration	Zechariah's Song <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Explore Zechariah's prophecy, and write poems or songs about Jesus based on Zechariah's song.	Bibles, paper, pens	

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



► Bible Point

The world needs Jesus.

Key Verse

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17).

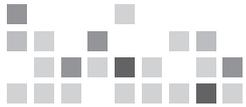
Weaving Faith Into Life

Children will learn that they need Jesus and will thank him for coming to save them.



LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	What Jesus Does <i>(about 20 min.)</i> Learn the Key Verse, create a jail cell, and be set free from jail.	Bibles, cardboard, roll of black crepe paper, scissors (several pairs), tape	
	Light in Darkness <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Sing the Key Verse song, and write a letter to God to ask for forgiveness for the wrong things they've done.	Bible Truth Sleuth, CD player, pens, flashlight, copies of the lyrics page (at the end of this lesson) Teacher Pack: CD	Tear out the Lesson 2 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.
4 Lasting Impressions	Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Truth Sleuth	
	Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.	flashlight	

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



Surprise Gifts Supplies

1 small paper bag per
child
pens

1 GETTING STARTED

Surprise Gifts

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went.

Gather kids for a gift exchange. Say: **Today we're going to have a white elephant gift exchange. I'm going to give you each a paper bag. Secretively choose something to put in that bag to give to someone as a gift. It could be anything from pocket lint to a paper clip you found—or even a spare article of clothing. You'll get this item back at the end of this activity if you need it back.** Give each child a paper bag and a pen. Instruct kids to each write their name on the bottom of the bag and drop in their chosen item. Give them a minute to do so.

Have kids place the gift bags in the center of the room, and have kids take turns choosing a gift from the pile. After all the kids have chosen a gift, have them take turns opening their gifts. As children open their gifts, they may give their gift to anyone with an opened gift and take that gift. Go around the room until everyone has opened a gift and exchanges have been made.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- Do you like your gift? Why or why not?
- What's it like to receive something you really want?
- How does that compare to receiving a gift you really need?
- Explain whether you think Jesus is a gift you *want* or a gift you *need*.

Say: **Today we'll learn about a man named Zechariah. He prophesied about Jesus, even before Jesus was born. We just gave and received some gifts that weren't too great, but we'll learn about a gift that met the needs of the entire world. Together we're going to discover that ► THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS.**





2 BIBLE
EXPLORATION

Zechariah’s Song

What You’ll Do

Say: **Before we read our Bible passage today, let me give you a little background. The angel Gabriel visited a very old man named Zechariah. Gabriel said that Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, who was also very old, were going to have a baby boy, and that they were supposed to name him John.**

Gabriel told Zechariah that this son would do great things for God and would help people get ready for the Lord. Zechariah had a hard time believing Elizabeth would have a baby, because both he and Elizabeth were so old. Because Zechariah doubted, God made it so Zechariah was unable to speak until the day John was born.

When John was born, Zechariah could speak again! The first thing he did was praise God. All Zechariah’s neighbors were amazed and knew that this baby was special. The people believed God had a special plan for this baby named John. Let’s read about what else happened after Zechariah was able to speak.

Have kids find partners, and make sure each pair has a Bible. Have pairs open their Bibles to Luke 1:68-79. Say: **This passage is called Zechariah’s Song. In his song, Zechariah sings a birth announcement about two babies.**

Have kids read the passage in their pairs. When pairs read something that praises God, they can shout that out and end the line with “Praise God!”

When kids finish reading the passage, distribute paper and pens and tell them they’ll be working together with their partners to write a song or poem for Jesus that tells about the fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy in the world today. Say: **Zechariah’s song was saying that Jesus would come to save us, and Zechariah’s own son, John, would help people get ready for Jesus. And we’ve seen what Jesus does in the world today. Brainstorm with your partner about things that are in Zechariah’s song that you can praise God for today in your own song or poem. And consider focusing your song or poem on today’s Bible Point: ► THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS.** Allow time for kids to write their songs or poems.

When they’re finished, have kids who are willing perform their songs or read their poems aloud to the group. Don’t require anyone to do so if they don’t want to.

Say: **After months of Zechariah not being able to talk, it’s pretty special that Zechariah’s first words were a song to God to praise him for the things he was going to do through Zechariah’s own son, John, and through Jesus.**



Zechariah’s Song Supplies

- Bibles
- paper
- pens





What Jesus Does Supplies

Bibles
cardboard
roll of black crepe paper
scissors (several pairs)
tape

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What does it mean that Jesus is still doing what Zechariah talked about more than 2,000 years ago?
- What do you think of God sending John to help people get ready for Jesus?
- Why do you need Jesus?

Say: **Because Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, he knew his son, John, would grow up and prepare other people for Jesus' coming. Zechariah knew that because everyone sins, or does wrong things, they would need Jesus. Jesus came to save us from our sins. When we believe in Jesus, we can have forgiveness for our sins. ► THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS.**

3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

What Jesus Does

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Make sure each child has a Bible. Say: **Zechariah's song said Jesus would come to redeem, or save, his people. Our Key Verse today, John 3:17, talks about that, too.**

Have kids find the verse in their Bibles, and ask a willing child to read John 3:17 aloud: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

Ask:

- What does *condemn* mean?
- What are some things people could be condemned for?

Say: **When people are condemned, it means that they've been accused and found guilty of doing something wrong. In our society, when people are condemned, it usually means they go to jail. So let's make a jail cell for condemned people.**

Have kids form four groups, and explain that each group will make a section of the jail. Set out the supplies, and have each group cut three 2x12-inch strips of cardboard. Have kids tape their pieces of cardboard together end to end. Have kids cut 3- to 4-foot lengths of crepe paper. Then have kids tape the streamers to the cardboard strips so they hang down at 2-inch intervals.

As kids work, say: **The jails that Jesus came to set us free from are jails that we make ourselves. We're not perfect, and we can never reach God on our own. Our sins keep us from God. So God sent Jesus to help free us from the jail of our sin.**





After each group has finished its section of the jail, ask for one willing child from each group to hold up its section of the jail. Have the rest of the group stand inside the jail cell.



Say: ► **THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS**, and we need Jesus because we've all sinned. Without Jesus, it's as if we're trapped in a jail of sin. But God didn't send Jesus into the world to *tell* us all the things we do wrong. God sent Jesus to save us from all the things we do wrong.

Say the Key Verse with kids a few times: **"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17)**. Each time you say it, have at least one child in each group burst through the bars of the jail cell.

After the final time you say this as a group, have the four kids holding up the jail cell walls drop them to the ground.

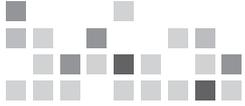
Talk With Kids ■■■■

Have kids form pairs. Lead pairs in this discussion.

- How was being trapped in jail like being trapped in sin?
- Tell about a time you did something that made God sad.
- What can you do when you realize you need Jesus?

Say: **God knew that we wouldn't ever be able to reach him on our own. He loves us and he wants us to be with him, so he sent Jesus. And he did a bunch of things to help us realize we need Jesus. He gave Zechariah words to tell what Jesus would come to do, and he gave Zechariah a son who would tell people about Jesus. God knew that ► THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS**, so he sent Jesus for us.





Light in Darkness Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth
CD player
pens
flashlight
copies of the lyrics page
(at the end of this
lesson)

Teacher Pack

CD: "To Save the World
Through Him" (John
3:17) (track 2)

Light in Darkness Easy Prep

Tear out the Lesson 2
pages from each Bible
Truth Sleuth student
book.

Light in Darkness

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Distribute copies of the lyrics page. Say: **Let's thank Jesus by singing a song.** Play "To Save the World Through Him" (John 3:17) (track 2 on the CD), and lead kids in singing the song.



**For God did not send his Son into the world
To condemn the world.
For God did not send his Son into the world
To condemn the world, oh no,**

**But to save the world through him,
But to save the world through him.
For God did not send his Son into the world
To condemn the world.**

(Repeat from the beginning.)

"To Save the World Through Him" (John 3:17) by Dean-o. © 2003, 2006 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

After the song ends, have kids each find a place in the room to sit quietly by themselves.

Distribute pens and the Bible Truth Sleuth pages, and have kids turn to the "I'm Sorry, God" activity.

Say: **Think about something you've done that you need to apologize to God for.** Encourage kids to draw or write something inside the letters spelling "SIN" in the first box on their pages to express how this wrong thing can leave us feeling empty and far from God. Say: **Now think about what it would be like if you knew you could never be forgiven for that wrong thing.** Direct kids to the second box in the activity. Allow a few minutes for kids to express their reactions to the idea of never having forgiveness for that wrong thing by writing inside the letters spelling "SIN."

Say: **Now let's talk for a minute about your reaction to God's forgiveness and how that covers your sins.** Allow a minute or two for kids to discuss this, and then encourage them to express their reactions in any way they'd like; but this time, they'll completely cover up the letters in the word "SIN" in the second box to show how God's forgiveness covers up our sins.

Say: **Now express your need for Jesus to help you with the sin you thought about. Find a way to decorate the words "I NEED YOU" in the final picture so they highlight your need for Jesus. You can use words, pictures, or any other artistic representation.** Allow a few minutes.

When everyone has finished writing, turn out the lights and sit on the floor. Have the flashlight close by.





Say: **Without Jesus, we live in the darkness of our sin. When we're sorry for the wrong things we've done and ask for forgiveness, God forgives us. That's why Jesus came—to make that forgiveness possible. ► THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS. Silently pray and thank God that because of Jesus, you can now live in Jesus' light.**

Give kids a few minutes to silently pray, and then shine the flashlight on each child, one by one. When you shine the light on a child, have the child come sit with you on the floor.

Say: **Jesus shines his light on you. ► THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS. And Jesus wants us to grow closer to him.**

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- How did covering up your sins show the way God's forgiveness works in your life?
- What do you hope might change in your life if you live by God's forgiveness?
- In what ways can you let your need for Jesus change your life?

Say: **Zechariah knew Jesus was going to change everything. He was paying attention to God, so he knew what was going on. When we pay attention to God, we can notice our own need for Jesus. And it's not only us. ► THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS.**

4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■

Say: **Let's consider this week how much ► THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS as we do our Daily Challenges.**

Have kids find this week's Daily Challenges on their Bible Truth Sleuth pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- **Make an invitation for Jesus to be the light in your life. Put the invitation in your Bible, and pray that Jesus would help you see that you need him.**
- **Write a song expressing your need for Jesus, and sing it for him. Then pray, asking God to help you follow him.**
- **Spend two minutes reading about Jesus in the Bible. A good place to start is in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.**



Daily Challenges
Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth





Weaving Faith at Home Supplies

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flashlight

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell the kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, a place, and other ideas.**

Say: **God gave Zechariah the ability to know what Jesus was going to do. Zechariah knew the same thing that's still true today: ► THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS. Let's recognize our need for Jesus by following through on our Daily Challenges this week.**

Weaving Faith at Home

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about our need for Jesus. Kids can also do the activities in the "HomeConnect" section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church's families. Available at group.com/digital.

Say: **Jesus came to shine his light in our lives so we can be saved from living in the darkness of sin.** Have kids gather in a circle to pray. Turn off the lights in your room, and pass the flashlight around the circle as you pray. Encourage kids to shine the light around the room, avoiding shining it in people's eyes, as they think of how they need Jesus' light in their lives.

Pray: **Dear God, thank you for telling Zechariah about what Jesus' purpose here would be. Please help us remember how much we need your light in our lives. We're so thankful that you love us.** Allow time for kids who want to pray aloud to do so. **We love you, too, God. In Jesus' name, amen.**





Lyrics ■■■■

To Save the World Through Him (John 3:17)

For God did not send his Son into the world
To condemn the world.
For God did not send his Son into the world
To condemn the world, oh no,

But to save the world through him,
But to save the world through him.
For God did not send his Son into the world
To condemn the world.

(Repeat from the beginning.)

"To Save the World Through Him" (John 3:17) by Dean-o. © 2003, 2006 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.



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