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“Learn from the mistakes of others because you will never live long enough to make them all yourself.”

Inspire (for parents)

Growing up there was a small piece of paper on our refrigerator that stated in my mom's handwriting, “Learn from the mistakes of others because you will never live long enough to make them all yourself.” As a child, I never completely understood why that statement would be important enough to hang in a place of prominence in our home. However, as a mother and a grandmother, I completely understand.

One of the “mistakes” I made with my children was placing importance on outward appearances. This was especially apparent when preparing for church on Sunday mornings. When my children were young I made sure every bow in my girls' hair matched their dresses and that my son's shoes were polished. As they got older and began to dress themselves, their choice of clothes for church became the fuel for many an argument. I now look back on those times and would like to call “redo!” I wish I would have spent less time on their appearances and more time preparing their hearts to worship the King. First Samuel 16:7b tells us, “The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

God takes extra effort to prepare us to meet His Son—not just at church on the weekends, but every day. That small piece of paper now hangs on my refrigerator and is a constant reminder that I will make mistakes—that I will seek to prepare myself for how others might think of me instead of what the King will think of me. However, what a relief it is to know that God sees my heart and takes the time to prepare me to meet His Son. He paid the price for my mistakes and gives me His righteousness so I can be like Him.

by Debbie Guinn

Getting Started

Scripture: Luke 1:1–25, 57–80 (Zechariah, the Angel, and the Birth of John)
Main Point: God Gets His People Ready to Meet His Son

This resource is designed to allow your family to have time in God's Word **before your children attend church.** Because God's plan is for parents to be the primary spiritual nurturers of their children's faith, we know that as you grow spiritually, your children will grow spiritually as well.

Equip (for parents)

God chose and prepared Zechariah to play an important role in getting people ready to meet His Son. He was one of about 18,000 priests serving *Yahweh*. Priests served in the temple only twice a year, so it was a rare honor for a priest to serve the Lord by entering the holy place. Those chosen were selected by casting lots—a practice often used to determine God's will in given situations. The chance to enter the holy place was considered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Luke, chapter one, says Zechariah offered incense as a sacrifice to the Lord. The practice of offering incense to the Lord was used to symbolize the intercession of prayer. During this time of service, Zechariah would have lifted up prayers specifically for Israel. As the incense rose, it represented prayers lifted to God. These were holy moments. As Zechariah lifted his prayers for the nation, the other priests prayed and waited outside. In the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament, there is no record of God speaking to His people (often referred to as the period of silence). Then God was heard again when He gave the angel Gabriel a message to deliver through Zechariah. Gabriel declared, “Your prayer has been heard.”

There were two important parts to Gabriel's message—one for Zechariah and one for the nation. The angel assured Zechariah that he would not only have a son, but that his son would turn the hearts of many Israelites back to the Lord. God chose this holy moment to unveil His plans for Israel and to begin introducing His people to His Son.

“Your prayer has been heard.”

REMEMBER VERSE

Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.
 1 Corinthians 10:24

Support (for parents & kids)

Before this weekend, gather your family and **JUST FOR FUN** light incense or a scented candle. Then, read together the biblical account of the angel visiting Zechariah in **Luke 1:5–14, 18–25**. Point your children's attention to the incense or scented candle and have them smell the beautiful aroma. Share with them that our prayers to God are like a lovely fragrance to Him. Ask them what they think Zechariah's prayers might have been. Ask them if they know who Zechariah's son was. Share with them that his son was Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. Ask your children what might be some ways they would prepare to meet Jesus back in Bible times. Ask them what might be some ways they could prepare to meet Jesus today.

When you're finished, share with your children that what they just heard is a part of The Big God Story in the Bible, and that they'll hear more about it in church this week. Close your time by praying and thanking God that He cares enough about us to get us ready to meet His Son!

