

LESSON 11: GOD HEARS ZECHARIAH'S PRAYER

Leader Guide for Grades 5 & 6

Classroom: Deeply Rooted

 Luke 1:5-25, 57-66

12/22/2019

Teachers Dig In

Dig In to the Bible

- Read: Luke 1:5-25, 57-66
- In This Passage: Throughout his life, Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, have prayed for a son. Now that they're old, God tells Zechariah he will answer their prayers. Zechariah has a hard time believing God, but God gives them a son in just the right time for his plan.
- Bible Point: God hears our prayers...
- Application: ...so we trust his timing.
- Summary Verse: "Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy" (Psalm 100:2).

Dig Deeper

- You'll Be Teaching: *God hears our prayers.* Younger kids often pray in earnest faith, never doubting God will answer. But at some point in their childhood, doubt can creep in. Prayer is no longer a first response, but a last resort. Kids see that God doesn't always answer their prayers the way they *want*, so they think he's not listening at all. Help kids see that God's answers to prayer may look very different than we expect, but he's never too late and he's never wrong.
- Think About: What's something you prayed about for a really long time? How can you see God at work—even if he didn't answer in the way you expected?

Dig In to Prayer

- Pray that kids would trust God to answer their prayers in the best way possible.

Quick Tip

- You may expect a lesson on prayer to be primarily reflective and quiet. But it doesn't have to be that way! In this lesson, you'll find time for quiet, reflective prayer...but you'll also see a lot of meaningful action and motion. This enables kids to learn an important lesson without losing focus, as they have frequent opportunity to get some energy out in a productive way.

This Lesson at a Glance



OPENING

Kids share about a topic related to the lesson.

Supplies

- Bible



CORE BIBLE DISCOVERY

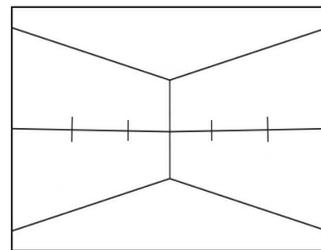
Kids listen poorly, make a timeline of Zechariah's prayers, and use gestures to communicate.

Supplies

- Bible
- individually wrapped fun-size candy bars (1 per child)
- white address labels (1 per child)
- gift bag with tissue paper
- painter's tape
- sticky notes
- pens
- incense (either cones or sticks—you won't light these)
- paper
- envelopes

Easy Prep

- On each mailing label, print "Do not eat until..." Fill in a date 2 days from when you'll teach this lesson.
- Stick a label on each piece of candy.
- Put all the candy in the gift bag.
- Use painter's tape to mark a line on the wall, all the way around your room. Also make 12 hash marks, and label each one with a month (going in order).



- Think of a story you can share with kids about a time God's timing was better than yours.



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

Kids thank God for how he's answered past prayers.



OBJECT LESSON

Kids make sounds with straws and cups.

Supplies

- foam or paper cups (at least 1 per child)
- drinking straws (at least 1 per child)
- child-safe scissors
- paper clips (at least 1 per child)
- safety pins or straight pins (1 per leader)
- duct tape
- several cups of water
- scissors



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

Kids play a game of Tag, not knowing when it starts.



LOW-ENERGY GAME

Kids use gestures to find a phone.

Supplies

- cellphone



CRAFT

Kids make perpetual calendars they can write prayers on.

Supplies

- poster board (12x18-inch piece for each child)
- rulers
- pencils
- construction paper (various colors)
- permanent markers
- clear contact paper
- dry-erase markers (1 for each child to keep)
(check your local dollar discount store for a 4-pack)

Easy Prep

- Make a sample craft to show kids.

**Marked supplies are also used in Core Bible Discovery*

Let's keep kids safe! You can help by using supplies as instructed for only ages 3+, purchasing child-safe items, and being aware of allergy concerns.



Supplies

- Bible

Welcome

- Thank kids for coming.
- Just for fun, have kids give a side hug to two friends.
- Make announcements.
- Introduce new kids.
- Celebrate birthdays by having kids hop on one foot while they sing “Happy Birthday.”
- Collect the offering.

Introduce the Lesson

Say: **Today we’re going to learn that God hears our prayers, so we trust his timing. In the Bible, we’ll learn about a man who had to wait a *long* time for God’s answer to his prayer. Waiting can be hard!**

Share

- Tell kids something *you’re* waiting for right now.
- Have kids form pairs. Ask kids to share what *they’re* waiting for right now.
- After partners have discussed, ask two or three kids to share with the whole group what they talked about with their partners.

Summarize

Open a Bible to Luke 1, and say: **Even though waiting is hard, it’s always worth it when what we’re waiting for finally happens. Let’s see what the man in our Bible story was waiting and praying for, and how God heard his prayer. The Bible isn’t like other books; it’s special. The Bible is full of people waiting to see God answer prayers at just the right time. God is always ready to talk and listen, and he’s here with us. Let’s talk with him now.**

Pray, praising God for hearing our prayers.

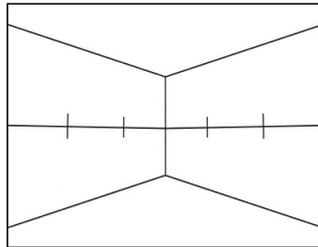


Supplies

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- incense (either cones or sticks—you won't light these)
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Easy Prep

- On each mailing label, print "Do not eat until..." Fill in a date 2 days from when you'll teach this lesson.
- Stick a label on each piece of candy.
- Put all the candy in the gift bag.
- Use painter's tape to mark a line on the wall, all the way around your room. Also make 12 hash marks, and label each one with a month (going in order).



- Think of a story you can share with kids about a time God's timing was better than yours.

Listen Poorly

Say: **Today we're learning that God hears our prayers. Let's see how well I can hear you. Do you want candy?** Pause. **Hmm, I'm not sure I heard you. Do you want candy?** Pause.

Say: **Okay, I heard you. But you've got to trust my timing! It's not time for you to get candy right now. Instead, let's do more with listening.**

Have kids form pairs and identify which partner has the next birthday. That child will be the Talker. The other child will be the Listener.

Say: **If you're the Listener, your job is to listen really, really badly. You might interrupt a lot, avoid eye contact, read while your partner is talking, or anything else you can think of that would be bad listening. Talkers, your job is to tell a story of the best thing that happened this week, and keep talking no matter what your Listener does.**

Allow about a minute. Then have partners switch roles and repeat the experience.

Ask: • **How did it feel to be the Talker when your partner didn't seem to be listening?**

• **How does praying feel like that? Explain.**

Say: **God hears our prayers. But since we can't see him listening, sometimes it doesn't feel like he is. And sometimes he doesn't answer our prayers the way we want...at least not right away.**

Sometimes we have to wait a long, *long* time for God to answer our prayers.

That's what happened in the Bible to a guy named Zechariah. Let's see what happened. But first (start to move toward the gift bag) ...no, it's not time for candy yet!

Make a Timeline

Say: **Here's what the Bible tells us about Zechariah.**

Read Luke 1:6-7.

Say: **In those days, having children was really important. We know that Zechariah prayed for kids, but it seemed as if he and his wife were too old for God to answer his prayers.**

Give each child a sticky note and a pen, and have kids write "baby" on the sticky notes. Then have kids spread around the room and put their sticky notes on the tape timeline.

Say: **Imagine that your sticky note is Zechariah's first prayer for a baby. But it didn't happen. Months went by...** Have kids walk around the room, moving their sticky notes from month to month.

Say: **And years went by...** Have kids keep walking around the room, moving their sticky notes along the timeline.

Say: **But no baby. We don't know for sure, but there was probably a time Zechariah stopped praying for a baby. It seemed too late.** Have kids sit back down, holding on to their sticky notes.

Say: **Then one day, Zechariah went to serve in the Temple.**

Read Luke 1:8-10. Have kids pass around incense to smell, and then collect the incense.

Say: **While he was there, God answered his prayer.**

Read Luke 1:11-14, 17.

Say: **To Zechariah, it seemed too late for this to be true. He even questioned the angel! Listen to this.**

Read Luke 1:18.

Say: **But God hears our prayers, so we trust his timing. And this baby came in God's perfect time. Remember how the angel said that the baby would prepare people for the coming of the Lord? That meant he'd get people ready for Jesus! The baby had to be born just before Jesus. In God's perfect timing, God answered Zechariah's prayer.**

Have kids put their sticky notes on the timeline.

Tell kids something you've been praying about for a long time. Then write a brief summary of it on a sticky note, and stick it on the timeline.

Give kids new sticky notes, and have them write something they've been praying about for a long time. Have kids walk around the room to show how long they've been praying and then stick the sticky notes in the current month. Then have kids return to their seats.

Say: **Sometimes we pray about things for a long time, waiting for an answer. But God hears our prayers, so we trust his timing. His timing is always better than ours! Share an example of God's timing being better than yours. Kids may have trouble coming up with examples of their own, but if any kids do have their own stories to share, allow them to do so after you share.**

Say: **God hears our prayers, so we trust his timing. So keep praying about the prayers on the wall! God always does the best thing in the best time. I'll take home your sticky notes so I can pray for you, too!**

Pick up the gift bag. Say: **It's still not time for me to give you candy.** Set the gift bag back down.

Use Gestures

Say: **Zechariah didn't trust God's timing. He questioned whether God's angel was telling the truth because he thought it was too late for God to answer his prayer. Because he doubted, he wasn't able to talk until after the baby was born. He had to use gestures—or actions—instead of words to communicate. Let's try that!**

Have kids return to their partners and use gestures to try to share about something they really, really want. After partners have gestured and guessed, have a few kids come up and gesture for the whole class while others guess what they're trying to say.

Say: **Based on his actions, people figured out that Zechariah had met with God in the Temple. He went home, and guess what happened next?**

Read Luke 1:24-25.

Say: **Let's use silent gestures to act out what happened next.**

Have a child silently read Luke 1:57 and gesture it for the whole class, until they guess what happened. (Don't worry about exact wording.)

Repeat with different children acting out Luke 1:58, Luke 1:60, Luke 1:61, Luke 1:62, Luke 1:63, and Luke 1:64.

Say: **Now, everyone use motions to show me if you think it's time for your candy.** Pause, then pull a piece of candy out of the gift bag. Say: **Nope! Still not time!** Put the candy back in the bag. Pause for about 30 seconds.

Say: **Now, since you're trusting my timing...it's time to get your candy! But make sure you read the note on it.** Give each child a piece of candy. Encourage them to follow the directions and not eat the candy until the date written on it. Let them know when they do eat it, they can thank God for his perfect timing.

Have kids hold their candy as you pray: **God, thank you that you hear our prayers. Help us trust your timing, even if it means waiting. Help us remember that you're always on time, and you're never too late to do what's best for us. In Jesus' name, amen.**



Thank You

Thank God

Say: **God hears our prayers**, but sometimes when we're waiting for an answer to prayer, it's hard to trust that. One thing that can help us trust God's timing is remembering how he's answered our prayers in the past.

- Have kids form groups of four.
- In their groups, have kids thank God for what he's done for them in the past.

Wrap Up

Pray: **God, thank you that you hear our prayers. We know you've heard and answered so many prayers, and we trust your timing as we continue to come to you in prayer. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Thank kids for coming, and encourage them to come back next week.



OBJECT LESSON

Different Sounds

[10 min]

Supplies

- foam or paper cups (at least 1 per child)
- drinking straws (at least 1 per child)
- child-safe scissors
- paper clips (at least 1 per child)
- safety pins or straight pins (1 per leader)
- duct tape
- several cups of water
- scissors

Make Noisy Straws

Say: **Have you ever heard straws talk? Well maybe they don't talk, but they can make different noises. Let's experiment and listen to straws make sounds.**

- Give each child a cup, a straw, and a paper clip. Place scissors, duct tape, and cups of water within reach.
- Give each adult or teen helper a safety pin or straight pin. Have them poke holes near the top of each child's straw so a paper clip can easily fit through the hole.
- While adult or teen helpers prep straws, have kids use scissors to poke a small hole in the bottom of their cups. Caution kids not to make the holes too big or straws won't stay in place.



- Have each child poke a paper clip through the holes in the straw and position it to make the letter "T."



- Show kids how to lower the straw through the inside of the cup and down through the hole. The paper clip will keep the straw from falling through.



- Have kids use a piece of duct tape to secure the paper clip to the inside of the cup. This adds extra stability to keep cups from breaking easily.
- Have kids form pairs.
- Have one partner in each pair cut about 2 inches off the bottom of his or her straw so it's noticeably shorter than the other partner's.



Play Straws

Say: **We've made our noisy straws. Now let's play them!**

- Show kids how to wet a thumb and pointer finger by dipping their fingers into a cup of water and then, as they hold the cup with their other hand, quickly slide their fingers down the length of the straw. It'll make a quacking sound!
- Remind kids that they don't need to really squeeze or pull the straw. If they have trouble making a sound, encourage them to add more water and move their fingers down the straw more quickly.

Ask: • **Listen carefully to your sound and your partner's sound. How are they different?**

Say: **The length of the straw impacts the sound that it makes. Let's experiment in other ways to make your sound different from your partner's.** Give kids some ideas. For example, they can cut straws even shorter or cut cups to different sizes. For each change they try, have kids guess what impact that will make on the sound. If possible, provide additional cups and straws for kids to work with.

Talk About It

Ask: • **You listened carefully to hear the different sounds the straws made. How is that like God listening to different people's prayers?**

• **Why does God sometimes answer in a short time, and sometimes he takes a long time?**

Say: **Like your straws make different noises, God answers prayer in different ways. Sometimes we think that God should answer everyone's prayers the same way, and we might get frustrated when we notice an answer to a friend's prayer but not our own. Instead of getting frustrated, we can praise God along with that person and trust God's timing in our own lives. God hears our prayers. His answers may be different for different people, but we can trust him and thank him for working in everyone's lives!**



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

[10 min]

Timely Tag

Play a Version of Tag

Say: **Today's Bible story of God answering Zechariah's prayer shows us that God knows the best time and way to answer our prayers. God's timing can mean a short wait or a *long* wait, but we can trust God either way.**

Let's celebrate trusting God's timing with a game that's all about timing.

- Invite a willing person to be the Tagger.
- Have the kids help you choose a well-known kids' song that most of them know or one of your recent praise songs you've been singing.
- The Tagger will secretly choose one of the words in the song's lyrics—any word he or she likes—and when that word is sung, the Tagger will begin to chase and tag everyone. The Tagger won't share what word he or she has chosen so no one else will know when to expect the chase to start.
- Have the Tagger stand in the middle of the room with everyone else gathered around him or her. Everyone will sing the song but can't move until the Tagger starts the chase.
- The third person tagged can be the new Tagger, and the game will start over.
- Each new Tagger must choose a new word in the song to start the chase.

Talk About It

Ask: • **What was it like not knowing when the Tagger would choose to start chasing?**

Say: **It was fun and exciting to wait for the time the game would start. Sometimes it went fast, and sometimes it took a while.**

Ask: • **Why is it exciting or frustrating to wait for God's answers to your prayers, not knowing if it's going to happen quickly or take a long time?**

Say: **When answers to prayer take a long time, we can wonder if God has heard us. The truth is God hears our prayers, and as hard as it may be, we can wait and trust that God knows the right time and way to answer us.**



Supplies

- cellphone

Play a Game of Hot or Cold Without Words

Say: **In today's Bible story, Zechariah couldn't believe the timing God chose to answer his prayer for a child—he and his wife seemed way too old! Because of his disbelief, Zechariah couldn't speak until the baby was born. Let's play a game where we can't speak, like Zechariah.**

- Hold up the cellphone so everyone knows what it looks like.
- Invite a willing person to be the first Searcher, who will search for the hidden cellphone by following the gestures of everyone else.
- Have everyone practice a gesture for "hot" that will mean the Searcher is getting close to the cellphone. All the kids could fan themselves as if they're hot.
- Then do the same for a gesture for "cold" that will mean the Searcher is far from the cellphone. All the kids could shiver as if they're cold.
- Have the Searcher close his or her eyes tightly or even go just outside the room for a moment while you hide the cellphone.
- After you hide the cellphone, invite the Searcher to open his or her eyes or come back into the room and begin looking for the phone.
- Everyone will give the "hot" and "cold" gestures to help guide the search but may not talk. Encourage everyone to have fun with it and make their gestures more dramatic as the person searching gets "hotter" or "colder."
- Play a few rounds of the game with new Searchers and new gestures, such as motions for "near" or "far" or anything the group decides.

Talk About It

Ask: • **What changes would you make to this game to make it much easier to find the phone?**

Say: **The game would have been *much* easier if you could talk. Imagine going nine months without being able to talk like Zechariah!**

Ask: • **Using only gestures, tell about something you're praying about.** After kids gesture, let them use words.

Say: **Like Zechariah, most of the time we'll have to wait for our prayers to be answered, and sometimes we'll wait a *long* time. It doesn't mean God is ignoring us or has missed our prayers. God hears our prayers, and though it can be hard to understand God's timing, we can trust God's timing. God knows best.**

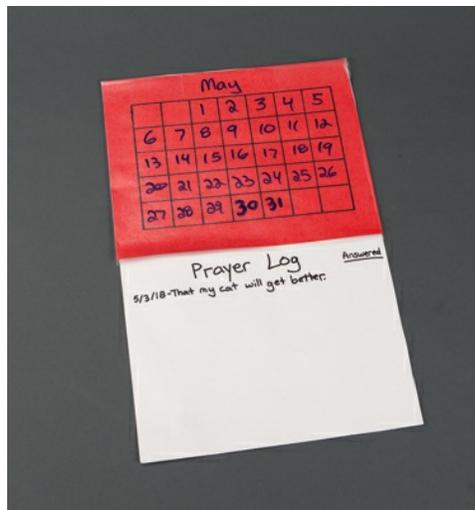


Supplies

- poster board (12x18-inch piece for each child)
- rulers
- pencils
- construction paper (various colors)
- permanent markers
- clear contact paper
- dry-erase markers (1 for each child to keep) (check your local dollar discount store for a 4-pack)

Easy Prep

- Make a sample craft to show kids.



Make Perpetual Calendars

Show kids the sample craft you made. Set out the supplies to share. Have kids follow these directions to make perpetual calendars.

- Choose your favorite color of construction paper.
- On the construction paper, make a grid of that's seven squares across and five squares tall. (Use a ruler to make each square 1¼ inches.)
- Once you've drawn the grid in pencil, go over it with a permanent marker.
- At the top of each column, write the days of the week. (Leave some space above that.)
- Peel a piece of clear contact paper that's just a few inches bigger than the construction paper and put it on the table, sticky-side up.
- Put the construction paper facedown on the contact paper, and press on it.
- Line up the top of a 12x18 poster board piece with the bottom of the construction paper. Fold the extra contact paper around the sides so it holds the construction paper and poster board together.
- Turn the calendar over and use a permanent marker to write "Prayer Log" on the poster board below the construction paper. Then make two columns: a wide one marked "Prayer" and a narrow one marked "Answered."
- Using a dry-erase marker, put the dates for this month on your calendar, writing directly on the contact paper.

Write a Prayer

Say: **Zechariah watched month after month, year after year go by. And God didn't answer his prayer for a long time. But God hears our prayers, so we trust his timing.**

Your calendar can remind you to trust God's timing. Each month you can erase the numbers and write the dates for the new month. But at the bottom, where you can't erase, you'll record the dates you start praying for something and then mark the date God answers. Let's start now.

Have kids write today's date and a topic they want to pray about. Have adult and teen leaders help kids write if they're unable to.

Say: **Now we wait! God *will* hear your prayer, and he'll answer in the best way, in the right time.**

Talk About It

Ask: • **Tell about the prayer request you wrote in your prayer log.** Share your own prayer request first.

• **Tell about a time it took a while for God to answer your prayer.** Share your own story first.

Say: **No matter how he answers or how long he takes, God hears our prayers. It'll be really neat to look back and see how God answers your prayers...even if it takes a long time!**

Have kids take their calendars home and use them to record prayers for themselves, their friends, and their families. When their parents pick them up, ask parents to help kids record their prayers if their kids aren't yet able to write.

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