



DAY 1: EVERY JOURNEY BEGINS WITH A STEP

SCRIPTURE READING

LUKE 1:1–4 (NLT)

Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.

LIFE LESSONS

Every journey begins with a first step and an acknowledgment that we have many steps yet to take. We must accept that some moments may be hard, while others will seem effortless. Keep in mind that the journey you're undertaking as you read Jesus's story is not a race to the end. Allow yourself to relax and breathe. This trek is designed to provide space for change and reflection, both of which take time.

In compiling his gospel, Luke sought the truth above everything else, and we are following his lead. The stories and teachings of Christ that we'll encounter on our journey come with both loving assurance and a slight reprimand or two to help us get back on track. Either way, they are meant to encourage us to live our best lives, resting in God's love and Christ's hope. Jesus came to bring hope and truth to our lives, and it's important that we never forget that as the days pass. Rest in the truth of Christ's words and take comfort, as you go along, in His promise of hope for a broken world.

We will be taking a chronological look at the life of Jesus through the Gospels, sitting in the shade of His vibrant humanity as He experiences the world around Him.

We hope Christ's life will inspire you, teach you things about yourself and the world around you, and help you feel loved and accepted by God.

WHERE ARE YOU?

Have you been on a long journey before? If so, where did you go, and what did you take with you?

What did you enjoy about your journey? What is the most memorable part?

If you have never been on a long journey, where would you like to travel? Why did you choose that destination?

A PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for the messengers who wrote down the gospel accounts of Your life so we can still learn from Your words and teachings today. I pray that this journey will open my eyes to who You are, and that I will learn how to love You and love like You. Give me an open heart and mind as I learn about You. In Your name, amen.



DAY 2: THE UNEXPECTED BLESSING

SCRIPTURE READING

LUKE 1:5–25 (NLT)

When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.

One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.

While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly."

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."

Then the angel said, "I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time."

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. When he finally did come out, he couldn't speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary.

When Zechariah's week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. "How kind the Lord is!" she exclaimed. "He has taken away my disgrace of having no children."

LIFE LESSONS

God often works in unexpected ways. Sometimes we don't recognize news or circumstances as the blessings they are until far later. When God sent Gabriel to announce a life-changing development for a far greater future, something that didn't even seem possible, Zechariah couldn't take it in—it was too much. The unlikely path God chose for introducing Jesus to the world came as a shock to Zechariah. The larger plan, though, would alter the course of humankind.

Sometimes our immediate reactions to news or events can make things harder than they need to be. Zechariah refused to accept Gabriel's words, and, as a result, he spent months unable to converse with his wife during her pregnancy. Those months could have been so much easier for both of them if Zechariah had kept his heart open to God's work in his life.

As you go through life's ups and downs, try to take a moment to let your experiences sink in. Keep your heart as open as you can. Instead of resigning yourself to your current situation because it's the one you know, open your heart to new opportunities and potential changes. Imagine the possibilities! It would be a shame if you missed out on a miracle when it came knocking because you were reluctant to open the door.

WHERE ARE YOU?

When have you received surprising news?

What was your reaction to it?

When have you felt overwhelmed by news? How did you work through that experience?

A PRAYER

Father, thank You for working in miraculous ways! I pray that I would stay open to opportunities and new circumstances and not just stick to my comfort zone. Please give me the patience for when I don't understand so I can be open to Your blessings and pathway for my life. In Jesus's name, amen.