3 Levels of Christians from the Christmas Story - part 1

**Experience Spiritual Progress**

**Monday**

Read Luke 1

You may have been a Christian for a long time, but are you a strong Christian? **Journalize** your thoughts from Luke 1 about Zechariah.

**Tuesday**

Read Luke 1

Do you have a hard time believing what God promises you? **Journalize** how Zechariah changed from unbelieving to believing.

**Wednesday**

Read Luke 1:24-25, Joshua 5:9, Romans 8:1-4, Psalm 86

**Daydream** all day what it would feel like to be free from any disgrace, shame and stigma you think you have.

**Thursday**

Read Psalms 103, Romans 3:21-26

God defies the law of cause and effect in your life, because He loves you and cares for you. **Meditate** on the things that should have happened to you, but didn’t.

**Friday**

Read Luke 1:57-61,80, Esther 4-7

Do you have the backbone to say “No” when you should (to yourself and to others)? **Ask** God for a strong spirit.

3 Levels of Christians from the Christmas Story - part 1

Luke 1

**[1](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-1.htm)**Many have undertaken to compose an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, **[2](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-2.htm)**just as they were handed down to us by the initial eyewitnesses and servants of the word. **[3](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-3.htm)**Therefore, having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **[4](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-4.htm)**so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

[5](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-5.htm)In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah, and whose wife Elizabeth was a daughter of Aaron. [6](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-6.htm)Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and decrees of the Lord. [7](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-7.htm)But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well along in years.

[8](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-8.htm)One day while Zechariah’s division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, [9](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-9.htm)he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. [10](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-10.htm)And at the hour of the incense offering, the whole congregation was praying outside.

[11](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-11.htm)Just then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. [12](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-12.htm)When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and gripped with fear.

**[13](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-13.htm)**But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. [14](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-14.htm)He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice at his birth, [15](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-15.htm)for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He shall never take wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb. [16](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-16.htm)Many of the sons of Israel he will turn back to the Lord their God. [17](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-17.htm)And he will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

[18](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-18.htm)“How can I be sure of this?” Zechariah asked the angel. “I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years.”

[19](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-19.htm)“I am Gabriel,” replied the angel. “I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. **[20](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-20.htm)**And now you will be silent and unable to speak until the day this comes to pass, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.”

Zechariah Christians

* Offer the sacrifice - we faithfully come to church - external performance
* Old in the faith but not necessarily strong and mature in the faith.
* We get our prayers answered we just have trouble believing.
* Fearful and are worry-warts.
* Our biggest trouble is closeness and relationship.
* W tend to wait for church to do something magical for us instead of going directly the source (Jesus) for ourselves.

Performance or relationship?

How to move to the next level with Jesus? Relationship.

Instead of focusing on the merit of what you are doing (what's visible) focus on walking with, and talk to Jesus.

Evidence of progress - believe Jesus, victory over fear and doubt, more peace/less worry.

[21](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-21.htm)Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he took so long in the temple. [22](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-22.htm)When he came out and was unable to speak to them, they realized he had seen a vision in the temple. He kept making signs to them but remained speechless. [23](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-23.htm)And when the days of his service were complete, he returned home.

[24](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-24.htm)After these days, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. She declared, [25](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-25.htm)“The Lord has done this for me. In these days He has shown me favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

[39](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-39.htm)In those days Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah, [40](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-40.htm)where she entered the home of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.**41**When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. **42**In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! **43**But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? **44**As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. **45**Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

**57**When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. **58**Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

**59**On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, **60**but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

Elizabeth Christians

* Living in the experience of having their disgrace taken away
* Learning to live within God's loving mercy (God's loyalty to His own covenant, acting on His own terms because of His compassion)
* Remember Zechariah Christians focus on performance
  + - Instead hide disgrace because they feel it disproves their Christianity
    - Their security is in what they do, not what God has done for them

Elizabeth Christians experienced freedom from disgrace and shame

**Romans 8:1 New International Version (NIV)**

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

**Joshua 5:9 New International Version (NIV)**

9 Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach (stigma) of Egypt from you.”

God defies the law of cause and effect in your life, because loves and cares for you.

How? Jesus bore our punishment so that God has mercy on us.

So how do Elizabeth Christians act?

* They are joyful!
* They believe God's Word and promises!
* And they will talk about it and tell others about.
* Often times they are in tune with what the Holy Spirit is doing and recognize Jesus in other people.
* They get filled with the Holy Spirit! They have relationship with Jesus!
* They get a backbone and stand up...Elizabeth stood up and said, "No!"

No to others, No to situations, but you really start saying No to your self.

No...

I'm not going to make a big deal of the situation.

I am going to stop being unpleasant

I am going to stop driving my own agenda

I am going to stop letting my feelings and emotions dictate how I treat those around me

I am going to stop complaining and be thankful

Can Zechariah Christians become Elizabeth Christians?

[61](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-61.htm)They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who bears this name.” [62](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-62.htm)So they made signs to his father to find out what he wanted to name the child.

[63](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-63.htm)Zechariah asked for a tablet and wrote, “His name is John.”

He started cooperating with God instead of doubting God

And they were all amazed. [64](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-64.htm)Immediately Zechariah’s mouth was opened and his tongue was released, and he began to speak, praising God.

He started praising God instead of doubting God

[65](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-65.htm)All their neighbors were filled with awe, and people throughout the hill country of Judea were talking about these events. [66](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-66.htm)And all who heard this wondered in their hearts and asked, “What then will this child become?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

[67](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-67.htm)Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

He was filled with the Holy Spirit and was used in his spiritual gift

[68](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-68.htm)“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,

because He has visited and redeemed His people.

He made God his Lord instead of making religious traditions his focus

[69](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-69.htm)He has raised up a horn of salvation for us

in the house of His servant David,

[70](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-70.htm)as He spoke through His holy prophets,

those of ages past,

[71](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-71.htm)salvation from our enemies

and from the hand of all who hate us,

The scriptures came alive to him

[72](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-72.htm)to show mercy to our fathers

and to remember His holy covenant,

He experienced God’s mercy first hand

[73](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-73.htm)the oath He swore to our father Abraham,

to grant us [74](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-74.htm)deliverance from hostile hands,

that we may serve Him without fear, [75](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-75.htm)in holiness and righteousness before Him

all the days of our lives.

He stopped being fearful and a worry wart

[76](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-76.htm)And you, child, will be called

a prophet of the Most High;

for you will go on before the Lord

to prepare the way for Him,

[77](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-77.htm)to give to His people the knowledge of salvation

through the forgiveness of their sins,

He finally believed God

[78](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-78.htm)because of the tender mercy of our God,

by which the Dawn will visit us from on high,

[79](https://biblehub.com/luke/1-79.htm)to shine on those who live in darkness

and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet

into the path of peace.”

He finally had a relationship with his God instead of relying on his own performance.