

THE REALLY GOOD LIFE!

(Life of Christ Series)

Studies in Luke's Gospel

The 'Pre-Gifter'

(Pre-Gifter = Those who plan gifts in advance)

I admit it; I'm a lousy shopper! I love giving things to people that will bless them and make them happy, but I don't love the procurement rituals of shopping. Call it a touch of agoraphobia (fear of the market place) I guess, but the fact is this is the one area of procrastination that haunts me. I admire *pre-gifters!* They get their shopping done weeks, even months in advance of the big occasion. They have time to compare prices, enjoy window shopping, change their mind and avoid the rush of cold sweat we *pressed-gifters* feel on the eve of a big event deadline. The best thing about people who do their shopping early is that they seem to have the people they love and care about always on their mind. *Pre-gifters* are unique shoppers, in that they see things that catches their eye and this thought occurs, 'He or she or they would really love that!'

Apparently, I think what makes you *pre-gifters* so efficient is that you're not on a gift- getting mission so much as you have a certain person or persons always on your mind that motivates your diligence. It seems to be true that that special someone's presence is constantly on your mind and in your heart causing preemptive purchase of presents for them, as natural as it is responsible. Thus, your prevention of last-minute shopping angst is as much incidental as it is on purpose - am I right? Maybe it's time to progress from admiring your action to adopting your attitude so 'people's presence' dictates my 'presents purchase' for them.

Let's take this theory into the spiritual realm – holidays, like Christmas, can be less stressful if we have in mind Whose birthday it's about long before the calendar commands us to acknowledgment of occasion. If we begin now to practice His presence, we will enjoy giving Him presents of our time, talent, and treasure spontaneously rather than merely seasonally. By God's grace and His Holy Spirit it is important that when it comes to God we should become *pre-gifters* who think constantly (not seasonally) about how to bless and please Him in all we do with this new life He's given us in Christ.

'Breaking News from Heaven'

(Zacharias & The Archangel)

Worship: 'Good News & Bad News'

(The Delights & The Dangers of Genuine Worship)

Luke 1:13-25

The Purpose of Worship

Hear God's Message and Receive It

"But the angel said to him, "**Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard;** and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. **And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.** For **he will be great in the sight of the Lord,** and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And **he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.** He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, **to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**"

1:13-17

The Proof of Worship

Accept God's Message & Believe It

"And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to seek to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

1:18-20

The Practice of Worship

Remember God's Message & Conceive It

And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

1:21-27

DEVOTIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:	
MON	Luke 1:8-10 It is most likely that those who take the servant posture to sense the Lord's presence while they perform their ministry. What specific area of regular ministry at CBF are you committed to through which God may become more real to you? Do you want to draw closer to the Lord in be a more functional member of His body? Let the leaders know about your desire to serve and what your abilities are so we can help you get connected this week.
TUE	Luke 1:11-13 'Fear and trembling' are a normal response when you really feel the Lord's presence as you serve Him. As with anything new, we naturally feel inadequate and afraid. As you take on new ways of worshiping and serving God better don't be surprised that you feel overwhelmed at the start. Soon the Holy Spirit (rather than an angel) will remove the fear, fill your heart with faith and enable you know His plan for your life.
WED	Luke 1:13-14 God's will in a family moves through the biblical chain of command He has given in the Scriptures. As with Zacharias and Elizabeth, a Christian family will experience God's best through a godly husband and father who is the spiritual leader of the home. If you're married, are you being a channel of blessing for those under your responsibility? If you are single, be careful who you may marry someday – be sure they will enhance, not inhibit, God's flow of blessing to your life.
THU	Luke 1:15-17 Frequently God gives great assignments to those most morally pure and set apart for holy purposes. Zacharias and Elizabeth's son is to be raised in a special way separated from the usual follies of other people. As a result he was a mighty servant of the Lord for his generation and an inspiration to us all in the Church Age. How much more might God use your life if you were to become more separated unto His purposes? How does this apply to your children or the youth of our church who are influenced by your way of life?
FRI	Luke 1:18-20 Doubting God's Word and failing to accept His plan for our lives can be hazardous to your spiritual health. If things aren't going too well between you and God take inventory of your past for anything you know He wanted you to believe and do... think of anything? If His Spirit showed you an area of disobedience, repent and follow through on it right now.
SAT	Luke 1:21-23 What do you think Zacharias did for those 9 months when he couldn't speak? What if he used that time of silence to write the account we have just studied for 3 weeks! If you are ever under chastisement you can either pout about it or profit from it (<i>Hebrews 12:5-15</i>). Learn your lessons and take your discipline graciously and you will grow even in the woodshed of the Lord. By the way, tomorrow is church; God gives you a 'pass' to leave the woodshed to be with us in worship. See you in church.