

The Star Family Devotion – LCC Children & Family Ministry

Courage to Hope – Zechariah and Elizabeth

Read: Close your eyes for a moment and think about something you want very badly. It's not a bad thing to want something very badly, unless you get so focused on it that you start to be afraid you won't get it or be mad about not getting it. Zechariah was a priest and was married to Elizabeth. They did not have any children (in Bible times, it was believed that the lack of children meant a couple had disobeyed God or made him mad.) As they got older, Zechariah and Elizabeth could have become mad or afraid about not having children. But instead, they chose to follow God and trust Him to take care of them. That took a lot of COURAGE!! And guess what? The angel Gabriel came to Zechariah and told him that he and Elizabeth would have a son –Zechariah found it hard to believe, since they were so old. But sure enough, God gave them a baby even though they were old – a very special baby at that! Their baby was John – who grew to be a preacher who prepared people's hearts to be ready for Jesus.

Think: Has anyone every told you something that you found hard to believe? How did you feel when it really did happen?! List some words to describe *courage* – then make a list of words describing *hope*. Remember that things don't always turn out like we want them to, but when we have the courage to trust God, He will always make things turn out the best way!

Activity: Cut out the cardstock anchor and add a paper chain to it, keeping in mind that God is our anchor who always gives us hope!

Courage to Trust – Mary

Read: Mary is a teenage girl. In her day, girls did not attend school – they spent their time learning to be a good wife and mother and learning the songs, law, history and heritage of their people. Girls also got married at a younger age then, and parents chose who they would marry! Mary's parents arranged for her to marry Joseph. One day, before her wedding, an angel visited Mary and gave her some very strange news – that she would become pregnant and have *God's child* – a child who would become King of Israel and everyone! Mary must have thought this would be impossible and been scared at this news, wondering if she would get in trouble with her family, or if her friends would abandon her, or how Joseph would react. However, she did not let her fear stop her from listening to the angel, even though it meant doing something strange and very unexpected.

Think: Why do you think God chose a young girl to be the mother of His Son, rather than an older woman? Have you ever trusted God with something that seemed impossible?

Activity: –It might seem impossible to turn one piece of paper into something taller than you. Cut out the paper spiral. When you are finished, you should have a piece of paper that is taller than you! God can do some things that seem impossible, too.

Courage to Believe – Joseph

Read: Joseph was a wood and stone worker who was engaged to be married to Mary. He spent his days perfecting his skills as a carpenter and building a home for his future family. One day he heard what seemed like a crazy story that Mary was going to have a baby, but since he and Mary weren't married yet, that wasn't the way it was supposed to happen. Mary tried to explain, but the story of the angel appearing to Mary seemed too hard to believe, so Joseph thought perhaps he shouldn't marry her after all. Wouldn't you know it – just then an angel came to Joseph, too! The angel informed him that Mary was telling the truth and that God wanted him to marry her and be the father to her child. The angel even told him what the child should be named – Jesus. Joseph was torn about what to do – because God's request sounded really big – it would be easier to just call off the engagement. In the end, he decided to follow God's directions, get married, and be Jesus' earthly father.

Think: Have you ever chosen to listen and follow directions even when you weren't sure what was going to happen? What words might describe how Joseph felt when God directed him to be Jesus' father? Look up Matthew 1:21. Why was it so important to name the baby Jesus? How did your parents choose your name?

Activity: Make a coffee filter and craft stick Angel – you can use her as a puppet to help re-retell the Nativity story, or hang her on your Christmas tree.

Courage Lost – King Herod

Read: The Christmas story is full of examples of people who are courageous, but it also contains an excellent example of someone who was *not* courageous. Herod was King of the Jews at the time of Jesus' birth. We usually think of kings as being courageous, but Herod was more afraid than courageous. He lived in fear of someone taking his power, and sadly, he became evil and did hateful things to anyone who he thought might take his power. When Herod heard the news that a baby had been born that was to be King of the Jews, he was immediately threatened and his meanness really came out. If you can believe it, he wanted to kill the innocent little baby Jesus! He called in the Magi and asked them to find the baby and send word back so Herod could go see him, too. Luckily, after finding baby Jesus, the Magi had a dream that revealed to them that they should not go back to Herod, but go home by another way.

Think: What are some qualities of a good leader? List some things you think Herod was afraid of. While not the most pleasant, the story of Herod shows us what can happen when we choose fear over trusting God to give us courage; we become afraid of little things and it comes out as meanness and hatred to those around us.

Activity: decorate/color and cut out the crown template and wear it to help spread the message to be courageous, and trust God to give you courage when you need it!

Courage to Follow – Magi

Read: The Magi are also called the Wisemen. They spent their days studying old writings –they discovered that a special King would be born to rule over the Jews, and that a special star would let them know when he had been born. To say they were excited when they discovered the star would be an understatement! They immediately began planning the long journey to find this baby King. All they knew was to travel in the direction of the star. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they figured the baby would be at the palace, so that’s where they stopped – but instead of finding Jesus, they found Herod, who informed them that Jesus had been born in a little town called Bethlehem. Boy, their journey was not going as expected, as they ended up finding a poor baby and his parents in a small house in a small town instead of in a palace in a grand city! They worshipped Jesus and gave him fancy and generous gifts, but then another strange thing happened. In a dream, they were warned to NOT tell Herod where the baby was. Trusting the dream, they changed their plans and went home a different way.

Think: When things don’t go as expected we sometimes get mad and frustrated and give up. The Magi could have done just this. Yet they kept on their journey, even though they didn’t really know where they were going, and things surely didn’t go as they expected. Is there a message in this story for us??? Find Bethlehem on a map of the world – then look to the east and guess some places where the Magi might have come from.

Activity: Star of Bethlehem – cut out both stars and decorate them on both sides. Then cut along the line on each star that ends in the center of the star. Slide the two stars together to make a 3D star to hang on your Christmas tree.