

# Sunday School Superintendent



Union  
Gospel  
Press

**WINTER QUARTER**  
**December 2022,**  
**January, February 2023**

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Editorial ..... 2

## God’s Great Blessings

### UNIT I: Blessing of a Saviour

Dec. 4—The Promise of Messiah’s Forerunner—Luke 1:8-20.....	4
Dec. 11—God’s Promise to David—II Sam. 7:4-16 .....	6
Dec. 18—God’s Promise of a Saviour—Luke 1:26-38 .....	8
Dec. 25—The Birth of the Saviour (Christmas)—Luke 2:1-17 .....	10

### UNIT II: Blessing of the Gospel

Jan. 1—Blessing of Reconciliation—II Cor. 5:11-21.....	12
Jan. 8—Blessing of Forgiveness and New Life—I John 1:1—2:5 .....	14
Jan. 15—Blessing of Intercession—Heb. 4:14—5:10 .....	16
Jan. 22—Blessing of Liberty in Christ—Gal. 5:1-17 .....	18

### UNIT III: Blessing of Grace in Christ

Jan. 29—Blessing of Belonging in Christ—I Cor. 12:14-31 .....	20
Feb. 5—Blessings amid Trials—Jas. 1:1-8, 12-18.....	22
Feb. 12—Blessing of God’s Comfort—II Cor. 1:3-11 .....	24
Feb. 19—Blessing of Godliness—II Pet. 1:3-14 .....	26
Feb. 26—Blessing of Spiritual Fruit—Gal. 5:18—6:10 .....	28
Paragraphs on Places and People .....	30

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# Editorials

MEGAN HICKMAN

## Abundant Blessings

Blessings are abundant on social media. A recent trend consists of people posting pictures of themselves—on a beautiful sunny day, surrounded by their family, or with their peaceful, happy children—with the caption, “#blessed.” We are blessed; it’s true. Even unbelievers have gifts of God’s common grace, including nice weather and deep familial bonds. But there is more to blessing than that.

This quarter, we are going to explore some ways that God has faithfully blessed His people. We will consider first the Person of Christ Himself, then His gospel, and finally the supernatural grace that helps us persevere in daily life. These blessings—even when a hurricane is headed toward your home or you are absorbed by loneliness or your children are fighting and breaking the swing set—do not waver. They are blessings based on our identity in Christ.

We appropriately start this quarter in the Christmas season, anticipating the coming of our Saviour. Realizing God’s faithfulness in sending the promised Messiah can give us a greater appreciation for the holiday, which is why we take some time in lesson 2 to examine the prophecy given to David about our Eternal King. God promised many, many times throughout history that He would send a Redeemer for His people, and

I am sure they wondered at times if the Messiah would ever come. But He did. And we are privileged to be looking back on Christ’s redeeming work and enjoying spiritual blessings that Old Testament believers could only dream about! The very fact that God was even willing to send us His Son to die for our sins is astounding and immeasurably gracious.

But Christ did not come, die for sins, rise again, and ascend to heaven with the intention of leaving us waiting unaided for heaven. In His amazing grace, He gave us a completely new identity in the gospel. At the point of conversion, a believer becomes a new creation. Most believers struggle with fully accepting this blessing, especially when they continue to struggle with sin even after trusting in Christ as Saviour. Putting your faith in Jesus does not make all your problems and struggles disappear, but it does give you hope that you can overcome them and use them for God’s glory.

Once we are in Christ, He never leaves us or forsakes us. He walks with us, prays for us, and gives us the power to overcome sin. We may not look different immediately, but our position before God and His disposition toward us has totally changed. We are His beloved children!

We are given victory in Christ. But

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sometimes, in our shortsightedness, the practical details and struggles of our lives overwhelm us. So in addition to the blessings of Christ and the gospel, we are also given sustaining grace through various means to help us endure this life and grow through our sufferings. We are made part of the body of Christ, and we can experience a sense of belonging in it as we serve. God promises that He will use our trials to make us holy and that He will comfort us in them.

Trials are the bread and butter of the Christian life. It is through trials that we are tested and our fake religiosity is stripped away (1 Pet. 1:7). Ironically, it is often in trials that the Christian feels abandoned by God. This is probably due in part to Satan's attacks on our growing faith. But God is doing something valuable in us when we suffer, and remembering

this will help us ward off the attacks of the enemy. We must adopt a biblical mentality regarding trials, trusting that the Lord is working good through them and using them to bring glory to Himself. Our suffering is not purposeless, and we may very well see one day how God used it.

We are encouraged when we see the grace of God in our lives, because we know that it means we are growing closer to Him. One way He encourages us is through spiritual fruit. As I noted above, change is not always immediately perceivable in the believer, but over time a believer should grow spiritual fruit, being transformed into the image of Christ. This is hard to measure from one day to the next, but over years of walking with Christ and working with the Holy Spirit to fight our sin, we become more holy. Of course, nobody will be completely holy on this side of heaven, but our tastes of sanctification help us persevere and look toward the day when we will be free from the presence of sin. What a wonderful day that will be!

As we study God's Word this quarter, we should open our hearts to treasure His blessings. It is not enough to know in our heads that God has blessed us; we have to believe it! Every time we feel as though God has forgotten us, we should discipline our minds and hearts to go back to the truth of His Word. Scripture makes it very clear that God's promises in Christ are unwavering gifts. Part of our main purpose in life is enjoying God, which includes enjoying His blessings in Christ! These gifts should instill confidence in us as God's children. After all, if God is for us, who can be against us (Rom. 8:31)? Nothing can separate us from the love of God (vss. 35-39). What greater blessing is there?

# The Promise of Messiah's Forerunner

Lesson Text: Luke 1:8-20

Related Scriptures: Genesis 18:9-15; 25:20-28;  
Malachi 4:1-6; Matthew 11:9-15

TIME: 7 or 6 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

**GOLDEN TEXT**—"Thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth" (Luke 1:13-14).

## OPENING MOMENTS

### Suggested Songs (Adults)

"I Love to Tell the Story" (Hankey)

"So Send I You" (Clarkson)

### Suggested Songs (Children)

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain" (Traditional)

"Go Ye into All the World" (McGranahan)

### Icebreaker

Have you ever been so surprised by something that you did not believe it was true? What was it? Why did you react that way?

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Zacharias's assigned duty (Luke 1:8-10)**
2. **Gabriel's astonishing announcement (Luke 1:11-17)**
3. **Zacharias's anxious doubt (Luke 1:18-20)**

## KEY ISSUES

Pilot Gail Halverson was nicknamed Uncle Wiggly Wings by the children of Berlin. Life was desperate for the residents in 1948 after the Soviets blockaded all land entrances into the city. Essential items such as food and fuel were very hard to get. America began

airlifting tons of supplies into the city.

Halverson felt sorry for the German kids who gathered to watch the planes land. He told them to watch for his next flight in—he would wiggle his wings. When he returned, he dropped candy to them as he flew over. The kids were ecstatic, and the crowd grew daily. Before the airlift was over, twenty-one tons of candy had been dropped. To the kids, this was a message—there was still hope for freedom!

Another message inspiring the hope of freedom was delivered by the angel Gabriel. He told Zacharias he would father the forerunner of Christ (Luke 1:13-17).

Realistically, I know I cannot go back in time; however, I have occasionally asked myself what Bible person from history I would like to meet. If I could choose one person, I think John the Baptist would be high on my list. Jesus said, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke 7:28).

In this week's lesson, we learn of the prophecy of John the Baptist's birth as well as his godly character and calling.

Zacharias was a priest. One of the priestly duties involved burning and offering incense to God in His holy temple in Jerusalem. On this occasion Zacharias was selected for this daily task, and as he carried it out, a mul-