



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 2

In Week 2 of our current series on the Book of Luke, Pastor Jacob encouraged us to not give up and to remain faithful even when it seems that God's plan is slow to become reality. May the words of promise to Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth fill you with hope and confidence that God can be trusted.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 1.5-7

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

- Both Zechariah and Elizabeth came from priestly families. They were very familiar with the practices, laws, and history around the temple. At the time, corruption was prevalent throughout the temple practices, but Luke points out that Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous and walked blamelessly in the eyes of the law. Theirs was a life of obedience and faithfulness, yet they carried a deep longing for a child they could not have. **What are some of the underlying aches that are a part of your story? Is there a wish or a hope that remains under the surface even in the best of times?**
- *God, thank you for your faithfulness to me. You know the longing of my heart. Hear me and guide me to the future you have in store for me. Amen.*

TUESDAY: LUKE 1.8-11

Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude

of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

- We should not take lightly the honor of the priestly role. Based on the sheer number of priests, this was likely the only time that Zechariah was selected to enter the temple on behalf of the people. As he entered, he knew that he was representing the prayers of the people who were just on the other side of the walls. Hebrews says that Jesus is our high priest who represents our prayers and petitions before God, and made the sacrifice that restores our relationship with God. **How is this practice similar to the ways we live out our faith today? How is it different?**
- *God, You have given us an intercessor in Jesus Christ and through your Holy Spirit. May my own prayers reach your ears and may I experience your presence like the priests in the temple. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: LUKE 1.12-17

Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,¹⁷ and he will 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 for the Lord a people prepared.”

- Any encounter with an angel of the Lord would be shocking at first, but in this encounter, Zechariah was performing the role of priest. He entered the presence of God on behalf of all the people, but he was the one that God saw. God really saw him. He saw his faithfulness but also his hardship. He knew his situation and met him there with a promise. **Have you ever felt especially seen or known by God? Describe that situation.**
- *God, I admit that at times I inadvertently avoid your presence. Forgive me and help me to overcome any fear or hesitation I may have. Free me to sit in your presence and hear your promises. Amen.*

THURSDAY: LUKE 1.18-23

And Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.”¹⁹ And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.²⁰ And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.”²¹ And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple.²² And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute.²³ And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

- In the book of Genesis, we see a similar reaction to the promises of God. Abraham couldn't fathom how his ancestors would be more numerous than the stars in the sky. As the New Testament version of Abraham, Zechariah's lack of belief didn't prevent God from keeping his promises. His inability to speak may seem like a harsh punishment, but the silence was preparation for the praise that was to come when Zechariah's son was born. **Can you think of a time when God's promises came to fruition even through the doubt and reluctance of God's people?**
- *God, your blessings and the promises of blessings can seem too good to be true. Help me in my unbelief and prepare me for an encounter with you today. Amen.*

FRIDAY: LUKE 1.24-25

After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying,²⁵ “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”

- The Lord has done what He said He would do. Elizabeth’s time of great anticipation was largely spent in isolation. We tend to do this with an unexplainable gift from God. People will ask questions and come to false conclusions, but God’s promises are worth the short-term inconvenience. **Is there a promise from God that you are waiting to become reality?**
- *God of promises, give me patience in the waiting. I long for you to move in my life. Amen.*

SATURDAY: MALACHI 3.1

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

- The prophet Malachi records words that connect with our longing. In the midst of our struggles and discontent, these words are still true—God is preparing the way for our salvation and the redemption of the whole world. **How are your practices of prayer, scripture reading, and worship preparing the way for Jesus to enter in?**
- *Jesus, through the prophets and Zechariah and Elizabeth, and John the Baptist, the way has been prepared for you to break through into the hearts of every man, woman, and child. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Isaiah 40.3-5.

A voice of one calling:

*“In the wilderness prepare
the way for the LORD;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.*

*⁴ Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.*

*⁵ And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”*

The arrival of John was surprising yet also anticipated. Luke makes it clear that these events took place in a specific moment in time, yet they were connected to prophecies that dated back hundreds of years.

- As you look at the verses from Isaiah 40, are there ways in which we are still looking for the prophecy to be fulfilled in our time? How does each verse connect with a need in your life or in the world around you?

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And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
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