



# THE CHRISTMAS STORY

# DIGGING DEEPER

FAITHFUL & FORGOTTEN

DECEMBER 1

Zachariah and Elizabeth's story is one of faithfulness in the face of silence. They had faithfully followed God, but their prayers for a child went unanswered for years. This message explores what it feels like when we've done everything right and yet God seems silent. How do we wait on God when we feel forgotten or overlooked?

Work through the following questions and scriptures on your own or get together with your group, spiritual running partners, or family to talk through what you are learning.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of a time in your life when you felt forgotten, but in the end everything worked out just fine? If so, share about that experience.
2. Have you ever experienced God answering a prayer in a way you didn't expect? If so, share that experience.
3. Read Luke 1:5-19, 21-25  
Make some observations about this passage (What does the text say?):
  - What do you notice and what are you curious about?

Make some interpretations (What does the passage mean?)

- What do you learn about God?
- What do you learn about humanity?

Now make some applications (what's my response?)

- How are you encouraged, challenged, or convicted by this passage?
- What should be our response to this passage?
- Have you ever felt forgotten by God? What was your response?

Share your thoughts about these statements

- God Sees Your Faithfulness
- God's Timing Is Perfect
- Doubt Doesn't Disqualify

## KEY SCRIPTURE

**Luke 1:5-19** In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old. **(Continued)**

Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

**Luke 1:21-25** Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. When his time of service was completed, he returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

## PRAYER

Lord, You have promised never to leave or forsake me. Your love never fails, even when I cannot feel it. Your presence is constant, even when I cannot sense it. When I feel overlooked, help me to trust that You are with me and that my life has purpose in Your eyes. Help me to trust Your timing, even when it seemed like nothing was happening. Give me the courage to wait in Your presence. To believe that Your plans for me are good, even if they unfold in ways I cannot see. Help me to remember that in Your eyes, I am never overlooked, never lost, never beyond Your reach. Amen.

## PRACTICE

So how do we take chapter one of this Christmas story and apply it to our lives? What can we glean from this part of the narrative?