

Zechariah & Elizabeth

Reflections to Share,
Journal and Ponder

Chapter 4: Being Misunderstood

Is there something at this point in Zechariah and Elizabeth's journey that strikes you as unfair? Are your instincts telling you that good and faithful people deserve more than this from God? Have you ever found yourself applying that same logic to your own life? Since you have been "good" for a time or a season, you therefore deserve something (more) from God? Such thinking does raise the question of who defines what's fair—the Creator or the created? If you or I deserved something from God, would it be His grace that provides it to us, or our own effort? It also raises the whole issue of our view of God and whether it is an accurate view, or a self-created, self-serving one.

Luke uses this couple to show us what it means to be faithful, even when life just doesn't seem to go in the direction(s) we thought or hoped it would. They show us how to remain faithful even when our unfulfilled longings seem to dictate there is no longer any reason to do so. This couple not only prayed during all these emotional seasons, but continued to honor God's commandments and requirements, and with a heart that pleased God. For Zechariah and Elizabeth, faith was a verb they lived out every day, every year, every decade, no matter what. In giving us these glimpses into their lives, Luke reminds us that God does not guarantee us an easy road or a light burden in life.

A friend of our family long ago observed that there is no greater burden than being misunderstood and realizing there is nothing you can do about it. Zechariah and Elizabeth lived with that reality every day for more than thirty years.

Isn't it amazing how even a religious culture, supposedly focused on God's Word and God's ways, can still misrepresent God's heart of mercy and inflict pain on His people?

- Like Elizabeth, have you ever had a time when your sense of identity and purpose seemed to be at risk of being negated or unfulfilled?
- Have you ever been painfully misunderstood in your religious or social culture and realized there was nothing you could do about it?
- Why is it that it seems as if our deepest wounds come not from the world, but from the church? Is it inevitable that righteous people will be always wounded by their "religious" culture?
- Have you ever been wounded by a religious community? What did that do to you? Have you ever similarly wounded others? How did you deal with that when you became aware of it?
- What emotional reality most touched you in this section? Is there some part of your emotional past that the Holy Spirit still needs to touch, release, restore, and set free? Spend time in prayer, solitude, silence, meditation and contemplation asking the Holy Spirit to lead you into those areas of your life that are still constrained. As led, ask Jesus to set you free and restore you in those area(s).

Ponder

My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away. *Psalm 38:11* When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way. *Psalm 142:3*

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. *Psalm 37:4–7*