

Zechariah & Elizabeth

Reflections to Share,
Journal and Ponder

Chapter 5: Unfulfilled Longings and God's Plan

With the deliberate choice of the present-tense verb, “walking,” Luke tells us what to do when our unfulfilled longings are unrealized. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth, we should simply persist in continuing to be faithful and obedient, even when all hope for what we wait for appears to be gone.

Given the pressures of his religious culture, it took great courage for Zechariah to continue to accept Elizabeth's barrenness. Given the importance of childbearing, it would have been perfectly acceptable for Zechariah after a decade or so to either divorce Elizabeth and remarry, or to take multiple wives. Indicative of this mindset, some rabbis taught that after ten years of childlessness a man was mandated to take a second wife.⁴⁸ Had Zechariah elected to take such an approach to solving his dilemma, his religious culture would have commended him. He would have been viewed as making a reasonable, rational decision to enhance his self-interests. Then again, maybe Zechariah somehow knew that the ways condoned by his religious culture were not necessarily options for him, that God had a different call upon his life. Perhaps he took time to remember the late-in-life births experienced by Abraham and Sarah⁴⁹, and Samuel's mother Hannah (“and the Lord remembered her”⁵⁰) and recalling their faith journeys strengthened him to be able to wait some more.

- Can you relate to Zechariah and Elizabeth's decades-long sense of unfulfilled longings? Is there anything in your life that you would consider to be an unfulfilled longing? Was it, or is it hard to share that with others?
- If you were Zechariah, would you have stayed married only to Elizabeth after ten years? • Have you ever had to deal with chronic issues of rejection or humiliation day after day, year after year, decade after decade? What did that do to you? How did you adjust to living with them?
- Looking back in the “rear view mirror” of your life, can you see where God's hand was at work, even when you didn't know it and couldn't see it.
- Have you ever thought about thanking God for what He has already prepared for the rest of your life? Those perfect plans of His that have yet to unfold of which you are not even aware?

Ponder

My soul is in anguish. How long, O Lord, how long? *Psalm 6:3*

All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. *Psalm 38:9*

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you. *Psalm 55:22*

But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. *Psalm 71:14*

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings of eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. *Isaiah 40:31*