



## **DON'T BE AFRAID: GOD HEARS YOUR PRAYERS**

**Luke 1:1-25, 57-80**

- Four times in the Christmas story in the Gospels an Angel appeared to people to convey to them “good news”, and each time the Angel said, “Don’t be afraid.”
- *What are some of the greatest fears that people struggle with in our day?*
- One of the great fears many people have is that God won’t answer their prayers.
- The Lord doesn’t answer our prayers when we: 1) fail to pray (James 4:2), 2) pray only self-centered prayers (James 4:3), 3) want our will rather than His will (1 John 5:14-15), 4) harbor bitterness towards others (Matthew 5:21-24, 6:14-15), 5) continue to pursue ungodly desires and relationships (Psalm 66:18).
- The Lord does answer our prayers when we love Him, live for Him, and learn to fully trust in Him (Luke 1:1-25, 57-80).
- Zechariah was an obedient and righteous man who at times struggled to believe that God heard his prayers and would answer them.
- We all have times when we struggle to trust in the Lord and when we at times questioned whether or not we can rely on His grace and goodness.
- *“It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.”* (Hebrews 11:6)
- We have to learn how to live by faith even when the Lord isn’t apparently responding to our prayers.
- Prayer Formula - *When the request is not right, God says “No”; when the time is not right, God says “Slow”; when I am not right, God says “Grow”; but when everything is right God says “Go”!*
- *What steps can we take to prepare for God to answer our prayers on His time table and according to His will?*

***Preparing For Answered Prayers Involves:***

## **LIVING A FAITHFUL LIFE**

- *“When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God’s eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord’s commandments and regulations.”* (Luke 1:5-6)
- **Zechariah and Elizabeth were in a position to have their prayers answered because they lived godly and obedient lives.**
- **If we want to have our prayers answered and experience God’s best in our lives we have to keep living for Him and serving Him even when God doesn’t answer our prayers the way we think He ought to or on our time table.**
- **Sometimes we find ourselves living frustrated rather than faith-filled lives, which is sign that we haven’t mastered the practice of godliness in our lives.**
- *“Trust in the Lord and do good. . . . Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart’s desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him, and He will help you.”* (Psalm 37:3-5)

***Preparing For Answered Prayers Involves:***

## **PURSUING THE LORD’S PRESENCE**

- *“As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying. While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him.”* (Luke 1:9-12)
- **Zechariah encountered the angel Gabriel as he went to worship and pray; which reminds us that it’s important to be involved in personal and corporate worship and prayer times if we are to hear from the Lord and experience His blessings.**
- *“As these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.’”* (Acts 13:2)
- **The Lord speaks to His people through His Word (Psalm 104-105), His Spirit (Acts 13:2), Mature Christians (1 Kings 7:24), Dreams and Visions (Joel 2:28), Life’s circumstances (Revelation 3:7); and sometimes through Angels.**
- Jesus - *“My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.”* (John 10:27)

***Preparing For Answered Prayers Involves:***

## **BELIEVING THE LORD’S PROMISES**

- *“The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord.”* (Luke 1:13-17)
- **Zechariah had a difficult time believing that God would provide a child when his wife had historically been unable to have children.**

- *“Zechariah said to the angel, ‘How can I be sure this will happen? I’m an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.’”* (Luke 1:18)
- **We can have a desire to trust God and still struggle with unbelief at the same time (Mark 9:24).**
- *“Then the angel said, ‘I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was He who sent me to bring you this good news!’”* (Luke 1:19)
- **If God says something will happen - we can trust in the fact that it will happen!**

***Preparing For Answered Prayers Involves:***

**WAITING ON THE LORD’S TIMING**

- The Angel - *“Since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.”* (Luke 1:20)
- **We often grow impatient with God and feel like He is taking too long to answer our requests; and when we grow impatient with the Lord we often make decisions that aren’t best for us or others in the long run.**
- **Our expectations are typically based on what is fast and what is easy, but God’s plans are based on what is right and what is best.**
- *“The Lord is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for His help.”* (Isaiah 30:18)

***Preparing For Answered Prayers Involves:***

**REJOICING WHEN THE LORD PROVIDES**

- *“Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. ‘How kind the Lord is!’ she exclaimed. ‘He has taken away my disgrace of having no children.’”* (Luke 1:24-25)
- **It’s not a disgrace when a couple aren’t able to give birth to children although that was the belief in 1st century; because in those days people were dependent on their children to care for them when they became too weak to care for themselves.**
- David - *“Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned or their children begging for bread.”* (Psalm 37:25)
- **We can be confident of the fact that the Lord always provides for His people when we are focused on living for Him and faithfully trusting Him.**

***Preparing For Answered Prayers Involves:***

**DOING WHAT THE LORD INSTRUCTS US TO DO**

- *“When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth said, ‘No! His name is John!’ ‘What?’ they exclaimed. ‘There is no one in all your family by that name.’”* (Luke 1:59-61)
- **It is of no benefit to hear from the Lord and receive promises from the Lord if we’re not willing to carry out what God has called us to do.**
- *“So they used gestures to ask the baby’s father what he wanted to name him. He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s surprise he wrote, ‘His name is John.’ Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God.”* (Luke 1:62-64)

- **When we're willing to live for the Lord, trust Him even through our doubting times, and do what He instructs us to do, He will work miracles in and through our lives.**
- "Doubting Zechariah" - *"How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."* (Luke 1:18)
- Believing Zechariah" - *"And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell His people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins."* (Luke 1:76-77)
- **Zechariah and Elizabeth were praying for a child but God blessed them with a "champion" - which reminds us that when God answers our prayers He blesses us in greater ways than what we were hoping for.**
- The Angel Gabriel - *"Don't be afraid . . . God has heard your prayer."* (Luke 1:13)
- **The Lord wants to transform us from "doubting" to "believing" Christians, and He intends to answer our prayers as we learn to wait on and trust in Him.**
- ***What have I learned from today's message that I need to implement in my life?***