Day 1

December 3

Pray | *Pray that you create room for God to work daily in your life.*

THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE IS WILLING TO, ABLE TO, AND CHOOSES TO WORK IN OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES.

Luke conveys an immense amount of information to us about the life of Zechariah. We learn the man’s occupation. We are given a historical timeframe and geographic location of where he was. His marital status to Elizabeth, lineage, and their advancement in years are spoken of. The couple’s discipline and devotion to God reveal their character. Their infertility problems make the narrative as they were likely an ever-present, troubling aspect within both their marriage and for their societal status. Yet in no way is this story tabloid coverage of their personal lives. It is rather a beautiful set-up to see God’s redemption plan intersecting with their every day lives in a miraculous way and his preparation of the Messiah’s coming. This is a story that you can and should be reminded of as it is where God’s redemption story intersects your own.

Read | [*Luke 1: 5-7*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A+5-7&version=NIV)

Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

If Luke were to summarize in two short verses where you are right now in your life, what things could he say to tell others of the miraculous things God is about to do, or doing currently, in your life?

Zechariah and his wife both have a priestly genealogy (call it a faith heritage if you will). Why do you agree or disagree that this claim had anything to do with Luke’s assertion that they were righteous before God?

You may have unanswered prayers that you live with. Are you living like Zechariah and Elizabeth observing God’s commands despite unanswered prayers, or are you being distracted by them?

Day 2

December 4th

Pray | *Ask God to help you live for him in the day to day.*

DOING TIME.

Sometimes the days of our lives roll into weeks, then months, then years, and finally decades as our life becomes routine, as if we’re simply doing time. This can be especially true if we are awaiting life-changing answers to some prayers.

We have already learned that Zechariah and his wife were old and childless, a stigma in their culture. In many senses you can infer this couple were simply doing time, seemingly not expecting that circumstances will change any time soon since they have not up to this point in their lives. Revisit for a moment what yesterday’s verses told us about how they were living. Even if they were just doing time, Zechariah and Elizabeth were observing the Lord’s commands and decrees “blamelessly” all the while. Luke clearly wants us to understand that they both were doing this, and by doing so they were considered righteous in the sight of God.

Read | [*Luke 1: 8-13*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A+8-13&version=NIV)

Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

No matter your “full-time job”: employee, student, mother, caregiver, etc. “it” will consume a large portion of your life. Think for a few moments about those you impact doing what you do. If you do not feel you are, consider this instead: why do you feel this way?

The priest’s job of burning incense may seem inconsequential to us far removed from ancient temple worship. However, this act was what carried the prayers of the people to God. Knowing this, re-read verse 10. Zechariah’s role suddenly looms larger. In what ways does yours?

God used a faithful, childless, old priest to aid the prayers of his people. No matter how small you see your “job” pray and ask God that you may begin to see your role in his bigger picture.

Day 3

December 5

Pray | *Thank God for the Bible so we can know what to expect.*

ANGELS

God’s angels are recorded throughout the whole Bible. They have many purposes. Focusing on the purpose of being God’s messengers, they relay his promises and instructions to us. As a priest, Zechariah no doubt had heard the recorded encounters with angels in the Jewish Scripture (the Old Testament); and he may have read them directly from the scrolls.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in a sacred area of the temple, one that Zechariah alone would be in while burning incense, he was startled. And he was gripped with fear! Today’s verses don’t include how Gabriel looked, only Zechariah’s reaction to what he was seeing. What is recorded is what Gabriel said-the message that Zechariah’s prayer had been heard and a promise would be fulfilled.

Read | [*Luke 1:11-17*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A11-17&version=NIV)

Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Feminine, attractive, and non-lethal would describe most angel depictions you would find for sale at either a LifeWay or Hallmark store. In what ways do these fantastical, and inaccurate, depictions distort from what our understanding of, and our natural response to seeing, an angel should be?

Science Fiction makes us unsurprised when imaginary wonders become reality. Teleportation, common in Sci-Fi, happens in the Bible! (Jesus, Phillip, and angels move in this way.) If someone suddenly appeared out of nowhere and started talking to you, what thoughts might you be thinking?

Today’s passage seems familiar. Read Genesis 18:1–15 and Judges 13:1-7. Zechariah may have recalled these accounts as he later reflected on the angel’s message . Try thinking about parallel passages when you read scripture. God throughout scripture is painting his plan of redemption, adding detail and building up to the final redemption.

Day 4

December 6th

Pray | *Thank God he is patient with our many questions.*

IT IS IN OUR NATURE.

The angel Gabriel, in nearly 150 words, tells Zechariah the most amazing message! He will have a son; he is to name the baby John; his son will be great in God’s sight and filled with the Holy Spirit even before birth; and John will do extremely important things in preparation for the Messiah’s coming. Zechariah’s response to this message is in about twenty words. And what do they convey but his uncertainty these things will really happen since he and Elizabeth are both advanced in age. So after hearing all that Gabriel just said, Zechariah seems stuck on reliability and reproduction. Gabriel’s retort is in two parts: credentials and consequence.

Read | [*Luke 1:18-20*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A18-20+&version=NIV)

Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Read 1 Samuel 1: 1-20. It is one example of a long awaited answer to prayer, of how God gave a barren woman a baby who would alter the course of history. When you hope for something for so long-that even when it looks like it could happen-you may doubt it really will. What things are you hoping for and yet thinking God may not deliver on?

Zechariah witnessed miracles, plural. He saw an angel, conversed with the angel, and lost his ability to speak just as the angel promised for questioning this messenger of God. In what areas of your life are you questioning God’s messages right now despite seeing miracles?

Look at the last part of verse 20. You can question God’s willingness to do something and/or God’s timing to do something. Yet God will do things for his purpose and in his time. Take a few moments to consider anything you have been questioning God about. Now pray on these things.

Day 5

December 7

Pray | *Thank God that he meets you where you are.*

SIGNS THAT THINGS ARE NOT GOING AS THEY SHOULD.

Unsure who said it originally: In Minnesota there are two seasons –winter and road construction! If you commute to your job you know your route and when you need to leave based on how long it will take you to get to work. Soon enough you have a reasonably predictable and timely routine. One morning, there are signs that something isn’t right. Heavy construction causes a long line of tail lights as far as your eye can see while emergency vehicles attempt to traverse the gridlock as they pass your current position. No, things are not going as they should.

Temple worship and priestly duties were similar in that there was a morning and evening rhythmical pattern to it. When his priestly division was serving at the temple, Zechariah had been chosen to perform the most distinguished, once in a lifetime, ritual: to burn incense as the prayers of the people were lifted to God. Only he alone could enter into the sacred holy place to carry out the prescribed sequences of this offering. This day there were signs that things are not going as they should…

Read | [*Luke 1:21-25*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A21-25&version=NIV)

Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Ripe for small town gossip- Old Zechariah returns from temple duty absent of the ability to speak...then his aged wife disappears for months...and she returns very much pregnant! In what ways has God been working in your life when things may not have appeared to be going as they should?

Having just come through the Thanksgiving holiday take time to reflect on your blessings using Elizabeth’s form to praise God: The Lord has done this \_\_\_\_\_\_ for me, he has shown me his favor.

Perhaps you have never heard nor seen an angel personally but any interaction with God’s word, his people, and his messengers should leave you changed. God wants you to know his love, his care, and his forgiveness. If today is the day you are listening then pray and ask him into your life.

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