

WORD

⁵In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

LUKE 1:5-7

(Read also LUKE 1:8-25.)

Both Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were from a family of priests. Even more than that, they were described as *righteous before God*, and *walking blamelessly*, or in obedience to, all His rules and laws. However, they had one deep and long-lasting sorrow—Elizabeth was *barren*, or unable to have children. Though they were already too old to hope for a child, we will see through this story how God answered their prayers and what He does for His people.

1 God hears.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John." LUKE 1:13

The angel told Zechariah to fear not because God had heard his prayer. This was the first time the Israelite priests had heard from God in 400 years. Just knowing that God heard the prayers of His people would have been a big deal for Zechariah. However, the angel also told Zechariah that God had heard his individual prayer—to have a son. There is no prayer that God does not hear, no matter how many people are praying to Him. How should knowing that God hears our prayers change the way we pray?

.....

.....

2 God answers.

¹³But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great before the Lord. . . ." LUKE 1:13-15

(Read also LUKE 1:15-17.)

The angel was not only telling Zechariah that his prayers had been heard; he was showing how God's answers are bigger than our prayers. The angel promised that Zechariah and Elizabeth's son would bring them joy and gladness. He would also bring joy to many others, by preparing the way for the Lord. Not only would a son be the answer to Zechariah's prayers, he would be part of God's plan of salvation for His people. Recall a time you got an unexpected and joyful answer to your prayer. What happened?

.....

.....

3 God cares.

²⁴After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, ²⁵"Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." LUKE 1:24,25

There were so many days when Elizabeth must have felt sad and pressured by society because she could not have a child. So when she felt the answer to her prayers inside her belly, Elizabeth knew and felt God's care. He knew how people in society saw her; He knew how badly she felt about not having a child. The son He sent as an answer to her prayers was one way He showed His care for Elizabeth and Zechariah. God wants His answers to our prayers to give us joy. How does this encourage you to keep praying and not give up?

.....

.....