

Week Two: *Remember the Bigger Picture*

Luke 1:5-25

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Read Psalm 37:1-6. Whom was David addressing in this Psalm? Is that issue still troublesome for modern-day Christians? In your own words, how would you explain David's advice?
2. Continue reading Psalm 37:16-19. Has that been your experience?
3. Have you known poor people who were "rich," and rich people who were "poor"? How much does a person's happiness depend on material possessions?
4. Read Luke 1:5-25. How does Luke describe the character and nature of Zechariah and Elizabeth? (See Luke 1:5-6) Why do you think that is important to the story?
5. Read Job 1:6-11. What was the assumption Satan made about faithful people? Do you think faithful people are blessed more by God than unfaithful people? On what basis have you reached this opinion?
6. Read James 5:10-11. Were the most committed followers of God spared hardship because of their faithfulness? Why would God allow faithful people to suffer?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Think about and pray for some faithful people you know who are undergoing a rough patch. Pray for them to endure and remain steadfast in their faith.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read Luke 1:5-25. There are two especially troubling, even confusing, realities that Zechariah and Elizabeth were experiencing. Why is the ability or inability to have children especially difficult?
9. Notice too that Zechariah, while an old man, had never been chosen to offer the incense in the temple. It was a once in a lifetime experience. How might Zechariah have felt every time he was passed over and younger men were chosen?
10. Why is it common for people to think hardship is somehow related to personal failure and God's punishment?
11. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. How can we be sure God is not punishing us for our sinfulness when things seem to go badly for us?

12. If God is not punishing us for our sins by allowing difficulties in our life, what other explanation makes sense?
13. Read John 9:1-3 and John 15:1-2. What two other possibilities exist for God to allow us to endure hardships?
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to better notice faithful people who are struggling in life and to be more supportive of them in the midst of their difficulty.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Look at Luke 1:11-12. What words were used to describe Zechariah when the angel appeared to him? What do you expect to happen when you pray?
16. Look at Luke 1:13. What did Gabriel tell Zechariah? When was the last time you think Zechariah may have actually prayed that prayer? What does that say about God's timing?
17. We would not even know the names of Zechariah and Elizabeth had it not been for God's decision to bring John into their life. What does that tell us about all the unknown and supposedly insignificant people who quietly keep the faith?
18. Why do you think God chose an old couple to bring John into the world? Jesus was born to young people. Why not John?
19. Luke 1:24 tells us that Elizabeth chose to hide her pregnancy for five months. Why would she do that?
20. Mary came to visit Elizabeth during Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy and stayed for 3 months. Why is that significant? What did the two women have in common? What was different?
21. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for all the pregnant mothers who are wondering now about the nature and purpose of their yet unborn children.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. Read Zechariah's words which he spoke at the birth of his son in Luke 1:68-79. What phrase or expression made the biggest impression on you?
23. Remember, Zechariah had not been able to speak for the nine months of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Read Luke 1:64-66. What purpose had his silence served in his life? In the lives of those who knew him?

24. Do you think Zechariah's prophetic words are mostly about his son John or the coming of Jesus?
25. Have you ever written a personal mission statement? What is it? If not, what thoughts would you want to include?
26. According to Zechariah, what was John's main purpose? How does this compare to what John later said about himself in John 3:28-30?
27. What names (titles) does Zechariah give to Jesus in his prophetic speech, and what does each one mean?
28. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray that you would always remember and honor the truth that your purpose to proclaim Jesus through your life and words is the most important thing you will ever do.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. Look again at Luke 1:5-25. How would you describe the mood of Zechariah and Elizabeth before the visitation of Gabriel — consternation, acceptance, or quiet expectation?
30. How would you describe their mood after the visitation but prior to the birth of John?
31. Is there something you are waiting for God to do? How would you describe your mood?
32. Would you rather be a small part of something big or a big part of something small?
33. Are you part of a small group now? Why or why not? If so, what role do you play in your group?
34. Are you proud of all your church is doing to reach the lost and strengthen the saved, or do you wish they were doing more (or less)?
35. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray a prayer of thanks that Jesus did not consider saving the world too great a goal nor the saving of you too small a challenge.