



Week of Monday, November 24, 2025

Luke 1:5-25

5 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah's division named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. **6** Both were righteous in God's sight, living without blame according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord. **7** But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years.

8 When his division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, **9** it happened that he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. **10** At the hour of incense the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. **11** An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified and overcome with fear. **13** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. **14** There will be joy and delight for you, and many will rejoice at his birth. **15** For he will be great in the sight of the Lord and will never drink wine or beer. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb. **16** He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. **17** And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people."

18 "How can I know this?" Zechariah asked the angel. "For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel answered him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and tell you this good news. **20** Now listen. You will become silent and unable to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time.”

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary. **22** When he did come out, he could not speak to them. Then they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He was making signs to them and remained speechless. **23** When the days of his ministry were completed, he went back home.

24 After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived and kept herself in seclusion for five months. She said, **25** “The Lord has done this for me. He has looked with favor in these days to take away my disgrace among the people.”

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

O – Observe what it teaches

P – Practice this in your life

E – Express this in your prayers

Weekly Devotional

I can look back on many seasons of life when I was desperately praying for something very specific. I'm sure you can identify. You find yourself with a real need, but you cannot imagine how God will provide. Or you carry a deep and good desire, yet the doors just never seem to open. In those moments, impatience grows. You begin to wonder if God is listening—if He hears, if He cares.

It's in moments like these that we must return to what is true. Our feelings and doubts can pull us in many directions, most of which are not helpful. Scripture is full of reminders that God hears His people when they pray. David affirmed this in one of the darkest seasons of his life: **"The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is near the brokenhearted; He saves those crushed in spirit."** (Psalm 34:17–18)

I often wonder if Zechariah and Elizabeth clung to passages like this during the many years they longed for a child. We can't know exactly what they read or prayed, but I'm confident they reminded themselves again and again of this truth: God hears our prayers, and God is faithful. This is how we remain faithful ourselves—by holding to what is true when we cannot make sense of the road ahead.

I'm encouraged by how Zechariah and Elizabeth lived in the middle of their sorrow. They were not perfect, but they kept walking with the Lord. Luke tells us they were "righteous in God's sight," and that they were careful to obey His Word. They continued to serve Him. Zechariah carried out his priestly duties day after day. And it was in that ordinary faithfulness that God broke in unexpectedly. An angel appeared and declared that God had heard every prayer they had prayed—and that He would answer in a specific, miraculous way. They would have a son. But this son would be more than an answer to their personal longing; he would prepare the way for the long-awaited Savior of the world.

Let me encourage you in two ways this week.

First, wherever you are, keep walking faithfully with the Lord. Stay in His Word. Serve Him in the ordinary routines of life. Very often, it is in those regular moments—just as Zechariah discovered—that God speaks, guides, and shows Himself faithful. Some of the most life-shaping moments I've experienced have come through that steady, everyday obedience. **Second**, remember that your quiet faithfulness may reach far beyond your own life. You never know how God may use your steady obedience to impact the people around you in ways you could never imagine.

-Devotional written by Jason McDonald

Read Also:

Luke 1

Genesis 18:9-15 [promise to Abraham & Sarah in old age]

1 Samuel 1 [God hears the longing of the barren and works through unexpected births]

Psalms 34 [God hears the cries of His people]

Psalms 27 [waiting with confidence in the goodness of the Lord]

Malachi 3:1; 4:5–6 [The promise of a messenger who prepares the way of the Lord]

Galatians 4:1-6 [God works in His perfect timing for salvation]

Group Discussion Questions

Where do you identify with Zechariah and Elizabeth? Share an area of life where you've prayed for something good but are still waiting.

What does Luke emphasize about Zechariah and Elizabeth's character (vv. 5–7), and what does this teach us about the reality of faithful people experiencing unmet longings?

How does Zechariah's ordinary, routine service to God (vv. 8–10) challenge or encourage you in your own daily obedience?

What strikes you about the angel's words, "Your prayer has been heard"? How does this speak to God's timing and the way He works in our lives?

Where do you see yourself wrestling with doubt like Zechariah (vv. 18–20)? How have you seen God meet you with grace even in seasons of doubt?

What is one practical way you can remain faithful this week—in the "regular routines"—trusting that God will use it to shape you and bless others?

Where might God be using your quiet, steady obedience to bless others—perhaps in ways you don't yet see?

Week of Monday, December 1, 2025

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, **27** to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** And the angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." **29** But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. **30** Then the angel told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. **33** He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end."

34 Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?"

35 The angel replied to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. **36** And consider your relative Elizabeth—even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless. **37** For nothing will be impossible with God."

38 "See, I am the Lord's servant," said Mary. "May it happen to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

Mary was not preparing for greatness. She was preparing for a quiet life, engagement to Joseph, a home, a future she could see and understand. Then Gabriel appeared with a message that would change not only her life, but the world. His greeting did not begin with a task, but with assurance: “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you.” Before God called Mary to anything, He reminded her that she was seen, loved, and not alone.

The announcement of Jesus was not a sudden response to the brokenness of the world. It was the fulfillment of a plan set in motion before creation. The Messiah promised in Eden, the Son from David’s line, the Redeemer spoken by the prophets, every word God had spoken was now unfolding exactly as He intended. Mary was caught off guard, but God was not. What was unexpected from her perspective was the steady fulfillment of promises from His.

We often measure situations through fear, weakness, and uncertainty. We look at ourselves and think, “I am not capable. I am not qualified. I am not prepared.” But God’s promises have never depended on human strength. Gabriel’s message made that clear: the child to be born would be holy, called the Son of God, and His kingdom would never end. God was not asking Mary to perform miracles or carry the world on her shoulders. He was asking her to trust Him.

Mary responded with simple, beautiful surrender: “I am the Lord’s servant. May it happen to me as you have said.” She did not know how Joseph would react. She did not know how her family or community would treat her. She did not know what this calling would cost her. But she knew who had spoken to her. Her obedience was rooted not in clarity about her future, but in confidence in the faithfulness of God.

When God interrupts our plans, we instinctively reach for control. We want certainty, guarantees, and explanations. But faith is not the absence of questions, it is the decision to trust the character of God. The same God who fulfilled every word of His promise to Mary continues to fulfill His promises to His people today. Your circumstances may surprise you, but they do not surprise Him. He has not forgotten His word, and He has not forgotten you.

If life has taken a turn you never expected, if the path feels uncertain, if you do not understand what God is doing, remember Mary. God is not reacting. He is faithful. Our response is not to demand full understanding, but to rest in His character and say with humble trust, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it happen to me as You have said.”

-Devotional written by Eric Foster

Read Also:

Luke 1

Isaiah 7:14

2 Samuel 7:12–16

Isaiah 9:6–7

Genesis 3:15

Matthew 1:18–25

Daniel 7:13–14

Micah 5:2

Group Discussion Questions

Why do you think Gabriel begins with “The Lord is with you,” and what does that tell us about how God prepares His people before He calls them to something difficult?

When you hear Gabriel say that Jesus’ kingdom “will have no end,” what comes to your mind?
How does the idea of an unshakable, eternal King challenge the temporary hopes and fears we tend to live with?

Mary was an ordinary young woman in a small town, yet God chose her for something extraordinary.
How does this challenge the way we think about who God uses and why?

Mary did not receive all the answers about her future, yet she responded in faith. Where in your life are you waiting for clarity before you obey, and what does this passage teach you?

What do we learn about the work of the Holy Spirit in this passage, and how should that shape our understanding of salvation and new spiritual life?

Consider the social, relational, and personal risks Mary faced. What does her obedience teach us about following God when it costs us something?

Week of Monday, December 8, 2025

Luke 1:39-56

39 In those days Mary set out and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah **40** where she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. **41** When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped inside her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. **42** Then she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! **43** How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? **44** For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me. **45** Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!"

46 And Mary said: My soul magnifies the Lord,

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48 because he has looked with favor on the humble condition of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed,

49 because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and his name is holy.

50 His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him.

51 He has done a mighty deed with his arm; he has scattered the proud because of the thoughts of their hearts;

52 he has toppled the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly.

53 He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy

55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he spoke to our ancestors.

56 And Mary stayed with her about three months; then she returned to her home.

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Weekly Devotional

Mary had already obeyed God. She believed the angel's message, accepted whatever people might think of her, and embraced the calling to carry the Messiah. She was walking by faith—but faith doesn't remove uncertainty. She didn't know how others would respond to her miraculous pregnancy or how much this calling might cost her. God had given her a promise, but He didn't give her the full picture. What she carried was holy, but it also left her vulnerable.

So Mary went to visit Elizabeth. It looked like an ordinary trip to see family, but Luke shows us that this was God's kindness at work. Elizabeth wasn't just someone who would listen—she was someone who had also seen God do the impossible.

The moment Mary walked into the house, the Holy Spirit moved in Elizabeth, and she spoke blessing over Mary. She didn't say, "You're so brave," or "You're strong enough to handle this." She pointed Mary back to God. Elizabeth said, "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!". Her words didn't erase the hard road ahead or silence the rumors Mary would face, but they reminded Mary that the God who had spoken was the God who would keep His promise. God was at work. He was the One who would bring His plan to pass. Mary didn't need to know everything, she needed to trust Him.

And something changed in her. The burden didn't disappear, and the path ahead was still difficult, but her heart lifted in praise. She didn't sing because life got easier, she sang because she remembered who God is. Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.". She praised the God who sees the humble, who raises up the lowly, who keeps His promises from generation to generation. Her worship wasn't born from positive thinking, it came from remembering God's character.

This is often how God strengthens His people. He doesn't always clear away every obstacle or answer every question. Instead, He brings faithful people into our lives, people who know His Word, who walk with Him in prayer, and who gently remind us of His goodness. Real encouragement isn't about boosting our confidence in ourselves. It helps us lift our eyes to the Lord. It helps us remember what He has said and steadies us when everything around us feels unsure.

You never know the power of your presence. You may sit with someone who is carrying a heavy calling or a quiet burden. You may not be able to fix their situation, but you can remind them of the God who never abandons His children. You can speak His promises with gentleness and point their heart back to Him.

And that's why our encouragement matters. Not because we're strong or wise or able to solve every problem, but because God uses ordinary people to strengthen His children. Elizabeth didn't explain Mary's future, she reminded her of the God who already knew it. She didn't take away Mary's fears, she pointed her to the One who deserved her trust. When our hope rests on what God has spoken instead of on what we can see, praise becomes possible even in uncertain places.

The same God who met Mary in Elizabeth's home still meets His people today. He surrounds us, He carries us, and He finishes what He starts. Trust Him, speak of Him, and point others to Him.

-Devotional written by Eric Foster

Read Also:

Luke 1

Genesis 12:1–3

1 Samuel 2:1–10

Isaiah 61:1–3

Galatians 4:4–5

Psalms 103:8–14

Micah 5:2–4

Romans 15:4–7

Group Discussion Questions

What does it feel like when you're obeying God but unsure how people will react?

Who are the people you go to when life is unclear, and what makes them trustworthy?

How can we grow in the kind of encouragement that brings people closer to God rather than just cheering them up?

What helps you stay focused on God when life isn't improving quickly?

When have you seen God move in a way that surprised you or didn't fit your expectations?

Where do you see God turning upside-down the values our culture holds up (status, power, success)?

Where do you think God might be calling you to show up for someone—even in small ways—that could encourage their walk with Him?

Week of Monday, December 15, 2025

Luke 1:57-80

57 Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she had a son. **58** Then her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her his great mercy, and they rejoiced with her.

59 When they came to circumcise the child on the eighth day, they were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. **60** But his mother responded, “No. He will be called John.”

61 Then they said to her, “None of your relatives has that name.” **62** So they motioned to his father to find out what he wanted him to be called. **63** He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they were all amazed. **64** Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. **65** Fear came on all those who lived around them, and all these things were being talked about throughout the hill country of Judea. **66** All who heard about him took it to heart, saying, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the Lord’s hand was with him.

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

68 Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and provided redemption for his people.

69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,

70 just as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets in ancient times;

71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of those who hate us.

72 He has dealt mercifully with our ancestors and remembered his holy covenant—

73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant that we,

74 having been rescued from the hand of our enemies, would serve him without fear

75 in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days.

76 And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

77 to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.

78 Because of our God’s merciful compassion, the dawn from on high will visit us

79 to shine on those who live in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

80 The child grew up and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

Sometimes the most profound truths in Scripture are tucked into the simplest sentences. Luke writes, “Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she had a son.” We could easily pass over that verse without much thought. But there is such hope and power in it. This single sentence is the answer to what were surely many prayers, and it is the quiet fulfillment of what God said would happen.

For a long time, Elizabeth had lived with longing. She and Zechariah were described as righteous and faithful, yet they had no child. Their story held both obedience and sorrow. They served God, but lived with unanswered desires. In that way, they look like many believers: walking with the Lord faithfully, while carrying a prayer that has not yet been answered.

Then, in God’s time, not a moment early and not a moment late, the promise came into view. What the angel had declared in verse 13 now becomes reality in verse 57: “your prayer has been heard.” God had not forgotten. He had not overlooked them. He had not changed His mind. The word He spoke was fulfilled.

This verse reminds us that God keeps His promises. He always has and He always will. The months of waiting were not wasted. The years of longing were not meaningless. God was working, even when nothing visible was happening. And at just the right time, the answer came.

It is also true that sometimes the answer looks different from what we prayed for or imagined. God does not always give us exactly what we asked, or when we asked, but He never stops being good. Even when His answer is “not yet” or “not this,” His purposes are still perfect. The same faith that rejoices when the prayer is answered also trusts when the path is different than we expected.

Elizabeth holds her son, and God’s faithfulness shines so clearly in that moment. The neighbors rejoice, because they see that the Lord has shown her great mercy. What God promised has come to pass. What they prayed for has arrived. The silence of years gives way to joy, and the story of redemption moves forward.

This one verse tells us something about God’s character that we need to remember: He does not forget His people. He does not abandon His word. He hears every prayer and knows every longing. His timing is perfect. His purposes are sure. And even when we cannot see what He is doing, He remains faithful.

Perhaps you are waiting for something today. Perhaps there is a prayer that has been spoken for years, a burden carried quietly, a hope that has not yet been fulfilled. Luke 1:57 invites you to look again at the God who keeps His promises. You may not know how or when He will work, but you can be sure that He will not fail. Whether He answers in the way you hoped or leads you down a different road, He can be trusted. The God who remembered Zechariah and Elizabeth remembers you.

-Devotional written by Eric Foster

Read Also:

Luke 1

Genesis 21:1–7 - God keeps His promise to Sarah.

1 Samuel 1:9–2:10- Prayer, waiting, birth, and praise.

Psalms 113 - God lifts the lowly with mercy.

Psalms 40:1–5 - God hears and answers patiently.

Romans 4:18–25 - Faith in God's promises.

Hebrews 10:19–25 - Hold fast, God's promises are faithful.

Group Discussion Questions

Where in your life do you feel like you're waiting on God? What makes waiting hardest for you right now?

When God's timing is slower than what you hoped for, how do you usually respond? What might it look like to honor Him in the waiting?

In seasons where nothing seems to be happening, how can you stay faithful in the small things? What "ordinary" places might God be working in your life right now?

Who in your life needs you to rejoice with them right now? What would that look like in a practical way?

If you could write a sentence like Luke 1:57 about your life, what promise of God would you long to see fulfilled, and what step of faith can you take this week?

When God answers prayer, big or small, how do you recognize and celebrate it? What difference would it make to your faith if you slowed down to notice His faithfulness more often? As we celebrate Christmas, the ultimate reminder that God keeps His promises, how might you do that this season?