



WARM UP

Zechariah & Elizabeth

What has taken up a lot of your time recently?

SET IT UP

What do you do when life doesn't work out as you hoped? Zechariah and Elizabeth were a godly couple. They served God faithfully and asked God for children. But God didn't give them any... for a long time. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life" (Pr. 13:12). When God's answer finally came, Zechariah had so much pent-up disappointment that he doubted God's direct promises. Through a powerful set of circumstances Zechariah discovers that God delivers on His promises, every time. And that prayer is never a waste of time.

CHAT IT UP

1. **When have you been shocked or surprised?**
2. **Read Luke 1:5-25. What problem did Zechariah and Elizabeth face?** (Answer: They could not have children.)
3. **Why were they unable to have children? What do we learn from this?** (Answers: We don't know. We don't always know *why* we face certain hardships. Hardship does not mean that God is mad at us.)
4. **Why was Zechariah rendered unable to speak until the day his son was born?** (Answer: He thought his limitations were God's limitations.)
5. **When have you doubted that God's perfect plan for your life?**
6. **How would you finish this sentence: If I could make sure one thing happens it would be _____.** (Or: What long-term hope or frustration can you identify in your life?)
7. **Fear attacks us right where our faith lives. What specific and big prayer can you pray about that "one thing"?**

WRAP IT UP

Fear of life not working out can really keep you locked up. You must look up to break out. One of the most powerful acts of faith is praying against our fears. Take some time as a

group to pray big prayers to God who can do “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20).

LEADER TIPS

- Throughout this series we will be talking about how fears keep us “locked up” and how Christ frees us. As the leader, set the tone for this study by being real about your fears. Your authenticity will be a model for the rest of the group.
- When reading a larger passage of Scripture with a group break it by having group members read verses or paragraphs at a time. You can even summarize in between to help everyone get the story the first time.
- One of the best ways to handle heavy/big questions like #6 is to give people time to think and write answers on **notecards**. Think about providing a piece of scrap paper for questions 6 & 7 this week.