



WISE MEN STILL **FOLLOW HIM**

WEEK 1

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FOLLOW HIM: WEEK 1

WHEN THE WAIT FEELS TOO LONG

LUKE 1:13, NLT | LUKE 1:17, NLT

There's something deeply painful about unanswered prayers. Not the ones we prayed last week or even last month, but the ones we've been bringing to God for years. The prayers we've almost stopped praying because hope has become too heavy to carry.

Zechariah and Elizabeth knew this weight. They were good people; the type of couple every church wishes they had more of. They knew their Bibles, served faithfully, and lived with integrity. Yet the one thing they wanted most remained out of reach. A child. A family. This was a dream that seemed to die a little more with each passing year.

In their culture, childlessness wasn't just heartbreaking; it was humiliating. It marked them as somehow less than; as if God Himself had overlooked them. And perhaps the cruelest part was that they had done everything right. This pain wasn't the result of recklessness or disobedience. The Bible describes them as faithful, and still the prayers went unanswered.

Maybe you're living in your own long wait right now. Perhaps it's a relationship that remains broken despite your repeated attempts at reconciliation. Maybe it's a career that never materializes no matter how qualified you become. For some, it's the loneliness of singleness when everyone around you seems to be finding their person. And for others, it's watching a loved one slip further from God despite decades of prayer.

The enemy whispers that God has forgotten you. That your prayers bounce off the ceiling. That

faithfulness doesn't actually matter. And when you look around and see others receiving what you've been asking for, the doubts begin to grow.


But here's what Zechariah's story teaches us: God doesn't forget. Your prayers aren't lost in some cosmic voicemail. He's been listening all along, working on a timeline you can't see, orchestrating details you don't yet understand.

When the angel finally appeared to Zechariah, the message wasn't just "you're getting a son." It was "God heard your prayer"—past tense. Heard. God had been listening the entire time, even when Zechariah had likely stopped asking.

The wait wasn't punishment or divine forgetfulness. It was preparation. Because God's plan wasn't just to give an elderly couple a child—it was to send someone who would prepare the world for Jesus. What God is doing in your life is part of a much bigger plan. His delays aren't denials—they're part of His design.

Sometimes God makes us wait because His answer is bigger than we imagined. When we ask for one thing, He's preparing something that will impact generations. His timing isn't cruel—it's perfect. And when the answer finally comes, we'll understand why it had to be now and not then.

Don't stop praying. Don't stop believing. Don't stop following Him. Because the God who heard Zechariah's prayer decades after he stopped praying it is still listening to yours today.



Luke 1:13, NLT

But the angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John.

Historical Context

Zechariah was in the Temple fulfilling what was likely his once-in-a-lifetime priestly assignment when Gabriel appeared. As a priest in the division of Abijah, he served in the Temple only two weeks a year—and being chosen by lot to offer incense in the Holy Place was an honor most priests experienced only once, if ever. This wasn’t a routine prayer moment; it was the holiest moment of his ministry.

The angel told him the child’s name would be John, meaning “the grace of the Lord”—a name not found anywhere in Zechariah’s family line. God was making a declaration: this child would be a sign of His unearned grace, arriving at precisely the right time after centuries of silence.

- God hears your prayers, even when you’ve stopped praying
- God’s answers are often bigger than our requests
- What might feel like delay or even denial is actually part of God’s design
- God’s timing is always perfect

Reflection

Why do you think God chose that specific moment to finally answer Zechariah’s prayer? What does this tell us about God’s timing?

Is there a prayer that you’ve stopped praying? How would it change your perspective to believe that God has been listening all along?

Luke 1:17, NLT

He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.

Historical Context

This verse is the direct fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6 which is the very last prophecy in the Old Testament. For four centuries, God had been silent; no prophets, no new revelation, just waiting. The Jewish people were living under Roman occupation, wondering if God had abandoned them. When Gabriel quotes this ancient promise to Zechariah, he's announcing that the 400-year silence is over. John would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah"—not as a reincarnation, but carrying the same bold, uncompromising call to repentance that Elijah brought. The reference to "turning hearts of fathers to children" wasn't just about family reconciliation; it was about restoring God's promise between generations before the Messiah arrived.

- Your answered prayer may be part of a promise God made long before you were born
- God's timing connects your story to His larger story
- John's calling was decided before his parents even knew he existed - God had a plan for this child long before Zechariah prayed for him
- God's biggest answers often require the longest waits; the more significant the calling, the more preparation time needed

Reflection

How does knowing that your story is part of God's larger plan change the way you view your unanswered prayers?

If your current wait is preparing you for something bigger, what might God be preparing you for right now?





GUIDED PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for hearing every prayer we've ever
prayed, even the ones we've stopped praying
because the wait felt too long. Thank You that our
silence and our doubts don't cancel Your promises.
We confess that sometimes the wait makes us
wonder if You've forgotten us. We see others receive
what we've been asking for, and we question if we
even matter to You. Forgive us for doubting Your
goodness and Your timing.

Help us to trust that You are working even when we
can't see it. Remind us that delay is not denial, and
that Your "not yet" is protecting us from blessings
we're not ready to receive.

For those of us carrying prayers that feel decades old,
for restored relationships, for children, for healing,
for purpose, for love—we ask for renewed hope. Give
us the strength to keep praying, keep believing, and
keep following You.

Remind us that our personal prayers are woven into
Your **bigger** story. Help us to see that when You
finally answer, it won't just change our lives, but that
it will impact in ways we can't even imagine.

We praise You not only for what you have done,
but for what You're going to do. We trust that Your
timing is perfect. We believe Your plan is bigger and
better than ours.

In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.