

Face to Face

with

Elizabeth

First Day

Her Story

“But all of us who are Christians have no veils on our faces, but reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord. We are transformed in ever-increasing splendor into His own image, and this is the work of the Lord who is the Spirit.” (II Corinthians 3:18 PHILLIPS)

Elizabeth was someone special! She had prominence from birth, as she had been born into the priestly line of Aaron. Her father was a priest and the man she chose for her husband was a priest. And even better, she lived like one born into prominence; she was a godly woman who lived according to the laws of her God.

But, though an extraordinary person, she like so many others had very ordinary problems. Hers was the problem of barrenness. To be childless was always a heartache, particularly for the Jew who looked at children as a sign of God's favor and pleasure, and especially in the darkness of that day which was so in need of God's intervention. Every Jewish woman secretly wondered if she would be the one to bring forth the promised Messiah; certainly Elizabeth had this hope in her heart for many years, but by now that hope was only a memory. We will begin by looking at what Scripture tells us about Elizabeth. *This is her story.*

Open your Bibles to **Luke 1**. Read the verses listed below and, in a few sentences, summarize the events described there:

verses 5-17 _____

verses 18-25 _____

verses 26-45 _____

verses 57-66 _____

What was Elizabeth's *shame*? _____

What was her *triumph*? _____

What did she *learn*? _____

Whiskey

“...Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” (II Peter 1:5-7)

Elizabeth's name means "the oath of God," or "worshiper of God."

Today we will be looking at the *character* of Elizabeth. Reread the portions of the Luke 1 account that apply to Elizabeth and use the following words to describe her:

- *Her strength*
- *Her weakness*
- *Her faithfulness*

In verse 6 we are given a description of the way Elizabeth lived her life of faith. What do you think it means (be specific) that Elizabeth:

- *Was righteous before God?*
- *Walked in all the commandments and ordinances of God?*
- *Was blameless?*

How did Elizabeth's *character* make a difference in the way she handled her personal affliction?

- Are you following the same pattern for your life that Elizabeth did? What change in your life or lifestyle would help you to better live in accordance with what we have just learned about her?
- What difference might it make in your personal affliction if you made some of these changes?

Third Day

Her Hope

“And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.” (Luke 1:45 NASB)

From what we have studied about Elizabeth this week:

What was her *need*? _____

What was her *hope*? _____

What was God’s *promise*? _____

Elizabeth and Zacharias had prayed countless times and for many years. Now they were old. Most likely they had given up entirely on this desire. We wouldn’t blame them for that because it appeared as if the hope of a child was lost forever. Elizabeth wouldn’t be the chosen one to bring forth the Messiah. In fact, there would be no heir in this family to the priestly line of Aaron. But they were never hopeless in the Lord, or we would have seen them walk another way. They continued on in their hope that God was good and that He had a great plan for their life. They just weren’t sure what that was!

And then the day came. It was an ordinary day in the sense that Elizabeth and Zacharias were doing what they were supposed to do at that time – *doing the next thing*. It was the time of year that Zacharias’ priestly division would serve in the temple. That was special, and yet it was an ordinary part of his life. But something extraordinary happened on that particular day. Zacharias was chosen by lot (that means *chosen by God!*) to burn incense in the temple of the Lord. This was nothing ordinary; it was a once in a lifetime opportunity to do a special work of God. But that was only the beginning, because God had more! Just imagine it – the beginning of an ordinary day, becoming by the moment more extraordinary. It was a unique moment in the plan of God to bring a most amazing blessing not only to Elizabeth and Zacharias, but to all of Israel as well. This day, as Zacharias set out to do the blessed task of offering the sacred incense, God appeared to him by way of the angel Gabriel, who came to tell him that finally, after all the years they had waited, their prayers had been heard and Elizabeth would bear a son.

Taking into consideration the miraculous way Zacharias was told about the child who was to be born and the plan God had for his life, can you understand why it was that Elizabeth and Zacharias had to wait so long for this prayer to be answered? _____

Scripture tells us that after conceiving, Elizabeth secluded herself for five months. What words came from her heart during this time? v. 25 _____

With those words in mind, what do you think Elizabeth was occupied with during those hidden months? _____

Elizabeth's son, John, was not just any child he was a promised child. He was to have the special ministry of going before Jesus, making *ready a people prepared for the Lord*. Just as John would be the forerunner of Jesus, we can almost see the pregnancy of Elizabeth – who was both barren and past the age of childbearing - being a sort of forerunner to the pregnancy of the *virgin* Mary, who would soon be visited by this same angel.

Speaking of Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy, listen to how Phillips translates verse 36: *"Indeed, this is the sixth month for her, a woman who was called barren."*

Is there barrenness in your life today? Have you a prayer deep in your heart that you have by now given up? Can you think of any reason that God might have in delaying the answer to your prayer? _____

How might this story of Elizabeth's and Zacharias' prayer being answered, so long after they had given up any hope for it, offer hope to you today? _____

Memory Verse:

I would have lost heart unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13). This is our memory verse this week – begin memorizing it today!

Fourth Day

Her Gifts

One wonders upon reading Elizabeth's story how she was not only able to keep going, but also to maintain her reputation for being a godly woman despite the fact that she must have endured great hardship due to her barrenness. She had spent decades in a childless marriage in a culture that no doubt branded her as incurring God's judgment for her sin. In her day, the Jewish rabbis allowed childless marriages as grounds for divorce. However, Luke 1:6 speaks of Elizabeth and her husband Zacharias as "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They were *righteous*, meaning they were upright before God in all their ways. They were also walking in obedience, which meant Elizabeth walking *alongside* her husband in agreement in all the Lord's commands and requirements. And they were both *blameless*, meaning free from fault in God's sight. They were living their lives – *outwardly* and *inwardly* – to please Him.

What gave Elizabeth the strength for her daily work, the countenance of a glad heart, and the faithful resolve to glorify God in all she did? Her own name reveals the secret: *Elizabeth* means a *worshiper of God*. She looked to Him, spent time with Him, and allowed Him to use her circumstances to mold her into a woman after God's heart.

Today it is so easy to underestimate the importance of a daily devotional time with God. We allow it if it doesn't deter us from our set agenda for an already overcrowded day, but are we in the habit of planning our day around a set appointment with our heavenly Father? Would it make a difference to us if we understood how much it means to **Him** to have that time with us? One wonders how much smoother our paths would be if we made Him our first priority instead of giving Him our leftovers.

Please take a moment and consider the following: When facing difficult circumstances....

Where do you go for help? _____

To whom do you turn? _____

Do you allow God to use your circumstances to mold you into a woman after His heart? _____

Do you have a set appointment with God each day? _____

The only way to endure hard times and remain righteous, obedient and blameless is to earnestly seek God with an undivided heart – now, today and every day. The foundation of a daily devotional time will make us ready for what life hands to us. If we wait for the crisis to *begin* getting ready, it will be too late. Time spent with the Lord today will result in victory tomorrow!

Luke 1:24 says, “*Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months.*” She retreated to the quiet seclusion of her home to worship God and contemplate the good news of the birth of her son. She could have paraded herself about, shouting the news throughout her hometown streets, but she chose to remain quietly close to the Lord, full of joy and anticipation.

Put yourself in Elizabeth’s shoes for a moment. Imagine, if you will, that you are able to just set aside all your responsibilities for a while....

What would it be like if you “hid yourself” for a period of five months to be alone with God? Does that thought excite you and fill you with longing or does it panic you and fill you with dread? (Or perhaps you fit somewhere in between?) Please record your thoughts. (Be honest with yourself – God already knows your heart.)

It’s very possible that Elizabeth had the gift of encouraging others, which was grounded in her deep devotional life. She was older and more experienced in life with a great deal of wise counsel to hand down to a younger woman. She exemplified the woman Paul the Apostle referred to in Titus 2:3-5 when he said, speaking of the older women, “*that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.*”

Are you a younger woman desirous of the influence that an older woman in the Lord would bring? Write out your prayer request here.

Are you an older woman who would like to be an “Elizabeth” for a younger woman in the body of Christ? Write down your willingness to invest in someone who needs encouragement and then lift it to the Lord in prayer.

For both Elizabeth and Mary, those three months together must have seemed like a gift from God. Mary wasn’t the only one encouraged. Luke 1:41-42 says, “*And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!’*” Upon hearing Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s baby leaped with excitement and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. God intends for us to freely give and receive from one another, pointing one another to Christ in the hope that we, too, will experience His fullness and speak out His praise. Look for someone to encourage in the coming week.

Fifth Day

Her Legacy

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)

How will you be remembered? How would you like to be remembered? What will you leave behind of benefit for others? What you do and say today will leave imprints for others to view tomorrow.

Taking a closer look...

- What impression did Elizabeth leave with you this week?

- How might her example impact women in today's world?

Taking a personal look...

Elizabeth leaves us with the lovely picture of personal devotion in private solitude, which is the key to entering into that place of rest in Christ, whatever the circumstances may be.

- Is your personal quiet time with the Lord giving you what you need to “walk by faith” and “not by sight?”

- If this time is not what you would like it to be, what changes can **you** make to ensure that the time you spend with the Lord is *quantity* as well as *quality* time?

Passing it on...

- What kind of advice would you offer someone about the importance of a daily devotional time with the Lord?

- What word of wisdom have you gleaned from your study of Elizabeth this week that you would like to pass on to another?

Sixth Day

Your Prayer

Each day this week you have examined up close – face to face – a woman of the Bible: her *story and manner; her promise and hope; her gifts and legacy*. Throughout the process, as you learned about her, you also learned about yourself.

Now the focus shifts to *Your Prayer*. Each week during your group time you will have the opportunity to pray in agreement with the other ladies for the things you write down on this personalized page. Keep an updated account in the *Praise* list each week as God answers your petitions. This year let's come boldly to His throne and learn to pray the **BIG PRAYER** with expectancy! The only prerequisite for such boldness is being *humble* and *real* in His presence.

Prayer: Write out your prayer for each of the following...

I praise God for (an aspect of His marvelous character) _____

I confess to God _____

I thank God for _____

I ask God for _____

Promise: Write out this week's *promise* in the space provided...and learn to pray this promise from Scripture.

Praise: If God has answered a prayer request for you this week or fulfilled a desire of your heart, please write it out and date it as a stone of remembrance.

Notes

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