

TALK IT OVER

EYEWITNESS SERIES

PART 1 | 22 MARCH 2026

NOTES TO LEADERS

1. Please take note of our upcoming Easter weekend services:
 - Good Friday: 8am & 9:30am
 - Easter Sunday: 8am, 9:30am and 6pm
2. There is a water baptism teaching on Sunday, the 29th of March, and water baptisms will take place across all services over the Easter weekend. Encourage anyone in your group who has not yet been baptised to sign up.

SCRIPTURES

LUKE 1:5-25

⁵ *In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.*

⁶ *Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. ⁷ But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.*

⁸ *Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside.*

¹¹ *Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.*

¹³ *But the angel said to him: 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.*

He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.

¹⁶ *He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.*

...

¹⁸ *Zechariah asked the angel, 'How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well on in years.'*

¹⁹ *The angel said to him, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰ And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.'*

²¹ *Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple.*

²² *When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realised he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.*

²³ *When his time of service was completed, he returned home.*

²⁴ *After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.*

²⁵ *'The Lord has done this for me,' she said. 'In these days he has shown his favour and taken away my disgrace among the people.'*

START TALKING

- What stood out to you from Sunday's message? What challenged you or encouraged you?
- What has God been doing in your world - what can we celebrate?

START THINKING

1. What stands out to you about how long Zechariah and Elizabeth had to wait? What does this passage teach us about God's timing?
2. How would you have reacted if an angel were to appear to you suddenly, as happened to Zechariah?
3. Why do you think Zechariah struggled to believe the angel, despite being a faithful priest? How do you reconcile the tension between faith and doubt in your own life?

START SHARING

- How do you typically respond when God seems silent or distant? What advice would you give someone who is struggling with seemingly unanswered prayers?
- Read Luke 1:25 and note the words "favour" & "disgrace"
- What do you think Elizabeth meant by "disgrace"?
- Why was this such a big deal in her context?
- Where have you experienced God bringing freedom from shame in your life?
- What are you trusting God for in the lives of your children/grandchildren (or young people you influence)? How can we remain faithful in praying for the next generation?

START PRAYING

- **Faith & Doubt:** "Lord, I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief."
- **Promises:** Pray for renewed faith in long-standing prayers
- **Favour:** Thank God for removing shame and restoring identity

START DOING

1. Invite someone to Easter
2. Consider water baptism (if you're not yet baptised).
3. Identify one promise or prayer you've stopped believing for. Write it down and begin praying for it again.

TALK IT OVER

SUMMARY OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

For the last 13 years, we've been working through the Gospel of Matthew. Just a few chapters at a time - year by year. And last year, we finished it. We are now going to begin going through the book of Luke in a similar way. For the next six weeks, we're going to be focusing on Luke chapter 1.

Luke 1 is 80 verses long, and it contains stories that none of the other Gospels includes.

It's the pre-nativity narrative - what happened before Jesus was born - and this Sunday we looked at the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth in Luke 1:5-25.

We learn that Zechariah was from the line of Aaron. They were priests, people who were set apart. Dedicated to God. His wife, Elizabeth, was also from that same priestly line. And then Luke tells us something very deliberate: *"Both of them were righteous... blameless..."*

This is not a story about people who messed up. These were faithful people. And yet, *"They were childless... and very old."* They were faithful, righteous, blameless, and still waiting.

One day, Zechariah is chosen by Lot to go into the temple to burn incense. This is a once-in-a-lifetime moment. And while he's in there, an angel appears... Standing right next to him! Just imagine that for a moment, you're alone in the temple doing your job, and suddenly an angel is there with you! How would you react? Because the text says, *"He was startled... and gripped with fear."* That feels like a very appropriate response.

And the angel says, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, your prayer has been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son. You must call him John. He will be a joy and delight; great in the sight of the Lord; filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many people back to God.

All of this in a matter of moments. And then comes the key line. Zechariah says:

"How can I be sure of this?" And that question is the hinge of the whole story.

This story is a great challenge to our faith!

1. Faith & Doubt

How would we have responded if we were in Zechariah's place?

Zechariah was a priest. A man of great faith who had served God for decades. And yet, in this moment, he also doubted when the angel appeared to him. This is like many of us.

This story is a mirror. It reflects something in us. We can be faithful, committed, consistent... and still struggle to believe when God finally speaks.

Bad news: Zechariah's doubt had consequences. He couldn't speak for nine months. Every day of silence was an opportunity to reflect, to remember, to reconsider what God had said.

Good news: His doubt did not stop God's plan. Our doubt does not change Who God is or alter His purpose. It's the same as if we doubted the sunrise because of clouds. The sun continues to rise and set with or without us! God's ultimate plan will be outworked in the end.

So what do we do with our doubts? We pray this: *'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'* Mark 9:24. This is a real and honest prayer. And God honours it.

2. Promises & Parenting

We are given no details about Zechariah and Elizabeth's lives before this moment. No timeline, no backstory. But we can assume that there were years and years of waiting. Prayers were prayed with what felt like no answer. Imagine what emotions they must have gone through over that time! And then... *"Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard."* Luke 1:13

So here's the question: Have you given up on something God once promised?

Are there God-given dreams or promises that we have given up believing for? Because God's timing is never early, or too late. But it is appointed.

A note to parents:

Every child is a gift from God. And here's something we don't always realise:

God chose you as their parent. Not by accident. Not by chance. On purpose.

You are not the backup plan. You are the plan.

Parenting is beautiful, frustrating, exhausting, shaping... Because God uses parenting not just to shape our children, but also to shape us!

So don't give up. Don't stop praying. God sees every tear, every prayer, every moment of faithfulness.

3. Favour & Disgrace

Elizabeth says, *The Lord has done this for me ... he has shown his favour and taken away my disgrace.* Luke 1:25.

This is a huge biblical theme. God takes away shame and gives favour.

Right at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis, we see that Adam runs from shame. But in the Gospels, Jesus runs toward it. He takes it on Himself.

Think of a toddler covered in mud. Living their best life, but completely messy. If you tell them to clean themselves, it just gets worse. They need intervention, help from someone bigger than them.

That's what God does. He steps in. He washes us. He removes guilt, shame, disgrace... and replaces it with favour. It's not just a blessing, it's a new identity. A new state of being.

So Zechariah's story holds up a mirror.

- Where do you need to trust again?
- What have you stopped believing for?
- Where do you need to receive God's grace again?

God is still speaking. He is still working. And He is still faithful.