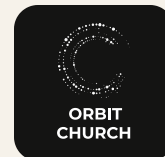


It's Bad, But It Ain't That Bad

2024-12-22 • PASTOR MATT ROSE



Luke 1:5-25

FOR THE LEADER

These questions help you run the conversation. They are not your study. Get into the passage yourself first, because your group needs what God taught you, not just a list of questions. These also lean on Sunday's message, so a few will not land for anyone who missed it. Watch it before you lead.

WHAT THE MESSAGE WAS ABOUT

Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and childless. They served in a temple ruled by a king who had no business being king, in the middle of four hundred years when God had not said a word. Pastor Matt's first point: it is fine to call that bad, because it was bad. God does not need us to pretend. His second point: God was already at work inside all of it. We never get the answer to when. We do get the answer to who. That is why this old couple kept praying through decades of nothing.

To get started

- What is a hard thing in your life right now that you have been careful not to call hard?

Looking back at the message

He gave people permission to name a bad thing as bad. Some in the room have needed that for years.

- 1 Pastor Matt said we avoid calling things bad because we do not want to be the complainer. Where do you catch yourself doing that?
- 2 Elizabeth was childless into old age in a small village where everyone would have talked about it. What does imagining those decades of painful conversations add to this story?
- 3 Pastor Matt said good things can come through genuinely bad situations without the bad ever becoming good. Where you sit right now, is that comforting or frustrating? OPTIONAL

Looking at the passage

Read Luke 1:5-25. Note the setting in verse 5 before you get to the angel.

- 4 Read Luke 1:5-7. Make a list of everything the text says is wrong with their situation.
- 5 In verse 13 the angel says: your prayer has been heard. Given their age, how long had Zechariah likely been praying it?
- 6 Zechariah asks how he can be sure, and he loses his voice until the baby is born. Why do you think that was the response?
- 7 Read Romans 8:28. What exactly does this verse promise, and what does it never promise? OPTIONAL

Bringing it home

The distinction between when and who is the takeaway. Say it plainly.

- 8 God never tells us when the answer will come, but we know who is listening. How does that change the way you pray about the thing you have waited longest for?
- 9 What have you stopped praying for because too much time passed?
- 10 Zechariah kept showing up to serve in the temple while nothing changed at home. Where are you being asked to stay faithful while nothing happens?
- 11 Who prayed faithfully for you over the years, maybe without ever seeing the result?

The group together

Long silences are easier to survive with people who remember what you asked for.

- 12 Why is it hard to keep praying about something in front of people who know it has not happened yet?
- 13 What is one thing this group could commit to praying about for a long time, even years?
- 14 How can this group be honest about hard things without turning into a place of complaint?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

What prayer did you give up on, and will you pick it back up this week?

You might pray about

- For long-standing prayers that have not been answered
- For faithfulness during silence
- For those in the group carrying something they have not named
- For the people who prayed for us before we believed