

Bethel Bible Study December 5, 2013: Advent Reflections

Advent reflections on the birth of John the Baptist

In Luke 1:5-20 we see how God worked with Zechariah and Elizabeth to bring out the birth of John the Baptist.

- **God worked through their pain** - the pain of childlessness.

God also works through our pain. Pain gets our attention; it softens us; it humbles us. If you are in a painful time of your life, look to God.

- **God worked through their prayers.** The angel Gabriel told Zechariah and his prayers had been heard.

When we pray, we admit that we are not self-sufficient. Anything you are not praying about, you are doing in your own wisdom and strength. What is that area for you? Talk to God and admit your dependency upon His wisdom and power.

- **God worked through His Holy Spirit.** John was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth. God's Spirit would use John to bring many people back to the Lord and prepare the world for the entrance of the Son of God. John's entire role would be accomplished through the Spirit of God.

God works today in the same way. His Holy Spirit inhabits the human spirits of people. If God's spirit was indispensable to John's life and ministry, then it is also indispensable to our lives and ministries.

We all know how a flashlight works. We simply slide the button and the light comes on. But, what is the source of its power to produce light? It's in the battery. Why does a flashlight need a battery to produce light? Because it is made that way. In the same way, our power to do right things and serve God is not in us. It's in the Holy Spirit who inhabits us. That's how God made us.

In the end the basic difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is the

presence of the Holy Spirit. II Corinthians 13:5 says, *Examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Do you not know that Christ Jesus lives in you?*

- **God worked through faith.** As awesome as this experience was, Zechariah asked, *How can I be sure of this? I am old and Elizabeth is well along in years.* Luke 1:18. Zechariah did not have the faith to believe God's words. Gabriel told him that he would not be able to say a word until all of this is completed. But, when Elizabeth gave birth to a son, Zechariah believed! He said, *His name is John.* God wanted Zechariah to have faith - but even in his unbelief, God worked and demonstrated his power to Zechariah. Then Zechariah and Elizabeth could both rejoice in God's plan for their lives.

Today we rejoice in God's work -

using our pain to bring us to Him
honoring our prayers of dependence
empowering us by His Holy Spirit
building our faith



Discussion questions:

1. How has a painful experience or time in your life brought you closer to God?
2. Tell of a time when God answered your prayers.
3. How does the consciousness of the Holy Spirit in your life give you confidence?
4. How does the account of Zechariah and Elizabeth increase your faith?