

The Gifts of Patience & Faithfulness

Message 2 of 5 in the series: "The Gift that Keeps on Giving"

A. The Christmas story reveals God's plan to rescue us from sin and death through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and empower us to live new lives through the Holy Spirit.

"...God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because **that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus**. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News." 2 Timothy 1:9-10 (NLT)

1. Salvation is a gift we don't deserve. "...When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, **he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy**. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Because of his grace he made us right in his sight** and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life." Titus 3:4-7 (NLT)
2. The Holy Spirit is working in us, transforming our character, so that we become a little more like Jesus every day. "For God knew his people in advance, and **he chose them to become like his Son**, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." Romans 8:29 (NLT)
3. The Holy Spirit is working in us, transforming us, so we can live abundant lives. "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it **more abundantly**." John 10:10b (NKJV)

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, **will produce much fruit**." John 15:5a (NLT)

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)

B. The Christmas story helps us understand our need for patience and faithfulness in our relationship with the all-powerful, all-knowing, eternal Creator God of the universe.

"When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. **Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes**, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. **They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old**. One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense... While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. 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**. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. **And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God**. 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.'"

Luke 1:5-17 (NLT) (see also *Malachi 4:5-6*)

1. God had heard all of Zechariah and Elizabeth's prayers. "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and **his ears are attentive to their prayer**..." 1 Peter 3:12a (NIV)
Important! "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." Matthew 7:7-8 (NLT)
2. The Holy Spirit is developing patience (longsuffering) within us because God's timing is NOT the same as ours. "But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: **A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day**." 2 Peter 3:8 (NLT)
Important! God's timing is always right/best. "So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and **at the right time he will lift you up** in honor." 1 Peter 5:6 (NLT)

3. The Holy Spirit is developing faithfulness (trust) within us because God's ways of doing things are NOT our ways. "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And **my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.**" Isaiah 55:8 (NLT)

"Zechariah said to the angel, '**How can I be sure this will happen?** I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.' Then the angel said, 'I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, **since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born.** For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.'" Luke 1:18-20 (NLT)

Important! "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you... Be still in the presence of the Lord and wait patiently for him to act." Psalm 37:4-5, & 7a (NLT)

C. The Holy Spirit gives us an abundance of patience and faithfulness so we can share them with others.

1. We can be patient with others just as God has been patient with us. "**Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you?** Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?" Romans 2:4 (NLT)

"Always be humble and gentle. **Be patient with each other**, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love." Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)

"Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: **You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.**" James 1:19 (NLT)

"Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, **you must clothe yourselves** with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and **patience.**" Colossians 3:12 (NLT)

Important! "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."
Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

2. We can be faithful to friends, relatives, coworkers, classmates, etc. just as the Lord has been faithful to us. "A friend **loves at all times**, and a brother is **born for a time of adversity.**" Proverbs 17:17 (NIV)

"So **let's not get tired of doing what is good.** At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith." Galatians 6:9-10 (NLT)

"After the wall was finished and I had set up the doors in the gates, the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites were appointed. I gave the responsibility of governing Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah, the commander of the fortress, **for he was a faithful man who feared God** more than most."
Nehemiah 7:1-2 (NLT)

Very, Very, Important! God doesn't have to work at being patient or faithful. That's who He is. It is His nature. As we stay connected to Christ and surrender every part of our lives to Him, the Holy Spirit will transform us so we become godly, acting and thinking like Jesus. "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but **let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.** Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Romans 12:2 (NLT)

J O H N S C H M I D T • 12-08-24 • john@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Read Luke 1:5-25 & 57-66. In what ways is the story of Zechariah & Elizabeth a lesson in the importance of trusting God's ways and His timing?
2. What do you think Jesus meant when He said that He came to give us abundant life? (John 10:10 & 15:5, 2 Timothy 1:9-10, Titus 3:4-7)
3. Why do we need patience and faithfulness in order to have a personal relationship with God? (2 Peter 3:8, Isaiah 55:8-9)
4. How can we share the patience God gives us with others? (Ephesians 4:2, James 1:19, Colossians 3:12)

5. Discuss the following ways God has been faithful to us:

“But the Lord is faithful; **he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.**”

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NLT)

“But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to **forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.**” 1 John 1:9 (NLT)

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; **he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.** But when you are tempted, **he will also provide a way out** so that you can endure it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, **will continue his work until it is finally finished** on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

6. How can we be faithful relatives, coworkers, friends, classmates, etc.? (Galatians 6:9-10, Proverbs 17:17, Nehemiah 7:1-2)