

Living in the Love of God Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part altogether, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Are you good at picking out presents for other people? Explain.
2. Do you like to wake up early on Christmas Day?

Read the following passage: Luke 1:5-25.

Zechariah was a faithful man. Even so, he, along with his wife, Elizabeth, experienced years of heartache and disappointment. When an angel appeared to him in the temple and informed him that his prayers had been heard and that he was going to have a son, it was too much for Zechariah to take in. God loved Zechariah and God loves us. And the message God gave to Zechariah is also a message for us. No matter where we are and what we have experienced, God wants us to live in his love.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Are there any areas of your life in which you find it difficult to live in hope? Explain.
2. Read James 5:16-18. What does James imply about how we should view our lives in comparison to the men and women in the Bible? Do you have trouble embracing this perspective? Explain.
3. Psychologist Henry Cloud writes that our thoughts around fear and failure tend to become personal (I'm irredeemably flawed), pervasive (it's not one thing, it's everything!), and permanent (nothing will ever change). Have you experienced this in your own life? How can the love of God help us resist going down that road with our thoughts?
4. Zechariah's path to fatherhood was not the one he had spent so many years hoping for and praying for. But, in the end, what God did was better. How do we navigate seemingly unanswered prayers? How do we know when it's time to change what we're praying for? Does your prayer life go beyond making requests? Why is that important?
5. Many times we exert a lot of energy trying to keep our desires in check. What are some desires we should seek to strengthen?
6. Most of the time God extends grace to us, we need to actively respond in order to fully experience that grace. Are there any areas of your life in which you can see God extending grace to you? How do you need to respond to fully experience this grace?

Pray