

Zacharias and Elizabeth: “Both Righteous”

Luke 1:6, “*And they were both righteous before God...*”

Introduction: Parents are important. In fact, I find it interesting the first two characters Luke describes to us in his well-written gospel narrative are not John and Jesus! They are Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John! The next two characters introduced to us are not John and Jesus either. After the angel Gabriel speaks to Zacharias, we are introduced to Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus! God had a plan for both John and Jesus in their earthly work and that plan would begin with having the right parentage.

After Luke’s introductory remarks he writes, “*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*” (Luke 1:5-6). What a beautiful compliment to describe a godly couple—“*both righteous before God.*” How wonderful it would be, if others wrote about us, to be described in such simple, yet profound ways. Let’s take a look at the story of Zacharias and Elizabeth and learn about why they were “*both righteous.*”

I. Righteous In Their Walk (Luke 1:6)

A. Luke 1:6 says of Zacharias and Elizabeth, “... *they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*”

1. Those who are “*righteous before God*” are those who “*walk in all the commandments.*”

2. The phrase implies obedience to God’s commands (see 1 John 3:7-10).

B. The book of Ephesians contrasts the Christian’s walk before Christ and the Christian’s walk after Christ—which one would characterize your walk now?

1. Ephesians 2:1-3, “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which **you once walked** according to the course of this world... in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind...*”

2. Ephesians 2:10, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that **we should walk in them.***”

C. One indication of this couple’s devotion to God was seen in their faithful service to God with regard to their temple duties (Luke 1:8-9). Can you be depended upon to serve?

II. Righteous Despite Difficulty (Luke 1:5, 7)

A. This couple provide a pleasant contrast to “*Herod, king of Judea*” (1:5) who was ruling the area at the time Elizabeth gave birth to John.

1. Herod was an immoral, petty and petulant king whom the Jews had to tolerate under the Roman Empire.

2. Zacharias and Elizabeth, however, did not conform to the mores of their culture but were still striving to follow their duties as children of Israel.

3. Righteous couples are willing to swim against the cultural tides.

- B. Yet, Zacharias and Elizabeth were also stricken with the disappointment of having “no child” and were losing hope as “*they were both well advanced in years*” (1:7).
 1. Such childlessness was viewed as a punishment by many (cp. John 9:1-3).
 2. Even worse was to be serving as a Levitical priest with no son as heir (1:5).
 3. Then, imagine this, you finally have a son and he is to play second fiddle to Jesus, the Son of God (1:13-17).
- C. Righteous couples are realistic about the trials and faithful despite them.

III. Righteous In Their Prayer Life (Luke 1:13)

- A. As Zacharias goes “*into the temple of the Lord*” the “*whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense*” (Luke 1:9-10).
 1. There should be no question as to what this couple had been praying as we read verse 13: “*... your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.*”
 2. Like Hannah, Zacharias and Elizabeth were praying, and God heard the prayers of the righteous (cp. 1 Samuel 1:10; 1 Peter 3:12).
- B. Godly couples make prayer a habit (1 Peter 3:7)—how often do you pray as a couple?

IV. Righteous As They Overcame Obstacles (Luke 1:18)

- A. With any couple, there will be trials within and trials without—Satan is crafty and tries to attack from every possible angle.
- B. Zacharias shows us that righteous people may have doubts, questions and skepticisms as he struggles with grasping how an old couple can have a baby (Luke 1:18).
 1. Yet, the angel makes it clear you do not question an angel (Luke 1:19).
 2. This sign to Zacharias sure did shut his mouth (1:21-22)!
- C. Not only did Zacharias have his own internal doubts, but the pair was pressured from external friends as well (1:57-61).
 1. Elizabeth leaves the final decision to Zacharias and Zacharias does as he was originally instructed by God’s angel naming him “John” (1:62-64).
 2. Godly couples, as pressures arise, ultimately submit themselves to God (1 Cor 11:3).

V. Righteous In Rejoicing in God’s Blessings (1:14)

- A. Righteous couples are thankful couples—as Elizabeth shows us (Luke 1:24-25).
 1. She does not view her pregnancy in old age as a curse—children are a gift from God (Psalm 127:3).
 2. Instead, it is a great blessing from God “to take away my reproach among people” (1:25).
- B. Righteous couples rejoice in the opportunity to raise children as servants of God—as the prophecy of Zacharias indicates (Luke 1:67-79).

Conclusion: As we look at this couple, is it any wonder why God chose them as the parents who would raise the forerunner to Jesus Christ? Godly parenting starts with a godly marriage. Couples who strive together side by side in their faith will raise their children together side by side as parents. As we close, let’s think about the One whom John would lead Israel to in His ministry (Luke 1:76-77; cp. Matthew 26:28; Acts 2:38)!