

# Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 12/2/18

**Monday** – Read Luke 1:1-4. **So That You May Know the Truth.** Luke’s primary sources were “those who from the first were eyewitnesses.” Only one or two people witnessed many parts of Luke’s Christmas story. Who could have told Luke about Gabriel’s visit to Zechariah or Mary? Christian tradition says Mary lived in Ephesus where Luke went with Paul. Have you ever thought that Luke might have learned the Christmas story directly from Mary? Does it give you confidence to know that the story was passed on in this way? How can you pass the Christmas story on to the people you know? Ask God to help you share the Good News of the Christmas story with others.

**Tuesday** – Read Luke 1:5-7 and Genesis 11:29-30; 25:19-21; 29:31; 30:1-2. **Righteousness and Barrenness.** Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous and blameless. Zechariah’s name means *God has remembered*, and Elizabeth’s name means *My God’s oath*. Zechariah was a priest and Elizabeth came from a priestly family. She had fulfilled the expectation for a daughter of a priest by marrying a priest. Like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, and Elkanah and Hannah, this devout couple was childless and getting older every day. Barrenness meant that this family didn’t have a future. If you struggle with infertility, there is great comfort in knowing that so many holy people wrestled with infertility. God loved them deeply and eventually answered their prayers and blessed them with children. So, we pray that God will work through doctors and medical treatments and that God’s healing touch will be on our lives. We trust that God will use whatever happens for God’s purposes. Pray for couples who are struggling with infertility.

**Wednesday** – Read Luke 1:8-17; I Samuel 1:27; and Malachi 4:5-6. **Answered Prayers.** Like Isaac and Hannah, Zechariah and Elizabeth prayed for a child, and in God’s time, God answered their prayers. The angel, Gabriel, told Zechariah that Elizabeth will bear a son named John which means *Yahweh has shown favor* or *Yahweh is gracious*. He will be great in the sight of the Lord. <sup>16</sup> “*He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.*” <sup>17</sup> *With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*” Not only will God give them a son, but their child will be the forerunner of the Messiah. What greater blessing could come to a faithful priest? This story reminds us that God hears our prayers and answers prayers in God’s time. Pray, expecting that God will hear and answer your prayers.

**Thursday** – Read Luke 1:18-23 and Genesis 15:1-18. **How Will I Know?** When Gabriel told Zechariah that Elizabeth would bear a special son in her old age, Zechariah doubted the message because of their age. Like Abraham before him, he asked, “*How will I know that this is so?*” Gabriel returns Zechariah’s emphatic “I am old” with an equally emphatic “I am Gabriel.” His mission is to bring good news to Zechariah, but because Zechariah did not receive the good news, he would not be able to speak until the annunciation was fulfilled and the child was born. Zechariah was concerned that his days had passed; now he will count the days until the angelic announcement is fulfilled. What causes you to doubt God’s willingness to hear your prayers and God’s ability to bring blessings into your life? Ask God to help you grow in the faith that God will answer your prayers and work in your life.

**Friday** – Read I Samuel 1:1-28. **Hannah.** Long before Elizabeth and Zechariah, a childless Hebrew woman named Hannah prayed for a son and asked God to remember her. She poured herself out before the Lord, and she had faith that God would hear her prayer. She promised to dedicate this son to religious service. God remembered Hannah and blessed her with a son. When she returned to the Temple to dedicate her son to serve the Lord she told the prophet, Eli, <sup>27</sup> “*For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him.*” <sup>28</sup> *Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.*” As you pour yourself out before the Lord, know that God will remember you and act in your life to answer your prayers and bless you.

**Saturday** – Read Luke 1:24-25 and I Samuel 2:1-10. **Prayers of Gratitude.** When God answered their prayers, both Hannah and Elizabeth offered prayers of gratitude. They each gave God the glory for blessing them. How is God faithful to those who reach out to God? How has God answered your prayers? How has God blessed you? Have you returned your gratitude and praise to God? As you pray, express your thanks and gratitude to God for what God has done for you.

**Lectionary Readings:** Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; I Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36.

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