

11-27-2010, COTR Texarkana

Title: Why, or What Now?

Purpose: Provoke people to have unshakable faith in God when they face disappointment.

Spiritual Truth: Stop asking, “Why?”, and start asking, “What does God want me to do now?”

Text: Lu 1:5-7

Topic: Faith, Disappointment, Why, Zechariah

Series: Unshakable

Series Purpose: Inspire people to have unshakable faith in uncertain times.

Why or What Now?

I. Introduction

A. How many were up Friday morning at 4:30? Did you go duck or deer hunting? If you can get up that early to shop we could probably get up early for prayer.

1. Today’s message is a bridge between the series “Unshakable” and Christmas.
 - a. Listen, watch or download messages on the web page @
ChurchOnTheRock.org
2. Somebody else had a baby while Mary was pregnant with Jesus. Her name was Elizabeth and she had a baby named John the Baptist. Her baby’s birth was prophesied 400 years earlier by the prophet Malachi. There would have been no Savior born on Christmas without His forerunner, John the Baptist.

B. Luke 1:5-7 (ESV)

⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah... And he had a wife ...and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And **they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.** ⁷ **But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.**

- a. This seems like a contradiction: righteous and barren. It would be more natural to say righteous and blessed. Zechariah and Elizabeth were godly people but weren’t able to have a baby after years of praying to God. I’m sure they asked questions like, “Why is this happening to us?”
 - b. There is an unspoken question all people ask in times like this: why is God letting this happen to me?
 - c. Illustrate with an anchor. Disappointment had the potential to bring their life to a standstill.
2. Unbeknown to them God had a purpose for her barrenness. Their ability to have a child was on hold until God’s time was right for John the Baptist to be born.
 3. Sometimes things happen in our lives that we don’t understand. Today we’ll learn how to deal with disappointment, unanswered prayer, personal loss and unfulfilled dreams. We’ll learn to ask a more important question than “Why?” We’ll ask and answer the question, “What does God want me to do now?”

C. Title: Why or What Now?

D. Purpose: Provoke people to have unshakable faith in God when they face disappointment.

E. Spiritual Truth: Stop asking, “Why?”, and start asking, “What does God want me to do now?”

II. Spiritual lessons from Zechariah and Elizabeth’s struggle

A. Lesson #1: When the Bible doesn’t make sense trust the character of God.

1. Deuteronomy 7:12-14 (NCV) [Context: God’s promise to Israel]
¹² If you pay attention to these laws and obey them carefully, the Lord your God will keep his agreement and show his love to you...¹³ **...he will bless you with children...**¹⁴ **...Every husband and wife will have children...**
2. Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous and blameless but had no children. How could this be? It seems as if God made a promise He’s not keeping.
 - a. What do you do when things happen that make you question the Bible? Trust the character of God, (Jn 3:16). A loving God will not do evil to His children.
3. Sometimes we understand why “bad things” happen and sometimes we don’t. e.g.
 - a. Joshua and Caleb knew that the sin of the 10 spies caused them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years.
 - b. Mary and Martha asked Jesus to heal Lazarus. Jesus stayed away and he died. Mary and Martha didn’t know why. God had an unforeseen purpose. He planned to raise him from the dead so many people would believe.
 - c. Satan killed Job’s kids, destroyed his business and made Job sick. God didn’t stop it. Job didn’t know why this was happening.
 - d. The important thing is our response.
 - i. Job 13:15 (ESV)
¹⁵ **Though he slay me, I will hope in him...** i.e. I don’t understand why this is happening but I choose to trust my Heavenly Father.
4. Sometimes a person of faith will tie a knot in the end of their rope to hold on.
5. A more important question than “Why?” is “What do I do now?” When you can’t figure out what’s going on you faith it out.

B. Lesson #2: Continue to serve God in spite of disappointment.

1. Luke 1:8 (NLT)[Context: barren for decades]
⁸ One day **Zechariah was serving God in the Temple...**
2. Zechariah didn’t stop serving God just because he didn’t understand why. He could have pouted, gotten depressed or walked away from God but he didn’t.
3. This is how mature faith works. It chooses to serve God no matter what. Job did:
 - a. Job 2:7-10 (NLT)
⁷ So Satan left the Lord’s presence, and he struck Job with terrible boils from head to foot. ⁸ Job scraped his skin with a piece of broken pottery as he sat among the ashes. ⁹ His wife said to him, **“Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die.”** ¹⁰ But Job replied, “You talk like a foolish woman. Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?” So in all this, Job said nothing wrong.

4. It's easy to serve God when everything is going great. It's hard when trouble hits. It's easy to pay your tithe when you get a bonus. It's hard when you lose your job. It's easy to praise God when you're healthy. It's hard when you're in pain.
5. Zechariah kept going to the temple for decades even though his prayer for a child was unanswered. This takes maturity.
6. God is most likely to show you the next step when you're serving Him.
 - a. **Verse 11 while Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him...**
 - b. The lesson here is simple. Keep serving God no matter what.

C. Lesson # 3: Doubt is the enemy of faith.

1. **Verse 18** 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..."** ²⁰ But now, since **you didn't believe what I said**, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born..
2. When God is taking you to a place you've never been before the worst thing you can do is doubt. Doubt has the potential to stop God from doing the biggest thing he's ever done in your life.
3. You can't walk on the water if you don't get out of the boat. Doubt will keep you in the boat and make you sink when you're on the water.
4. When you ask God, "What do You want me to do now?", don't doubt what He tells you to do.

III. Conclusion: Lesson # 4: Be faithful to God and He will be faithful to you.

A. Luke 1:24-25 (NLT)

²⁴ **Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant** and went into seclusion for five months. ²⁵ **"How kind the Lord is!"** she exclaimed. "He has taken away my disgrace of having no children."

1. Luke 1:76-77 (NLT)

⁷⁶ **"And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. ⁷⁷ You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins.**

 - a. They waited a lifetime but this child was worth the wait.
2. Most disappointment will turn into blessing if you remain faithful to God.
 - a. Abraham had a son after waiting 25 years. Job had more children and twice as many possessions after his tragic loss. Lazarus was raised from the dead and many believed in Jesus. Joshua and Caleb went into the Promised Land after waiting 40 years.
 - b. It's not over until God says it's over. Don't let "Why?" weigh you down with depression, anger or confusion. Choose to trust God and ask "What now?" and do what God says. If you remain faithful to God He will be faithful to you.

IV. Response: what is the Holy Spirit saying to you through this message?

A. Prayer

1. Are you having a hard time trusting while you wait?
2. Do you need to let something go? After David's child died he washed his face and worshipped.
3. Do you need to move from "Why?" to "What now?"

B. Souls