

Do I Really Have to Tell You Twice?

Inspired by Christmas but Appropriate Year Round

Luke 1:5-20 & 26-38

A very familiar story, the responses to Gabriel's messages are fairly well known. Zechariah can't believe he's really going to have a son after all these years of waiting and his doubt results in 9 months of silence. Mary doesn't understand how she'll have a baby since she's a virgin with no consequences, just an explanation.

I've heard many explanations of why Gabriel treated the two in such drastically different ways. The most popular is that Zechariah spoke in doubt and Mary asked in wonder. And of course, that makes sense. However, I have another hypothesis that might teach us a thing or two. As I've read scripture and considered all the times we feel like God doesn't answer us, I wonder if some of the times we don't hear God have anything to do with the reason Zechariah couldn't speak for 9 months?

When the angel told Zechariah that he and Elizabeth were finally going to have the child they'd been waiting for, his response was, "How can I be sure? We're really old after all." Could it be that part of Zechariah's problem was that he hadn't paid attention to what God had done in the past? Abraham and Sarah had a child when they were 100 and 90. Samuel's parents were getting up there in age. It's not like God had never done this sort of thing before. Instead of being excited that he was getting the same treatment as his ancestor Abraham, he was second guessing an angel! Mary on the other hand, when she asked, "How?" was asking a legitimate question. A virgin had never given birth to a child before.

The whole story caused me to wonder how often we ask for answers to questions that God has already answered or demonstrated his will or power through scripture or in our own life. If we have a question about God's will and it correlates with something that He's already dealt with in scripture, why should we expect an answer? Does our Father really have to keep repeating Himself? That's just another reason why it's so important for Christians to be in the Bible often, at least once a day. How can we know what God's "good, pleasing and perfect will" (See Romans 12:2) is if we don't know His Word?

While we're at it, let's look for just a moment at Joseph, Mary's betrothed. Joseph knew exactly what he should do when he discovered Mary was going to have a baby. The law, which he knew well, said he should divorce her. Fortunately for Mary, Joseph was a man of worth, so he was going to save Mary's reputation and do it quietly. Joseph didn't even ask God about it. He knew what the right thing to do was because he knew scripture. So, when God had something different than what Joseph would have expected, God gave him a dream to help him know the truth.

What if God expects us to just step out on faith sometimes when we can see that the correct thing to do is what lines up with his word? What if we were like Mary and didn't hesitate to do God's will? Even Joseph wasn't hesitant to do what he knew was the righteous thing to do, until an angel in a dream helped him see that this was a special circumstance. How often do we wait on a sign or wonder, when God has already told us or shown us exactly what we need to be doing?

So, take this opportunity to give yourself permission to follow God's will in your life. Sometimes it will just be the "common sense" thing to do. Other times God will give you a special sign, a dream or an angel to help you line your life up with His bigger plan. But don't wait on the signs and wonders. Stay close to the vine, trust that He'll give you plenty of notice and enjoy all that He has planned for you!

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