

## **John: the Other Miracle Child**

**Intro.** The expectations church members often put on pastors, while sometimes unrealistic, are an accepted part of the work. It is more difficult on the families of preachers who are married. To be the wife of a preacher is not easy. One friend of mine told me people in her church expected her to play the organ, sing in the choir and be at every meeting. She told them it was not a BOGO, *not* a two-for-one deal. Being the daughter or son of a pastor is *even* more difficult. The expectations and pressures are unreal. There seem to be limited options: to be either very *good* or very *bad*.

**I.** Of the twelve tribes in Israel, Zechariah was a member of the one whose men were the priests. It was their job to take turns making the prayers and offerings in the temple. Having children was seen as

a blessing from God yet Zechariah the priest and his wife had no children. Scripture tells us they were “righteous in the sight of God” [Luke 1:6], meaning good people. Spanish has a nice phrase, “Buena gente.” It must have been a hard thing to accept, but Elizabeth and Zechariah went about their lives following the commandments and loving God despite this disappointment. However, God had a plan. When the time was right, he announced to Zechariah the part he and Elizabeth would have in it. Their son would introduce the world to its Messiah. Growing up as the son of the priest must have been difficult with the expectations put on John. From the beginning of his life, John knew he was being prepared for something special. Imagine growing up with people looking at him and saying, “You’re that miracle baby.” No pressure, John. Again, when the

time was right, the Holy Spirit guided John to leave his family and live in the desert. There he prepared for his life's work until he was called forth to reveal another miracle child, Jesus of Nazareth. The man who lived in silence for so much of his life proved powerful in his preaching. He stirred the hearts of many to hope for a change. Their expectations were realized in the Lord. Luke tells us John's family and friends wondered what marvelous things he would do. Families look at their children and wonder the same thing. Fairly or not, our family and friends do look at *us* with expectations. We are asked if we are going to follow in our mom/dad's job or run the family business. We also put pressure on *ourselves* to succeed. Some days it can all feel too much. Could we promise to try to lessen that pressure on each other?

**Concl.** Few of us are born knowing what we will do with our lives. We have to discover our gifts, develop our talents and look for clues. Prayer can be part of this. We have to keep trying different things until a path opens. The *first* path may not be the *last* path; it's just a *start*. For John the Baptizer his birth was a beginning of a long journey. It ended in a jail cell after he introduced the world to the Messiah, but he must have been satisfied he had met some of the expectations expressed on day of his birth. We have expectations for ourselves. With hard work and God's grace, we try to live the ones we can accomplish. We are also miracle sons and daughters of God. Like John, we can introduce others to the Lord and elevate their expectations for *themselves* and the world.