

Dawn of Hope

Hope Waits (November 29th, 2020)

PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- If you missed it, watch the sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.
- Review the learning objective to focus the conversation, read the primary scriptures as a group, summarize the main points, ask the questions, and use supporting texts to enhance the concepts.

DISCUSSION

Opening Prayer: (1-2 minutes)

In light of what God is saying through this week's message, here's a suggestion of how your group can invite God into your time together.

Thank the Father for loving us so much that He came to us in the person of Jesus to sacrifice Himself on our behalf while we were still sinners! Pray that as we navigate the chaotic waters of our cultural moment that we would humbly listen and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we seek to love one another, just as you have loved us. Pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to remind us of the spiritual victory we have over sin in Jesus Christ! Pray that over the Holiday season that the Spirit would open our hearts to find the right words to speak, see new opportunities to serve our neighbors, and continue to transform us into the likeness of Jesus!

Discussion: (45-60 minutes)

What's Going on This Week

This Sunday, Pastor Danny led us into the first week of our Advent series titled *Dawn of Hope*. Pastor Danny brings our attention to *Luke 1:5* to introduce us to the context of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Over this Holiday Season, Pastor Danny takes us to this particular story so that we might learn how to wait upon the Lord and hope in Him knowing that His timing is perfect, and His will cannot be thwarted! This week, Pastor Danny challenges us to remember the perfect timing of the Christmas story and grow in our faith by understanding that Jesus will return exactly when the time is right! Therefore, we ought to lean into the scriptures to gain a fresh perspective on suffering when we are tempted to give up and when we don't understand why it seems like the world is experiencing God's judgment.

**“God will bring relief when the time is right. Not too early. Not too late. When He is ready!” –
Pastor Danny Strange**

Suggested Questions

Check-In: Icebreaker – In this series we will be talking about waiting and the good news of Christmas! What are some of your favorite memories of “waiting” for Christmas to come?

Study Tip: This week, we are introduced to the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah which is unique to the book of Luke. *Why does Luke decide to include this story while the other 3 gospel accounts do not? What is Luke trying to accomplish?* A lot can be determined simply by the verse we looked at this week, Luke 1:5. We start off by meeting Herod king of Judea. Recall that Luke is making an effort to accurately portray the historical details of Jesus ministry to a man named most excellent Theophilus (vv. 1-4). Herod governed the Palestine region from 37-4 B.C. and is most famous for his consolidation of power through political means and a period of improved cooperation with the Jews including the renovation of the temple. Thus, when Herod learns of a new Jewish king that would threaten his policy of cooperation and consolidation, he seeks to immediately squash the movement (Matt. 2:1-12). Next we meet Zechariah, a priest from the division of Abijah whose name means *YHWH Remembers* in Hebrew. The Old Testament reveals that since there were so many Levitical descendants, they were divided into groups of 24 [with Abijah being the 8th] so that each family could serve “on-call” in the temple 2 weeks of the year and for major festivals (1 Chr. 24:1-19; 2 Ch. 8:14). Zechariah’s rare on-call period plus the casting of lots made offering incense a once in a lifetime event for priests! This was God’s perfect timing for Zechariah! Finally, we meet Elizabeth who is the daughter of Aaron who was most likely a Jewish virgin at the point of marriage (Lev. 21:7, 14). Luke aligns her barrenness with the likes of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah who experienced a period of barrenness but gave birth to prominent Old Testament figures! Therefore, Luke is aligning the Jesus narrative with the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth to show his readers that there is one last forerunner to the Messiah! This week, step back from the story of Christmas and recognize how the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth was perfectly orchestrated to remind us of Israel’s LONG wait for the Messiah!

Objective #1: Identify the specific ways in which you are anxiously waiting for the Lord to move!

Primary Texts: Psalm 130:1-8; Luke 1:5-25 – Pastor Danny opens the series by pointing to Zechariah and Elizabeth as an example of a couple eagerly awaiting for God to act. He uses them to illustrate how we too have various things that may be causing anxiety in our current *chronos* (or chronological time) as we wait for the Lord to act. **As you reflect on your current situation, in what areas do you find your heart crying out, “how long oh Lord?” What do you believe are the core reasons behind your anxiety towards these situations?**

Objective #2: Explore how the Lord may be extending our faith in times of darkness!

Primary Texts: Isaiah 9:2; Galatians 4:3-7; Philippians 3:20– In response to our cries out to the Lord, Pastor Danny points to these passages that depict God’s perfect timing. He reminds us that before the Christmas story begins, Elizabeth and Zechariah found themselves crying out anxiously for the Lord to move in their lives. Pastor Danny makes the point that even though you may be experiencing darkness now, God will bring relief when the time is right according to His will! **Do you believe your answer to the previous question may be challenging you to deepen your relationship with God? Why or why not? What have you learned about yourself as you wait upon the Lord?**

Objective #3: Explore some actions that will help you focus on the hope found in the Lord as you wait!

Primary Texts: James 1:2-4; Colossians 1:24; Romans 1:18-32; Philippians 4:4-8– Finally, Pastor Danny offers these verses to provide some practical and biblical wisdom as we continue to live in a broken world and wait for Jesus’ return! These passages help when we are (a) ready to give up, (b) need perspective of suffering, or (c) wonder why the world continues to experience judgment. **Which of these perspectives do you believe you need the most in this season? What are some things that God is calling you to do in order to fix your eyes on these things?**

Closing Prayer: (5-10 minutes)

In light of what God is saying through this week's message, here's some suggestions of what your group could talk about with God in prayer.

Thank our Heavenly Father for sending His son at the perfect time! Praise the Son for emptying himself by becoming a human lying in a manger so that he might release us from the bondage of our spiritual enemy! Ask that the Holy Spirit would continue to equip us to live, love, and forgive like Jesus over the Christmas Season. Finally, pray that we as a church would have the courage and boldness to proclaim the gospel of Jesus as we celebrate his coming and share time with our friends, family, and loved ones.

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

- **2020 Daily Reader:** Interested in diving deeper? You can spend the next 8 weeks walking with us through the entire Bible as you to put on your kingdom lens through this difficult season! You can find the daily reader at [3Crosses.org/fall2020](https://3crosses.org/fall2020)

-**Stay up to date with Coronavirus Ministry Opportunities:** Help us out by pointing the people in your Community Group to [3Crosses.org/coronavirus](https://3crosses.org/coronavirus). If you or anyone in your group is looking to serve food in our pantry, access spiritual care, or seek financial assistance, you can find all you need at [3Crosses.org/neighborhood](https://3crosses.org/neighborhood)

- **Find out how to pray for two people in your group this week!** Pray that the members of your group would begin to seek unity by getting on the same page as Jesus!

-**Community Group Spring 2021:** For more information about joining a group, leading a group, or general inquiries, contact AJ at avanegas@3crosses.org