

Dawn of Hope

Hope Rises (December 20th, 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 He has loved us. Pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to remind us of the 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 fourth week of our Advent series titled *Dawn of Hope*. Pastor Danny brings our attention to *Luke 1* to show us how Zachariah and Mary approached the Lord with their skepticism as God outlined His will for their lives. By pointing us to the story of Zachariah and Mary, Pastor Danny challenges us to release control of our lives to Jesus and allow him to take our story in the forward direction that He is moving! He then challenges us to identify any areas of doubt or control that we may need to address as we allow God to walk with us into the future that He is crafting!

“Christmas reminds us that God has come to be with us and walk with us into the future He is creating.” – Pastor Danny Strange

Suggested Questions



Check-In: *Icebreaker* – What is your favorite Christmas memory?

Study Tip: The Christmas story is surrounded by mysterious figures that we refer to as angels! The word angel is derived from the Greek word ἄγγελος (angelos) and the Hebrew word מַלְאָכִים (melek...think Malachi which means my messenger) to describe a messenger of God whether it is in the form of a human being or a heavenly entity. Later translations of the Bible (the Latin vulgate) helped by introducing the accurate distinctions between the human and heavenly messengers that are prominent in our Bibles today. The heavenly messengers have an important role as those who bridge the gap between the hosts of heaven and the earthly realm. Angels are seen as those who serve the Lord on earth by relaying His word and divinely intervening according to the purposes of God (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 13:41,49; 28:2). Lest we begin to worship angels (Rev. 22:8-9), the Bible describes them as creations of God (Ps. 148:2-6) but ones who find themselves praising God continuously in the heavenly realms (Rev. 4:5) rejoicing at the salvation of the lost (Lk. 15:10). In this week's text, we meet one of the two angels in scripture that are specifically mentioned by name: Gabriel whose name means "God is my Warrior" (the other is Michael whose name means "Who is like God?"). While Michael is commonly depicted as God's archangel who advocates on behalf of the nation of Israel (Dan. 10:13; Jd. 9; Rev. 12:7-9), Gabriel appears only one other time in the Old Testament. Here, Gabriel explains visions to Daniel that have crucial ramifications for the timing of *the anointed one's* first coming and the occurrences that will lead to the second coming and the end times (Dan. 8-9)! It is fitting that "God is my Warrior" appears to Daniel who finds himself under the rule of Babylon to remind the prophet that God's will is moving forward and He will be victorious through the first and second coming of Jesus! Therefore, as you read the texts in the study guide this week, pay special attention to the words of Gabriel as he intricately ties the coming of John and Jesus to many Old Testament narratives revealing that Jesus is the one to whom all of history has been pointing to! Additionally, consider how God's Word through the scriptures is encouraging you to take a posture of anticipation as we expectantly await the second coming of Jesus!

For More on Angels, check out: [The Bible Project – Angels and Cherubim](#)

Objective #1: Identify God's forward path in your life and reflect on your emotions as you follow Him!

Primary Texts: (Zach.) Luke 1:8-18 / (Mary) Luke 1:26-34 – Pastor Danny opened up his sermon talking about how God wants to move forward and create something new in our lives as we get ready for 2021. At the same time, Pastor Danny points to the incredulous reactions of Zachariah and Mary to showcase how moving ahead in God's forward direction can be a terrifying proposition. **As you think about what is happening in your life right now, how do you sense God is moving (or wants to move) you in His new forward direction? What emotions come to the surface as you think about God leading you in His forward direction?**

Objective #2: Identify key areas of resistance as you align your heart with God's forward direction!

Primary Texts: (Zach.) Luke 1:19-25 / (Mary) Luke 1:35-37, 2:33-35; Matthew 1:18-19 – Next, Pastor Danny points to the appearance of the angel Gabriel to show that our resistance to God is usually not a matter of whether or not He is powerful enough to accomplish what He says! Rather, Zachariah, Elizabeth, and we today throw up our guard and resist the future God is writing when God claims that He *will* move forward in His direction whether or not we are on board at the time. **Share a time when God has told you to move in a new direction in the past. What were some of the key areas of resistance in your heart as God was challenging you to move? How might God be attempting to confront these areas in your life today as you think about God's forward direction?**

Objective #3: Commit to several different ways you can remember *Immanuel (God with us)* this season!

Primary Texts: (Zach.) Luke 1:57-66 / (Mary) Luke 1:38, 2:8-21; Matthew 1:20-25; John 14:1-7 – Finally, Pastor Danny points us to the true message of Christmas: God has come to be *with* us and walk *with* us into the future He is creating! **How have the faith journeys of Zachariah and Elizabeth encouraged you as you think about where God is calling you to walk? What are the things that you can do this Christmas and New Year season to remember that God is present and *with* you? How can we pray as a group for this to be a reality?**

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)

- **Christmas with 3Crosses:** Check out [Christmas with 3Crosses](https://3crosses.org/christmas) to join us as we celebrate the coming of Jesus the Messiah by spreading His gospel truth and love in a variety of ways this Holiday season!

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