

Instructions

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and pick 3-5 questions to discuss, which pertain to your group's unique needs and style.

For the video related questions, look up the video in RightNow Media. You can do this on a phone, tablet, computer, or SmartTV device. You can easily find the video by clicking on the "Revolution Church" channel within the app. If you or a group member needs access to RightNow Media, please email info@revolutionky.org.

Questions Related to This Week's Message

1. How are you feeling at the beginning of this Advent/Christmas season? Are you stressed, overwhelmed, excited, joyful, ready, or all of the above? What is your biggest barrier to hearing the message from the angels of hope, love, peace, and joy right now? How can you help each other "rest beside the weary road to hear the angels sing" this week or this season?
2. Have you ever waited for something for so long that hope for anything to change or improve seems... futile? Have you ever felt like Zechariah in this way? Zechariah gave in to an inner voice of reason, 'But we are too old,' and a cultural voice of judgement or disgrace, 'God has forgotten you,' and had a hard time believing that he and Elizabeth would actually bear a son. What were (or are) some of the other voices in your life that made (make) you question your hope in the promises and goodness of God?
3. If it is true, as Sarah Bessey says, that you can't have hope without first experiencing grief (or by first acknowledging that things are not quite right in this world), how can you move from a place of grief and hopelessness, to longing and hope?
4. How can you renew your spirit of hope this Advent? How can you prepare, or become more expectant, for God to show up and move among us? Or rather, how can we do this together?

Video and Discussion Questions from RightNow Media

"The Thrill of Hope: Zechariah's Story" by Andy Stanley

(located in the "Renovation Group Bible Studies" channel)

<https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/557?episode=1>

NOTE: The questions related to this week's message also apply to this video. You may want to watch it before that section to enhance your discussion. In the interest of time, feel free to start at minute 12:55, although it is well worth watching the entire 30-minute video if you have time.

1. What are you waiting for? What dreams in your life are you hanging onto? What dreams have you lost hope for? In the video, Andy asks "Is God still listening? Does God care?" Read the following verses and discuss how they impact your views on these questions.

1 John 5:14 - And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

Isaiah 66:9 - Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?" says the Lord; "shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?" says your God.

Jeremiah 29:11 - For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Reminding yourselves of God's promises can help you maintain hope and faith in who God says you are and what He desires for your life. Consider subscribing to the "God's Promises" email list at www.journeytofreedom.net to remind you daily of God's word for your life.

2. Compare and contrast these two scriptures.

Proverbs 13:12 - Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Romans 5:1-5 - Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

These passages seem to give two different views about hope. One says hope deferred makes us sick, while the other says that hope doesn't disappoint. Does one view resonate more with your story? How can these two views coexist and even support one another?

Family-Related Questions:

1. Kids are great at demonstrating hope. Perhaps it's because they have yet to experience "hope deferred" as it talks about in Proverbs 13:12. Rather than thinking about how we can instill hope in our kids, perhaps we should think this week about how our kids can instill hope in us. Discuss the hope you see in your kids, especially in this Christmas season and consider what aspects might help you "become like little children" in your own areas of longing.
2. How can you inspire your children to dream? Do you tend to be an encourager of their dreams or do you more often try to "reign them in" or "bring them back to reality?" Imagine for a moment that God has His hand in those dreams (no matter how silly they might be), and discuss what aspects of those dreams might be divinely inspired for each of their unique gifts and talents.
3. What hopes and dreams do you have for your kids? Do you struggle sometimes to believe them? How can you encourage each other not to lose hope, even when your best efforts at parenting feel like they're pushing your kids in the wrong direction?