

Instructions:

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



Series: Grateful for...

What are the promises of God revealed to God's people through the prophets? How were these words received then? Have they been fulfilled in Christ? What promises are we still waiting for? Join us this Advent and Christmas as we journey back to the words of Isaiah to hear the promises of God again, so that we might look to the future with hope, love, and joy. Because God always keeps God's promises.

Message description:

The people of Israel have returned home to Jerusalem after the exile, but things are not going how they expected. Land disputes, power struggles, many have turned to sin, and no one calls upon the Lord. Hello! Can anyone hear us? They long for God to rend the heavens and come down again like God did at Mt. Sinai, and at the Red Sea, and with the leveling of the walls in Jericho; fire, smoke, and earthquakes. As Christians, we see how God acted in history to bridge the chasm between God and the people by taking on humanity in the incarnation. Too often we want a warrior God who will make God's name (or our name) known among all the nations, but God chose to meet us in a poor baby in a backwoods town born to an unwed other. God acted in the birth of Christ to bring hope to the world; and yet, there is still much we are waiting on. We recognize the longing and despair of the Israelites as we long for God to act again in our hearts, lives, church, and world. **Our promise of hope is that God will act for those who wait on him (Isaiah 64:4).** And the Lord is always worth the wait.

Key Scripture

Isaiah 64:1-9

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. Have you ever felt an absence of God like the people of Israel did in Isaiah 64; walking in darkness, feeling alone and distant from God. Wondering, can you hear me? Can you even see me?
2. What are you waiting for right now?
3. What is the difference between hoping in Christ and making a wish?
4. How are you experiencing hope this Advent?

Going deeper with the implications of waiting from Dr. Christopher Davis

Read the following excerpts from his commentary in Isaiah 64:

"God is great, [and] God can also be gradual. When it comes to God's moves, God's methods, and God's miracles, God can be slow.

May I suggest that sometimes God uses slow because we are not ready for what God wants to give to us? Sometimes God uses slow because the ultimate end is not our gain but God's glory. We would do well to remember that God is not human, thus does not lie and has no need to repent. In other words, God is gonna do what God said. **What we go through cannot cancel what God told us. Because God's Word is more powerful than any struggle we go through along our way. If God said it, I don't care how long it takes. I don't care what we have to go through. I don't care what comes at us. None of it is strong enough to revoke, rescind, retract, reverse or repeal God's promises. God promised to be the God of Israel, and they were to be God's people. Thus, slow is never to be confused with no."**

"The Lord is worth waiting for. No matter how long it takes, no matter what you have to go through, when you get to the place that God has purposed, planned, and provided, or you receive what God has promised, prepared, and produced, you will gladly testify that it was worth the wait."

Questions for reflection:

- What words of encouragement or hope do you hear in this excerpt from Dr. Christopher Davis' commentary on Isaiah 64?
- How do you see that waiting can also be a time of preparation?
- What do you think God is preparing us for right now?
- Share about a time that you waited on the Lord and how the blessing you received made it worth the wait.

Read Mark 13:32-37

- What do you think it means to wait on the Lord in this passage?
- What does it mean to "stay awake"?
- What is the role of the church community in this age after Jesus' birth but before his second coming?

Close in prayer:

Pray together. Create intentional time and space to offer prayers for one another, that we might share in the comfort of Christ together and experience the Spirit's presence.

Consider the simple acronym of ACTS to guide your time of prayer together:

- A- Adoration.** *Share praise reports or reasons to praise God. (Reading a psalm together can help)*
- C- Confession.** *Leave space to pray silently or individually to confess sins.*
- T- Thanksgiving.** *Share something in the group that you are thankful for this week.*
- S- Supplication, or petition.** *Share concerns and prayer requests you have.*