



THE GIFT EXCHANGE
“Trading Doubt for Hope”

Introduction:

During the season of Advent, we are going to invite you to exchange gifts with God. But what kind of gifts could we possibly give him?

In a poem titled “What Can I Give Him?” Christina Rossetti wrote:

*What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him?
I'll give Him my heart.*

All we have to offer God is a heart of love...a heart of worship...a heart of repentance, gratitude, and humility.

Today we encourage you to trade your doubt for God’s hope!

1. The Danger of Doubt

Doubt is something that everyone wrestles with at times—including Christians! (Jude 22)

Have you ever asked yourself questions like these?

- Why is the world such a mess?
- Why does God let evil triumph?
- Why does God allow the wicked to prosper?
- Is God really in control of all things?
- Why am I struggling so much in life?
- Does God really love me?
- Can I really trust the Bible?
- How do I even know if I’m really saved?

2. The Gift of Hope

God wants us to abound in hope and experience the joy and peace that comes from believing in him (Romans 15:13). If someone asked you why you have hope, could you answer their question? (1 Peter 3:15)

4 Reasons Christians Have Hope:

God is the source of our hope.

The reason Christians have hope is that we have God! He has transformed our lives, and we will never be the same again (Lamentations 3:21–24; 1Timothy 4:10; Ephesians 1:12; Psalm 42:5; 1 Timothy 1:1).

God’s promises never fail.

When we find ourselves losing hope and giving in to discouragement, we need to saturate ourselves with God’s word and cling to his promises (Psalm 119:47, 130:5; Romans 15:4).

Jesus conquered death.

The resurrection is a historical fact, corroborated by hundreds of eye-witnesses, many of whom gave up their lives defending the truth of what they saw and experienced (cf. 1 Peter 1:3, 21; 1 Corinthians 15:12–20).

Biblical hope is not just wishful thinking.

- Definition: “Biblical hope is the confident expectation that God will fulfill his promises.”
- Tim Keller: Biblical hope is “life-changing certainty about the future.”
- It is as strong and unchangeable as God’s character; it is as sure and certain as God’s promises.
- It is grounded in historical reality.

Jesus is coming soon.

Titus 2:13 – “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...” (cf. 1 Peter 1:13).

Hope has three elements: (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*)

- Expectation
- Trust
- Patience

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What doubts have you wrestled with as a Christian? What has helped you hold onto your faith in those times of questioning?
2. Read 1 Peter 3:15. If a non-Christian asked you why you have hope, what would you say?
3. How is biblical hope different than the world’s concept of hope?
4. What are you dealing with right now that requires you to have hope? What promises of God are you holding onto?
5. Why is Advent such a special season of hope?