



ANXIOUS CHRISTMAS

ANXIOUS CHRISTMAS, PART 1: PANTOPHOBIA

Waiting is something we aren't typically very good at. And sadly, 2020 and 2021 has felt like one giant waiting room. When we look at the Bible, one of the longest seasons of waiting happened when God's people waited for the fulfillment of the promise of a coming Messiah. The story of Christmas shows us that just because we find ourselves waiting doesn't mean that God isn't working. God always fulfills His promises at just the right time.

BIG IDEA: While you are waiting, God is working.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

** Remember the goal is to use the questions to generate discussion, not to complete every one.*

1. What types of things do you do to avoid waiting somewhere?
2. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Isaiah 7:14 and Micah 5:2.*

¹⁴ All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us').

Isaiah 7:14

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.

Micah 5:2

3. What stands out to you about these two prophecies concerning a future Messiah? How do you think the Jewish audience would have heard them? What does it mean to you that Jesus fulfilled every one of the over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the coming Messiah?
4. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Luke 2:1-7.*

¹ At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴ And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

Luke 2:1-7 (NLT)

5. What details in these verses show you Luke isn't just telling a story, he's recounting history? How do you see both prophecies from question 1 fulfilled? What is the significance of listing Joseph's ancestry (see *Jeremiah 23:5-6*)?
6. Mary and Joseph would have grown up knowing all of these prophecies, yet the prophecies had been given nearly 700 years before them. Put yourself in either of their shoes. What do you think it would have been like for them? Have you ever experienced what you felt like was silence from God? How did you respond?

7. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Galatians 4:4-5.*

⁴ But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.
Galatians 4:4-5 (NLT)

8. What do these verses say about the right time, and what does that teach you about the sovereignty of God and that God is in control?

MOVING FORWARD

When we have to wait, we are tempted to think that God isn't working. When God seems silent, we're tempted to think that He is absent. That's why the Christmas story is so important. You can't separate the "Silent Night" of Christmas from the 400 years of Silent Nights between the Old and New Testaments. Christmas gives us a real, tangible, and historical hope. It reminds us that even when God is silent, He isn't absent.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

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Galatians 4:4-5 (NLT)