

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. *Enjoy discovering more about Him!*

## "ADVENT IS EXPECTANT WAITING" | LUKE 1: 26-39 | PASTOR BRIAN

### WARM-UP QUESTION:

What are things that are difficult to wait for?

### *"What Is Advent, When Did Advent Start, and Why Are We Doing It?"*

Advent, which means coming, started as a way for the church to direct people's heart toward Christ in the lead up to Christmas. Our church wants to encourage people to welcome God into their heart and life and focus on Him this season. What are challenges during the Christmas season that make it difficult to welcome God into our lives?

### *"Expectant Waiting is Less Passive and More Active, and There is Hope in the Waiting" (Luke 1: 26-39)*

Mary demonstrates how being receptive to God is a part of waiting well by saying yes to Him and going to her cousin to help and to see more of what God can do. Trust in God leads to Hope for God. What about God's character and actions make Him worth waiting for?

### *"Advent is the Already and the Not Yet, and is Practical" (Romans 8:22-23)*

Paul writes that Christians "wait eagerly" for Christ's return, just like Jews waited for the Messiah. What are specific ways to show that eager hope during this Christmas season?

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Pastor Brian challenges people to participate in a rhythm of prayer and scripture reading and serving others. Are you willing to make space in your schedule to do these? Pray for God to show you how you can create space and time for more of Him this Advent season.

### BONUS ADVENT SCRIPTURES FOR THIS WEEK: EXPECTANT WAITING

Monday	Psalm 37:7
Tuesday	Micah 7:7
Wednesday	Isaiah 8:17
Thursday	Luke 2:25-33
Friday	Luke 12: 35-40

## Advent is Expectant Waiting

### I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-5 Lar: Prayer. Xmas Eve Services. CAFL. Jasmine/Play.
- B. Slide6a Jeff & Paula Thompson, w/Mercy Projects: are out front today. If you would like to support their ministry to the Ukraine/Armenia they have *Matryoshka Nesting Dolls* for sale TODAY.
1. Slide6b All proceeds are to buy a tractor for the farm in Armenia.
  2. The Matryoshka or Nesting Dolls, are all hand made. *Jeff brought them back direct from Ukraine in his suitcase.*
  3. If you can't buy 1 today, check out [www.mercyprojects.org/shop](http://www.mercyprojects.org/shop)
  4. They have a bunch of *small, 5pc, 4" tall dolls* for only \$12, plus a huge selection, many signed by the artist.
- C. Slide7 Let's celebrate Generosity: You & your Church friends gave \$3000 in gift cards for the MPD to hand out this Christmas season. \$1500 to our Pantry to distribute. And you blessed 400 Foster children in our county with Christmas gifts.
1. We all may not all be able to *Foster or Adopt*, but **WE WILL** find more and more ways to *care for them* in our community. I believe they are the churches responsibility **not** our governments. These are *practical acts of mercy* that we can express, on behalf of **Jesus** in the life of "*our children*" in "*our county*". [statistically they are the **most vulnerable** in our world]
- D. Slide8a *Advent is Expectant Waiting* Ps.130:5,6 *My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning - Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.*  
Prayer:

### II. Intro: Advent is Expectant Waiting

- A. Slide8b I like the quote: "*If you're sick of Christmas by the 25th and can't wait to take all the decorations down and be done, ... you've done **Advent incorrectly.***"

### III. Slide9a WHAT IS ADVENT?

- A. **Advent** (coming, arrival) is a season of *preparation* for the event of Christmas, & finding *Joy and Anticipation* in *waiting*.
- B. When a **baby** is coming, or a **wedding**, someone coming over for **dinner**, *you Prepare!* [*you can only be ready for something, if you get ready for it*]
1. **Advent** is waiting, praying, and hoping for the Coming of the Messiah.
  2. **Advent** is a 4-week period leading up to Christmas (we'll do 3) where we, *as the Church & as individuals*, *pause & look back* at Jesus' **1st coming** as our **Redeemer**, & look forward to His **2nd coming** as our **Restorer**.
  3. **Advent** commemorates *the birth of Jesus*, but it also *welcomes God into our lives* every day. So it's about God **Coming** into our *lives* but also in our *hearts* ... *'in all moments, in all places, in all spaces, at all times.'*
  4. Slide9b Some have summed up the whole bible in 4-words: *'creation, fall, redemption, restoration.'* Advent is an *acknowledgment and celebration* of where we currently stand in history ... *right between Redemption & Restoration – in the already and the not yet.*

### IV. Slide10a WHY ARE WE DOING IT?

- A. It's setting your life in a *posture* to best receive **the gift of Jesus** this Advent Season.
1. Some of us grew up in a tradition that **followed** the Church calendar, *others* haven't. My heart is for us to realize **the real & deep meaning of Advent**, maybe for the 1st time.
- B. If you're like me, every Christmas season, you promise yourself that **this year** is going to be different. I'm not going to let my *day planner* get *inked-over* by the **rush** & the **crush**. - Let's make our best effort to *Remember and Focus* on *the Reason for the Advent Season*.
- C. Slide10b 3 Sun's: Advent is *Expectant Waiting, Hopeful Anticipation, Joyful Preparation*
1. **Bonus Pack for no additional cost:** Next 3 Wed Nights, 3 Themes from Christmas Carols of old. BB, *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*. AL, *The*

*Hopes & Fears of all the Years are met in thee Tonight. JB, Till He Appeared and the Soul Felt Its Worth.*

## V. Slide11 WHEN DID ADVENT START?

A. We don't exactly know. But we start hearing about it already in the 4th century.

1. 1st writing in 380AD at *the Council of Sargossa* (Hispania, Spain today).
2. Priscillianism - gnostic heresy, anti-physical/more into spiritualism, i.e. nothing in creation especially our physical bodies was made good so they really don't matter. *So the Council's response is to double down:* they emphasized Jesus coming w/a "phys body" (xmas) & encouraged all believers to attend church services.
3. Since Christmas & Easter were the 2 biggest celebrations for the church, There became an emphasis on **2 weeks before** each big event *to direct our hearts towards it*. It was a useful way to focus the church **off** the world & **onto** Christ.
4. In the modern day, it became 4 Sun's leading up to each. (light a candle each Sunday). *Colors: are Purple & Rose.*

## VI. Slide12a EXPECTANT WAITING IS LESS PASSIVE AND MORE ACTIVE

A. *Not sitting on your hands waiting* - Christian **waiting** *is less passive and more active, it's even receptive. Receptivity is the idea that God moves first towards us then waits, Waits for us to respond.*

1. **In the Xmas story: Mary is visited by Gabriel.** Told she will have a baby, she doesn't understand, Gab explains, she still doesn't understand. Gab lastly mentioned her very old relative Eliz, is 6 months pregnant (*w/God nothing is impossible*). So Mary gives her "yes" to God (*let it be to me according to your word*). Now consider what she did next: Slide12b *A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth.* Lk1:39-40

- a) After Mary surrendered her will to God's, her role was *not simply to sit back and wait* for the salvation of the world to happen; she hurried to assist a family member in need.
- b) **Being active** she receives both **grace and** a special mission to go where she is needed, **and** to be *God's hands and feet to others*.
- c) Mary shows us that **receptivity** does not consist of **passivity**, **but rather** of an openness to the **active** role that God asks each person to assume. *Father Mike*

2. **Slide12c Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers** (40's,50's). They say Fred is regarded as the greatest popular music dancer of all time, **but actually ...** *Ginger Rogers did the same steps except **backwards and in high heels***. **And** she was not a professionally trained dancer, **but** Fred like dancing with her the best, because, *"she just let me lead her, wherever I wanted to go."*
- a) **Let Jesus lead:** Lead you through **this season**, lead you through **life**, lead you through **His Word**, to give you what you need for the day.
  - b) Like you read, *For the Lord takes pleasure in his people* Ps.149:4. **What do I do with that? Just drink it in.**
  - c) Sometimes His Word **directs us**, sometimes it **lifts us up**, sometimes you just need to **digest it**. Be receptive to what he wants to speak to you through this season. **Advent is the slowing down of your heart and mind.**

## VII.Slide13a **ADVENT IS HOPE IN THE WAITING** [many picture waiting like this *elephant*]

- A. **Right now what are we waiting for?** Simply for COVID-19, Delta, & Omicron to go away? Waiting to see who's going to make it into Super Bowl LVI? Or waiting to be able to get on an airplane and go anywhere I want? Are these things all I'm waiting for? **If so**, what a waste of the *waiting-mode*. *We're far too easily satisfied.*
1. **On the other hand**, maybe you are **waiting** for the **lab results** from your husband's biopsy. **Or waiting** for a reprieve from an emotionally devastating situation. **These are not light things to wait for.** Psalm 37:7 tells us to *"be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him."*

B. Slide13b \*God never promises that our seasons of *waiting* will end by receiving exactly what we want.

1. **Not all** infertility ends with a baby. **Not all** cancer ends with a cure. **Not all** singleness ends with a spouse. Which means that our hope can't be anchored in the thing we're waiting for. *Our hope has to be anchored in something far greater - the promises and character of God.*
2. Knowing the nature and character of God is to **know rest**, even in the *midst of turmoil*. Why? **Because** what God **does** flows out of who God **is** - which means that if He is good, then His ways are good. **And** if His **ways** are good, then His **answers** are good - even when they're *hard*.
3. Unfortunately, we don't always view life that way, do we? *It's far too easy to view God's character **through** the lens of our situation, instead of the other way around.* (looking through binoculars backwards/*wow God looks far away*)
4. Slide13c If you're waiting on something, remember that, **ultimately, it's the Lord** you're **waiting on**.

### VIII. Slide14 ADVENT IS THE ALREADY AND THE NOT YET

- A. God *already* fulfilled His promise, the Messiah has *already* come. **And** we wait in-between these 2 advents, waiting for Him **to come Again!** (AKA, the *not yet*).
- B. The **not yet** of Advent. Paul tells us in Rom.8:22,23 that, *For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*
  1. **We** are still **waiting**, *right with the creation*, for God to complete His grand restoration project. He will return to make all things new, *once and for all*.
  2. Let the promises of Advent *fuel your confidence* that one day God **will** complete His work of **mending the world** and ushering in **shalom**.
  3. **Until then**, *we wait. We trust. We pray fervently. And we hope.*

### IX. Slide15 ADVENT IS PRACTICAL

- A. Countdown the days with an **advent calendar**. Yes you're 5 days behind, *that's ok*. It should be full of fun and daily surprises to help with *joyful waiting*.
- B. **Slow down and participate in a daily rhythm of prayer and scripture reading** which prepares and points our hearts towards the Christ.
- C. **Volunteer** at a local hospital, **or** care facility, **or** your church. **Serve** someone. Be **patient** with your family. **Speak kindly** to strangers. Go to **church**. **Share hope** with those who need it the most. Type in "Advent" on **Spotify** for music.
- D. **End: Advent** is an invitation to prepare for Jesus: asking Him *to come into* the **mess** of our lives, *to come into* the **busyness** of the season.
1. He wants to be apart of your life here. **You** are welcome to participate in **this story**. There's something about your story, connected to the big story of *God with us*, **that** He wants to invite you into. **Will you be apart?**
  2. **\*Invite up the worship team.**
- E. **Communion:** During this song we invite you to *come to the table* (frnt, bk, side). **Hold onto it & I will lead us through the elements.**
- F. Keywords: History, church, Hope, God, Jesus, Creation, Communion.