

## Small Group Discussion Questions

*Advent: Do Not Fear*

*These questions are designed to invite group reflection on today's Bible passage and life application of the themes introduced in today's sermon.*

### **Week 1: Do Not Fear Hopelessness**

Luke 1:5-17

1. Recall a time when you waited a long time for something you really hoped for. Did you finally experience or receive it? If so, how did it feel when it came? If not, how did you deal with the disappointment?
2. Luke 1 introduces two key characters. Who are they? What does Luke tell us about their character? What condition of their life seems at odds with what we know about them?
3. What is Zechariah's vocation? What special duty is he commissioned to perform? What is particularly significant about Zechariah being chosen for this duty?
4. At the time of Zechariah's ministry, how recently have God's people heard directly from God? What is their political and economic situation? What great hope are they waiting for?
5. Imagine you are a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jew. How would you feel about the promises of the Old Testament prophets? Would you trust them? Would you still consider these promises worth waiting for?
6. What are some of the promises or great hopes people in our culture build their lives around? What are some ways you observe people dealing with or responding to disappointment – in their personal lives; in their professions; in the area of politics or other parts of life? What do you think happens to people – and by extension, society – when we give up hope?
7. What unexpected visitor does Zechariah encounter? What is his first reaction? Why might he react this way? What is the first thing the visitor says?
8. What is the next thing the visitor says? What two "prayers" might the visitor be referring to? Which is the one he most likely means? What are some reasons to conclude this? Still, is there a way in which the visitor's words apply to both prayers?
9. What gift will God give Zechariah and Elizabeth? How will this also be a gift for their people?
10. What does this account teach us about God's promises? What posture does this story invite us to take when it comes to God's promises and our expectations of Him?
11. What are some explicit biblical promises we can be sure apply to us? How do these promises give us hope? What kind of hope do they give us?

*Pray:* For God to heal your hurts and disappointments; for God to remind you of His promises; for God to rekindle in you a hope that transcends all earthly circumstances.