

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 3: Do Not Fear Disappointment

Luke 1:39-56

1. Recall a Christmas during which you really hoped to receive a specific gift. What was it? Did you receive it? If not, how did you feel? How long did your disappointment last? Was there ever a Christmas when you peeked at your presents? Why did you do it? Was it worth it?
2. Today's passage features two obvious characters. Who are they? There is also a third, not as obvious character. Who is it?
3. What twofold promise does God make to the nation of Israel? In the Old Testament, what practical part of Israel's life is the mechanism by which the promise should work? Does it work the way it's supposed to?
4. What statement from the Book of Joshua does the angel Gabriel repeat to Mary? Does that statement always seem true – either to God's people in the Bible, or to us today?
5. What do we hope to experience at Christmas? What happens when Christmas doesn't meet our expectations? What do we feel when Christmas comes and goes? What deeper longing is revealed – both by unfulfilled joy *and* by times of joy that come to an end?
6. On the first Christmas, God delivers joy. Is it complete joy? Why or why not? If not, how does the joy of the first Christmas relate to God's promise of ultimate joy?
7. Elizabeth says, "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill His promises for her." Who might Elizabeth be talking about? How does her statement apply to the *three* women in this scene?
8. In her song, Mary gives thanks for blessings that apply to three parties. Who are they? What are the blessings she identifies?
9. The babies born to Elizabeth and Mary will bring immediate joy. They will also bring future disappointment. What are some of these disappointments? Do these disappointments mean either that Mary's song is untrue; or that her joy is unfounded?
10. In Ephesians 1, Paul talks about a "deposit" from God. What is it? How does God's promise of ultimate, complete joy shape the way we experience joy now?

Pray: For God to strengthen your trust in His promise of ultimate joy; for God to heighten your current joy based on the reassurance that one day our joy will be complete; for others for whom past disappointment is a real barrier to current joy and future hope.