



2020 ADVENT SERIES
“THE TIME BETWEEN”

SPEAKER: MARK NICKLAS
DATE: DEC 27, 2020

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker's message. They can help you understand and apply the teaching.

BIBLICAL TEXT(S) + MESSAGE SUMMARY:
LUKE 1:31-33, 2:8-20

The Advent of Jesus the promised Messiah brought great and disruptive changes to the lives of Joseph and Mary. They experienced God move in strange, beautiful, and unexpected ways: angelic visitations, a miraculous conception, tales of a heavenly choir, and the unexpected bounty of gifts from wealthy Magi. Then they were back to normal, whatever normal was for them.

The same can be true for us, as Pastor Mark teaches. We can see God move in surprising ways, only to have that time followed by the mundane or the disappointing. When that happens, we “ponder these things in our heart” as Mary did, and the memory of God’s intervention in our lives sustains us.

LEAN IN: *These are icebreakers and warm ups, mostly to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.*

1. What do you think of when you hear the word ponder?
2. Why do you think we tend to “ponder things in our heart”, mulling over significant events from our past?
3. What kinds of the things you have pondered?
4. What example or story stood out to you in Sunday’s sermon? Why was it significant to you?

LOOK DOWN: *These are questions about the Bible passage(s) and observations about what’s been read. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.*

1. What does the messenger predict will happen to Mary in Luke 1:31-33?
2. What do the shepherds experience, beginning with the story in Luke 2:8-19?
3. What did they do? How do you think you might have reacted if you were one of those shepherds?
4. How do the people in Bethlehem react at the shepherds’ report? How does Mary respond?
5. Why might “wonder” and “treasuring up things” and “pondering them in your heart” be important?

LOOK OUT: *These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.*

1. Where do you see the need today for sustaining memories of God’s goodness?
2. What kinds of things do you see people hanging onto in an effort to sustain themselves through tough times?

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3. How do personal and/or institutional memories and promises give people hope?
4. Let's take one of those institutional commitments as an example: Do you have a certain hope that Social Security can fulfill its promise to the nation's retiring workers? Why or why not?
5. How have you seen God's actions and/or promises impact the lives of others? Do you know any one whose life was sustained and made hopeful by their memories of what God had done long ago? If so, what's do you observe in them?

LOOK IN: *These are questions that help you consider how to apply the teaching personally. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.*

1. When and/or where in your life has God worked so clearly and powerfully that you've been moved to treasuring those memories and pondering them?
2. How have you felt hurt by, or disappointed in, God when everything seemed, or seems, normal again? Why or why not?
3. What's the most difficult part for you when circumstances demand you trust God even if he doesn't seem involved or interested in what you're going through?
4. What helps you trust that God is still at work even when you can't see what he's doing? Does anything in this message aid in that, giving you comfort or encouragement?
5. How has the memory of God's faithfulness (either as you've read about it in the Bible or as you've experienced it directly) impacted your life during the past year?

LIVE IT OUT: *These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.*

1. Create a "treasure up/ponder" journal and record your memories of God's faithfulness.
2. Spend a quiet hour asking God to remind you of those things he's done that would make you wonder at him and encourage you to "ponder."
3. What is one thing you can do this week to encourage others to draw strength from their memories of God's work on their lives?