

Advent – Adam spoke on Sunday how Advent in the advent season we look BACK at the hope Israel had for Messiah (which we now know came through Jesus), as well as it's the season that we look FORWARD to the hope we have in Jesus' second coming. Two of the passages he lead us through were *Zechariah 8:1-13* and *Romans 8:18-25*.

In the passage from *Zechariah* God's people are being taken off into exile and Jerusalem is being destroyed, yet God points them to the future hope of Messiah. So as you go though the *Zechariah* passage together, really ponder what it would've been like to be taken into captivity while at the same time God (through His prophet Zechariah) saying you can be hopeful for the future.

Then in the passage from *Romans* we see that even now there is still pain and suffering in the words, even since our Messiah Jesus has come. And the passage from *Romans ch.8* points us forward to the future hope we have in Jesus.

And the thing that impacted me (Keith) the most from Adam's sermon was when he pointed out in *Romans 8:19* that the world is looking to us, God's people, to really live out our faith. The more we engage with and live out the Advent story (and tension) the more we will shine the light of Jesus into our world that is dark and broken.

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- Growing up how did your family/church engage with Advent?
- Are you more of a "Christmas Cheer" person or a Scrooge ("Ba Humbug")?
- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

Know (what does the text say about God?) **Be** (what does it say about us?) **Do** (what does it call us to do?)

Zechariah 8:1-13

- O: Briefly discuss the passage, observe what was going on, and the hope God pointed His people to in the midst of devastation.
- I: Really try to express (and experience) what it must have been like for the prophet of God to point to future hope in the middle of current devastation.
- A: As we "look back" on this passage, what can we glean about Jesus? **Know**
-What do we glean about us as God's people? **Be**

Romans 8:18-25

- O: Describe/illustrate the tension in this passage. How is it similar to Zechariah ch.8?
- I: What will the world be like in the future with no decay or death? Really try and picture it. **Know**
(I personally wonder what trees will look like when they are not subjected to the effects of sin.)
- I: What is the difference between HOPE and Wishful Thinking? Discuss that in relation to this passage.
- A: Part of our faith and living out the story as God's people is the world is watching.
How does v.19 help inform us of our posture and engagement with the world around us? **Do**
- A: When was the closest to feeling a "groaning" that you've had in your spirit to see Jesus's return?
- A: How can you (we) really engage with this season of Advent? What has spoken to you most from these passages?

Note: The Riverside devotional for this series will go through Isaiah. It's VERY VERY good. Really consider journeying through it with our broader church this Advent season!

Recommended Follow-up:

- **Pray:** Pray together, and really focus in on the HOPE that we have because of Jesus.
- **Respond:** Spend this week responding to God's word as fleshed out in the group time, as well as journey through this week's companion devotional guide.

An explanation on how Riverside structures these discussion guides*:

Riverside defines a disciple of Jesus as a **“Know, Be, Do”** person. And since Jesus told us to “make disciples” we use the “Know, Be, Do” framework in our discussion guides.

Riverside leadership regularly asks questions around these areas:

- “What do we need to **know** about God?”
- “Who do we need to **be**?”
- “What do we need to **do**?”

Here is what we mean by “Know, Be, Do” (based on Colossians 1:9-10, see below)

Know – *“to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives..., growing in the knowledge of God”* Not just knowing about Jesus, but knowing Him personally, intimately, and deeply. This is also about knowing the scriptures, knowing the voice of the Holy Spirit, even knowing yourself.

Be – *“so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way”* Becoming more like Jesus (sanctification). This is about our character and our heart and our motivations, our passions and convictions change the more we get to Know Jesus (and others).

Do – *“bearing fruit in every good work, ...”* Knowing Jesus and Becoming like Jesus practically will change our actions. As we grow in these areas we will naturally DO the things that Jesus did while in the flesh on earth (living and loving like Jesus). Some broad categories around DO are evangelism and justice and service.

Notice *“bearing fruit in every good work”* then yields more *“growing in the knowledge of God.”* In other words, while “Know, Be, Do” are three distinct words, they are deeply interconnected.

As a side note, the next chapter states: *“⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. (Col. 2:6-8)* To aid in this process Riverside also has a **daily devotional guide available each week**.

Colossians 1:9-10, NIV

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,...

* As discussed in Riverside’s HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid “go through this guide word-for-word.” There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. This guide relies heavily upon the following resources: Thomas, Mack. *The Complete Bible Discussion Guide: Old Testament and New Testament*, Serendipity Bible for Personal and Small Group Study, Zondervan