



A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Advent Series Theme: Longing For More

Text for the Week: Isaiah 40:12-26; Romans 4:18-25

Message for the Week: "We Waver"

Week Three
Sunday, December 11

Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

Do you have any good and/or bad memories from visiting Santa?

Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Isaiah 40:12-26](#) and [Romans 4:18-25](#) out loud.

[Clicking this link will bring you to multiple translations.]

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

Respond / Reflect:

What types of circumstances cause you to waver in your faith in God and/or waver in your trust of God's promises? Give an example.

Do you believe that God will keep his promises? Why or why not?

What do you make of the unexpected and unlikely way God brought deliverance to his people as he promised on that first Christmas?

As advent people who are waiting for God to return to make all things new, do we believe that God will work through us here and now? How does our life reflect that belief?

"Try It!"

Which of God's promises will you test out and try this week? Here are some examples:

- "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Deuteronomy 31:8
- "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. Micah 3:10
- "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Pray this prayer together:

Father in heaven, strengthen our faith today. Enable us to believe and receive your promises. Spirit of God, help us not to waver, but rather be fully persuaded that God has the power to do what he had promised. Thank you for Jesus, who was born to be our Savior, delivered over to death for our sins, and raised to life for our justification. In Jesus name we pray, AMEN.

Missional/Spiritual Practice for ADVENT: Waiting on the Lord (Isaiah 40:30-31)

Each day during this season of Advent, you are encouraged to "Wait on the Lord." Each day find, 5, 10, 15, or 30, minutes (or whatever time you need) to sit and be with the Lord. Each day, take time to wait on the Lord. What does it mean to wait on the Lord? Kristi Walker, a missionary, in her explanation notes for us that when we wait on the Lord, we "...wait on the Lord to act – to deliver, to save, to avenge, to answer our prayers, to provide for our needs, to renew our strength, to reveal His glory, to do what only God can do." As you wait on the Lord each day, what is the Lord calling you to do? Who is the Lord calling you to be?

¹²Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?
Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,
or weighed the mountains on the scales
and the hills in a balance?
¹³Who can fathom the Spirit^[a] of the Lord,
or instruct the Lord as his counselor?
¹⁴Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him,
and who taught him the right way?
Who was it that taught him knowledge,
or showed him the path of understanding?
¹⁵Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket;
they are regarded as dust on the scales;
he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.
¹⁶Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires,
nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.
¹⁷Before him all the nations are as nothing;
they are regarded by him as worthless
and less than nothing.
¹⁸With whom, then, will you compare God?
To what image will you liken him?
¹⁹As for an idol, a metalworker casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and fashions silver chains for it.
²⁰A person too poor to present such an offering
selects wood that will not rot;
they look for a skilled worker
to set up an idol that will not topple.
²¹Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?
²²He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,
and its people are like grasshoppers.
He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.
²³He brings princes to naught
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.
²⁴No sooner are they planted,
no sooner are they sown,
no sooner do they take root in the ground,
than he blows on them and they wither,
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.
²⁵“To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.
²⁶Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:
Who created all these?
He who brings out the starry host one by one
and calls forth each of them by name.
Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.

The Message

¹²⁻¹⁷Who has scooped up the ocean in his two hands,
or measured the sky between his thumb and little finger,
Who has put all the earth’s dirt in one of his baskets,

weighed each mountain and hill?
Who could ever have told God what to do
or taught him his business?
What expert would he have gone to for advice,
what school would he attend to learn justice?
What god do you suppose might have taught him what he knows,
showed him how things work?
Why, the nations are but a drop in a bucket,
a mere smudge on a window.
Watch him sweep up the islands
like so much dust off the floor!
There aren't enough trees in Lebanon
nor enough animals in those vast forests
to furnish adequate fuel and offerings for his worship.
All the nations add up to simply nothing before him—
less than nothing is more like it. A minus.
¹⁸⁻²⁰ So who even comes close to being like God?
To whom or what can you compare him?
Some no-god idol? Ridiculous!
It's made in a workshop, cast in bronze,
Given a thin veneer of gold,
and draped with silver filigree.
Or, perhaps someone will select a fine wood—
olive wood, say—that won't rot,
Then hire a woodcarver to make a no-god,
giving special care to its base so it won't tip over!
²¹⁻²⁴ Have you not been paying attention?
Have you not been listening?
Haven't you heard these stories all your life?
Don't you understand the foundation of all things?
God sits high above the round ball of earth.
The people look like mere ants.
He stretches out the skies like a canvas—
yes, like a tent canvas to live under.
He ignores what all the princes say and do.
The rulers of the earth count for nothing.
Princes and rulers don't amount to much.
Like seeds barely rooted, just sprouted,
They shrivel when God blows on them.
Like flecks of chaff, they're gone with the wind.
²⁵⁻²⁶ "So—who is like me?
Who holds a candle to me?" says The Holy.
Look at the night skies:
Who do you think made all this?
Who marches this army of stars out each night,
counts them off, calls each by name
—so magnificent! so powerful!—
and never overlooks a single one?

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”^[a] ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²² This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²³ The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

The Message

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ We call Abraham “father” not because he got God’s attention by living like a saint, but because God made something out of Abraham when he was a nobody. Isn’t that what we’ve always read in Scripture, God saying to Abraham, “I set you up as father of many peoples”? Abraham was first named “father” and then *became* a father because he dared to trust God to do what only God could do: raise the dead to life, with a word make something out of nothing. When everything was hopeless, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw he *couldn’t* do but on what God said he *would* do. And so he was made father of a multitude of peoples. God himself said to him, “You’re going to have a big family, Abraham!”
¹⁹⁻²⁵ Abraham didn’t focus on his own impotence and say, “It’s hopeless. This hundred-year-old body could never father a child.” Nor did he survey Sarah’s decades of infertility and give up. He didn’t tiptoe around God’s promise asking cautiously skeptical questions. He plunged into the promise and came up strong, ready for God, sure that God would make good on what he had said. That’s why it is said, “Abraham was declared fit before God by trusting God to set him right.” But it’s not just Abraham; it’s also us! The same thing gets said about us when we embrace and believe the One who brought Jesus to life when the conditions were equally hopeless. The sacrificed Jesus made us fit for God, set us *right with God*.