

## Close to Home (2 of 4) Small Group Discussion Questions

Join our congregation for worship in-person or online at 10:30 am each Sunday via our [Grantham Church YouTube Channel](#). If you ever miss a message, the sermons are always posted to the [recent sermons page](#) at our website and at the [Grantham Church Podcast](#) the following day, along with the small group discussion questions under Worship Resources. Thank you for staying connected with us!

### Sunday, December 5th 2021



**Sermon Series Focus:** When something hits *close to home* it affects us deeply. During the Advent and Christmas season, we journey through Scriptures and traditions that are tender, heavy with emotion, and make us more vulnerable. We carry the memories and truths of this season close to our hearts. Join us this Advent season as we look at the Christmas story and acknowledge the “already but not yet” tension of our faith: God is already with us and heaven is coming to earth, and yet, God’s promised day—our eternal home—is not fully realized. So, how then shall we live?

**Sermon Title:** Laying the Foundation (Peace)

**Scripture Reading:** Genesis 12:1-3; Luke 1:57-80; 1 Corinthians 4:11-13

**Sermon Focus:** In the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, God is laying the foundation for the blessings of heaven—to make his home upon the earth. As we see with Zechariah and Elizabeth, God wants to do the extraordinary through ordinary people. But for that to happen, we must *believe* in his good news and be willing vessels of his grace, and conduits of his blessings to others. In the second message of our series, Pastor David shares how we can give attention to making space this Advent—in our lives and our imaginations—for God’s blessings to break through.

Thank you for going deeper in conversation with your small group in person, by phone, or video call. Use the following questions to help *guide* your small group discussion:

1. Read the entire story of the birth of John the Baptist in Luke 1:5-25; 57-80. How does this passage speak to you? What do you find interesting about how God works through this old couple? What does this passage teach us about God? What does it teach us about ourselves and how might it apply today?
2. Pastor David talked about how God was laying the foundation for the coming of Jesus in our main Scripture text in Luke 1. He said that this foundation is made up of faith, hope, and love. How do you see these things at work in the story?
3. When you think about the importance of a foundation, think about your own life. What were some "blessings" that were bestowed upon you and laid into the bedrock of your life? Also, what were some things that weren't so helpful?
4. Pastor David said that God created us to be a conduit of blessings (Gen. 12:1-13), not a "container" of his blessings. In other words, God wants to bless you and bless others through you. He said that, unfortunately, our conduit (soul) gets clogged up with sin (e.g., anger, cynicism, unbelief, unforgiveness, etc.). Be honest, what is the junk that accumulates in your heart and doesn't allow you to be the conduit of blessing that God has created you to be?
5. Henri Nouwen once wrote: "To give someone a blessing is the most significant affirmation we can offer. It is more than a word of praise or appreciation; it is more than pointing out someone's talents or good deeds; it is more than putting someone in the light. To give a blessing is to affirm, to say "yes" to a person's Belovedness. And more than that: to give a blessing creates the reality of which it speaks. There is a lot of mutual admiration in this world, just as there is a lot of mutual condemnation. A blessing goes beyond the distinction between admiration or condemnation, between virtues or vices, between good deeds or evil deeds. A blessing touches the original goodness of the other and calls forth his or her Belovedness."

Discuss this quote with your group. What do you understand him to mean? Do you struggle with your own Belovedness? Also, how do we actually see someone's Belovedness, especially when we dislike them? How might God be inviting you to affirm someone's value and worth this Advent?