

Fear Not! | Advent 2024 (1 of 3)
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 sermon slides and small group discussion questions under Worship Resources. Thank you for staying connected with us!

Sunday, December 1st, 2024



Series Focus: “Do not be afraid!” is one of the most oft-repeated phrases in the Bible. And these are the first words from the angels to Zechariah, Mary, and the shepherds in the opening of Luke’s Gospel. We need to hear these comforting words from those heavenly messengers, for their words and their meaning are echoing down through the ages to reach us where we are today. Join us for our Advent series—*Fear Not!*—as we reflect on these three encounters and are encouraged by how the Lord recognizes our fears on earth and responds to them in his great wisdom and loving kindness.

Sermon Title: Fear Not! God Hears Your Prayers

Scripture Reading: Psalm 6:1-10; Luke 1:5-25; Hebrews 5:7-8; James 5:16

Sermon Focus: It seemed like another day in the Temple, until an angel appeared and frightened Zechariah, a Jewish priest. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer.” But it’s likely that Zechariah had moved on from that prayer a long time ago and had given up on it being answered. In the first Sunday of Advent, Pastor David reminds us that God hears our prayers, and he encourages us to trust in the loving Lord who responds to our prayers and develops our character in the waiting.

Thank you for going deeper in conversation with your small group. Use the following questions to help *guide* your small group discussion:

1. Begin by reading Luke 1:5-25, first to yourself and then have someone in the group read it aloud. What sticks out to you in this story? What words or actions draw your attention and focus? Share those things with your group.
2. Zechariah was offering the prayers of the people with the burning of incense in the Temple when he was surprised by an angel who said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah. God has heard your prayer" (Luke 1:13). Since Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were very old, and because Zechariah doubted the angel's words, it's likely that his prayer for a child was an old one. If that's the case, what does this story teach us about prayer? And what does it teach us about God?
3. Like the angel to Zechariah, can you hear God say to you, "Don't be afraid. I have heard your prayer"? Be honest and vulnerable with your group. Is there a prayer that you struggle (but need) to believe that God has heard?
4. Have someone read Daniel 10:12-14 and then read Ephesians 6:12 aloud. While it's a mystery to us humans, the Bible teaches us that there are unseen forces that oppose and delay God's work on the earth. In fact, there are many factors that come into play: human and angelic wills, natural forces, God's timing, etc. How can this view help us to see prayer as part of our spiritual fight? Does this knowledge motivate you to pray less or more? Share your thoughts.
5. Read Hebrews 5:7-8 and James 4:7-10. Pastor David said that "submission" to God is about aligning your will with his, recognizing his wisdom over your own, and having a posture of humility, trust, and obedience. Are there any areas where you sense God is inviting you to submit your will to his in a prayer matter? What is something the Spirit is calling you to trust into God's wisdom and care?
6. Even though Zechariah doubted the words of the angel and lost his voice for a time, God still used this couple to work out his will and redemptive plan. Aren't you glad that God doesn't give up on us? Spend some time giving thanks for the ways that God has poured out his mercy and grace in your life.
7. What are your fears right now? Take a moment to respond aloud with your group and give those things to God this Advent season. And then close in prayer for each other as you trust in the Lord and wait on his salvation.