

## The Christmas “Sit-Down”

Christ in Christmas:

1. Make Christ the center.
  2. Spend less.
  3. Give more (outside your circle)
  4. Give presence.
1. What specific things will you or your family do to make sure Christ is at the center of Christmas this year?
  2. What are your plans for spending less this Christmas?
    - Commit to not going into debt this Christmas.
    - Set a dollar limit on the gifts you purchase.
    - Don’t give in to over-indulgence. (give “needs” rather than “wants.”)
  3. What ways will you give more outside your circle of reciprocity?
    - Commit as a family to give the gifts you would normally give to each other to people in need.
    - Waite Park Connection Groups will each be adopting a family for Christmas through City Life Works. Make plans to participate.
    - Volunteer at a shelter, food shelf, or other charity. Waite Park will be serving the Thursday meal on Thursday, Dec 22<sup>nd</sup>. This will be a big meal, so we can use a lot of help.
  4. Give presence.
    - Commit to engaging fully with family during holiday get-togethers.
    - Instead of large family gift exchanges, plan a family activity that will keep you together.



## Mixed Messages

### The Meaning of Advent

The word “*advent*” means “coming.” We celebrate advent the four weeks before Christmas that look forward to the arrival of the Christ. The four candles in the wreath symbolize: *Prophecy, Love, Joy, and Peace*. The center candle is the **Christ** candle, which is lit on Christmas.

Today, we light the prophecy candle.

### Scripture: Luke 3:1-14

\_\_\_\_\_ was the prophet who announced the coming of the Messiah.

- In Advent the \_\_\_\_\_ proclaims the coming of Jesus.

### Jesus’ missions:

1. His \_\_\_\_\_ mission.
  - “All mankind will see God’s \_\_\_\_\_.” (Isaiah 40:3)

2. His \_\_\_\_\_ mission.

- The \_\_\_\_\_ was breaking through to earth.
- Things would be right when the whole world was \_\_\_\_\_ to God's purpose.

John understood his job was to \_\_\_\_\_ the way for Jesus.

...by \_\_\_\_\_ people with God's purpose.

The question: What should we do?

- Anyone: \_\_\_\_\_ with those in need. (vs. 11)
- Tax Collectors: Don't take more than they \_\_\_\_\_. (vs. 13)
- Soldiers: Don't abuse your \_\_\_\_\_.

**The Question:** If we want to align with God's Kingdom, how should we celebrate Christmas?

Our modern Advent:

1. Make Christ \_\_\_\_\_. (prophecy)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ less. (love)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ more (outside your circle). (joy)
4. Give \_\_\_\_\_ rather than presents. (peace)

### Questions for further study and reflection:

1. What is your favorite part of the Christmas season?
  2. What practice or tradition most helps you reflect on the birth of Jesus?
  3. Do you think some traditions are more appropriate ways to celebrate Christmas than others? What are some good traditions? What are some that make you scratch your head?
  4. How would you describe Jesus' mission and ministry?
  5. What are some Christmas traditions that are inconsistent with the mission of Jesus?
  6. In Luke 3, how did John "prepare the way" for Jesus?
  7. In what ways do you think the role of the church for Christ's second "advent" (coming) is the same as John's role for Christ's first advent?
- In both the Old and New Testament, we see God's people celebrate important events (e.g. Passover, weddings, etc.) with parties and feasts—some of them commanded by God.
8. When does a feast or celebration become over-indulgence? Can you think of any general rules?
  9. Do you agree that much of our celebration of Christmas is materialistic and over-indulgent? Why or why not? Is it OK for Christians to celebrate this way?
  10. How can we guard against celebrating Christ's birth in unChrist-like ways?
  11. What might you change about the way you celebrate the Christmas season this year?