

# INVITATION TO *Promise*

## WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?

Is there something in your life that you had to wait for, perhaps for a long time? What happened? Were you eager, excited, impatient, frustrated? Why? Is there anything that you're waiting for today? How is that going?

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? \_\_\_\_\_

Look here for some background about the book of Isaiah: [enterthebible.org/oldtestament.aspx?rid=43](http://enterthebible.org/oldtestament.aspx?rid=43)

God promises hope and expectation to the people of Israel who have no hope, people whose only expectation is that life will be the same – or worse – tomorrow than it was yesterday. These people have lost their homeland. They long for a return to the “good old days.” Going back seems better to them than moving forward. But Isaiah delivers a bold announcement that God isn't about the way things were before. God is about the way things will be, because God is doing a new thing.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK? \_\_\_\_\_

Are we like the Israelites, longing to go back to “the good old days”? (And were they really as good as we imagine?) Does that sense of nostalgia seem more prevalent in our culture lately? Does the holiday season exaggerate that nostalgia? Why?

Watch this commercial, which depicts the Christmas truce of 1914: [youtube.com/watch?v=6KH0VBK2EVE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=6KH0VBK2EVE). Even though this is a nostalgic take on history, complete with product placement, do you find it compelling? Do you think it's possible that these men, on different sides of a bloody battle, could find a common humanity? Is the message in this ad true today? What is stopping us from seeking this sort of peace on a daily basis? Why is the promise of peace that Isaiah describes taking so long? Do we refuse to wait? Do we consistently resist the fulfillment of God's promise with the way we live?

What is the new thing that God is going to do? Is this passage a literal promise? Will the wolf ever really be at peace with the lamb, and will children ever really play safely near a snake's den? Is this passage true? What does it mean? What is the promise that God is making here? Do you really think the kind of peace described here is possible in this world? Is it our job to sit and wait for it to happen? Are we required to do something? Are we invited to do something? What is the difference? Is the fulfillment of this promise up to us? Why, or why not?

Do you think we lack the right kind of imagination to really envision a new path forward? What could God possibly be doing that we haven't seen before? Can anything really be new? What new thing could God be doing in the world right now?

## WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP? \_\_\_\_\_

In this season of Advent, as you wait for Christmas to fully emerge, identify what it is that you are anticipating the most. What is this time of waiting teaching you about yourself, and about the One whose birth you're waiting to celebrate?

## LOOKING FOR MORE? \_\_\_\_\_

Read this fantastic article by Dr. David Lose: [davidlose.net/2014/12/advent-2-b/](http://davidlose.net/2014/12/advent-2-b/). Pay particular attention to his words about promises and their fulfillment. How do you live differently when you've been promised something? (See Lose's examples about board games, phone calls and rides home.) What does it mean to live with the expectation that a promise will be fulfilled? How do you live differently with that expectation than you would live without it?

Is that also true for God's promises to us, promises of peace and love and no more tears? What happens when you have absolute faith that a promise will be fulfilled? Do you live differently? Is there anything you would do, or not do, if you believed that a peaceful future was certain? Does the way you live in expectation of that future actually bring about the fulfillment of the promise? How?

How are you a part of God's unfolding promise? And how does God meet you in your waiting?