



The best stories are about redemption. The message of Christmas reminds us that every story can end better than it starts. This series uses Charles Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol* as a platform to rehear the greatest redemption story of all.

**These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.**

**1** Rick began by reminding us that hope is a powerful thing. It is why the best stories are redemption stories, for they suggest that the future does not have to be chained to the past. Is there anything going on in your life right now where you could use some hope? Share a little bit of that story with the group.

**2 SCROOGE'S QUESTION: *Is the future fixed, or can it be fixed.*** Scrooge has experienced "future shock," and he wants to know if he can change the trajectory of his life. He is looking for the same thing we are all looking for—hope. Is the future pliable, flexible, changeable? A purely "naturalist" answer would be "No" or even "What does it matter?" How is the Christmas story a rebuke to naturalism?

**3 BECAUSE JESUS CAME... a new reality is present.** The birth of Jesus means the death of "same old, same old." Jesus did not enter our world to leave it like he found it. What are some examples of how you've seen the gospel challenge "same old, same old" to bring a new reality to our present world?

**4 Revelation 21:5** says, "*And the one sitting on the throne said, 'Look, I am making everything new!'*" Rick pointed out that in the days of Jesus there were two ways to look at the future. One way was *futurum*, which said that the future is just the natural outcome of everything that evolved in the past.

The second way, *adventus*, was to view the future as open to something breaking in to change how things would otherwise be. With this in mind, what are some examples of how Advent people look at the future?

**5 BECAUSE JESUS CAME... a new life is possible.** Redemption is more than being released from the guilt of our past; it is being set free to release who we were created to be going forward. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.** How does this make you feel about your "old life" and your "new life"? Share some examples of how you've seen Christ being formed in the other people in your group.

**6 BECAUSE JESUS CAME... a new world is coming.** Christmas declares that God will get what He has always wanted. This world is God's world, and it is meant for "shalom." **Read Isaiah 9:6-7.** Of these names and facts, which encourages you the most right now? Why?

**7** Rick closed by reminding us that ***Christmas gives birth to hope in the future.*** How does what we believe about the future affect how we live in the present? What is one thing you can do this week to "*keep Christmas well*"?

