



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 Begin by asking everyone to share what their favorite Christmas movie is and have them elaborate on why they resonate with it so much. How do some of these movies help us appreciate the greatest story of all?

2 ABOUT THE STORY... "Can I get past my past?" Redemption is not an easy journey. It often requires that we go backward before we can go forward. Why is that true? Share some examples of how the past can either be a wonderful classroom or a terrible prison.

3 Read Luke 2:8-12. Why do you think God chose to announce the birth of His Son to shepherds, some of the lowliest members of society?

4 CHRISTMAS IS >... my past sins. Rick reminded us that everybody could use a few "do-overs." If we did not need a Savior, God would not have gone to such trouble to send one. **Read Matthew 1:21.** How is Jesus the perfect answer for every imperfect moment in your life (see **Psalm 130:3-4** and **103:12**)?

5 CHRISTMAS IS >... my past chains. God does not bring up the past, but He will open up the possibility of a new future. Christmas announces the delivery of a deliverer. **Read Romans 8:1-2** and **6:10-11.** What encouragement do these verses give you regarding

Jesus's power to not only erase sin's record but to eradicate sin's power? Share an example of how you've seen the truth of "*Your past does not have to determine your future*" from your own experience.

6 CHRISTMAS IS >... my past pains. All of us have done wrong, and all of us have been done wrong. In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge allowed the pains of his past to rob his present of meaning and joy. How does the story of Christmas remind us that our bad memories can be overwhelmed by good news? **Read Matthew 6:12.** How does this part of the Lord's prayer help us get past our past?

7 Jesus can heal what time can't. Rick closed by reminding us that "*you cannot rewrite the past, but you don't have to let the past author your future*." **Read Isaiah 43:18-19.** What is one practical thing you can do to remember this truth as you journey through life?





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1 In this series, Rick is reminding us that the best stories are about redemption, and that is true of the best Christmas stories. Share some examples of how you've seen this to be true and talk about why that resonates with you so much during this time of year.

2 SCROOGE SEES *that life is better together.*
The Ghost of Christmas Present helps Scrooge realize that *"who you're with is more important than what you're worth."* Why are we often seduced into believing the myth of the "purchase of happiness" and why is this simply not true? Share some examples of times you've realized that your **"with"** list means more than your **"wish"** list.

3 WISDOM SOWS *into relationships first and most.* Take a moment to read through the following scriptures together that remind us that Christmas is a community reality: God with us! **Read Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:10; and John 1:14, 3:16.** What are some significant truths these verses remind us of?

4 1 John 3:16 says, *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."* What are some practical ways we can lay down our lives for each other (see **1 Timothy 6:18-19** and **Philippians 2:5-7**)?

5 CHRISTMAS SAYS *we are on God's "with" list.*
Since sin could not move into God's neighborhood, God chose to move into ours. How have you experienced the truth of Jesus being "God with us"? Share the name of "your one" and pray about an opportunity to remind them of this truth this month.

6 Read Isaiah 41:10. Christmas does not promise a life absent of struggle; it promises that God will be present in the midst of it. Share an example of how you've experienced this recently.

7 Rick closed by reminding us that *"Someday we will live in a 'without' world. But in this present world, decide that you won't live without others."* What are some practical ways you can intentionally treasure the people in your life?





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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*"?

