

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

COMMUNITY GROUPS WILL BE ON BREAK OVER THE HOLIDAYS. OUR WINTER QUARTER WILL BEGIN IN JANUARY 2015.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

For so many of us, the Christmas season seemed almost magical when we were young, and it can feel like we spend our adult years trying anything we can think of in an effort to recapture that magic. Of course, the Bible makes it clear that there's nothing magic about it; instead, the key is in seeing the power of celebrating the entrance of our Savior through the eyes – and hearts – of children. As we start our holiday series "Like a Child," Eugene challenged us to love like a child. :

1. **Ways a child loves:** It can seem that the deepest love comes quite naturally to a child, doesn't it? Children tend to go "all in" quicker than adults: they believe fully, they trust completely, and they don't seem to struggle being humble.
2. **Ways a father receives love:** When children love like that, their fathers are honored, thankful, and humbled by the childlike love. God the Father is no different in that regard than any earthly father being loved by his children.
3. **Ways God gives love:** God the Father's response to being loved by His children? He protects us, He gives to us what we need, and He loves us more than we could ever imagine!

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- What was one helpful or troubling insight or principle from this week's message, if any?
- What are a few of your favorite memories of the Christmas holiday as a child? How did Christmas change as you grew older?
- If you "lost the magic" of the holidays as you matured, what happened when you had children? What is it about a child that makes the holiday come alive not only for themselves but for others around them?
- Read Mark 10:13-16 and discuss how those same qualities can help us in our faith.
- Read 1 Corinthians 13:11 and Ephesians 4:15-16. These passages talk about the need to grow up, and yet Jesus says clearly in Mark 10:15 that if we won't enter the kingdom unless we receive it like little children. It can seem like a contradiction until we understand the difference between being child-LIKE and being child-ISH. Take some time and talk about the differences between the two and how important it is that we don't confuse the two in our faith.
- For many, really experiencing the love of God like a child is hard because our childhood experiences may not have been pleasant. If you would like to experience a more real "Father-child" love with God, honestly admit that to your group and close your time together by praying for each other in this area. If you can't think of what to pray, read Ephesians 3:14-21 over each other as a prayer (after all, it was a prayer from Paul for the believers in Ephesus).