

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 ARE BETTER WHEN MEMBERS COME PREPARED. THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN PROVIDED AS A TOOL FOR THAT.

Consider...

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

Message Summary

So many times, we can get pulled into the trap of allowing our hope to be swayed by or placed in things of this world. But as followers of Jesus, we must recognize that He brought hope to this world, and so we'll never find hope in this world. Our hope is found in Jesus, and in Jesus alone. Why is that so important? Because only when we accept that fact will we be able to live out this week's Big Idea: **hope is given on earth by those whose hope comes from heaven.**

1. **The birth of Jesus changed everything:** It seems like such a simple "no brainer" type of a statement, but the reality is that IF it did change everything, then that means our lives will be changed by Him. Sometimes it's just too easy to say Jesus changed everything and yet remain unchanged ourselves. But Jesus didn't leave us that option.
2. **Hope doesn't come from this world; hope came to this world:** One of the reasons why the birth of Jesus changed everything is because He was the vehicle that brought the hope to our world that we couldn't create on our own! We can never look to this world for hope, because hope comes from God. It's so much a part of who God is that Paul called God the "God of hope" in Romans 15:13. If we don't have hope, we're probably looking in the wrong places.
3. **Hope hold us when everything around us is falling apart:** When we place our hope in Jesus, we can know that our hope is secure. More secure than banks, or vaults, or that belt that's holding your pants up right now (we hope!). The Bible equates it to an anchor that keeps our soul from drifting, and when we allow that hope to remain strong when everything around is isn't, Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:15 that it will cause others to wonder where we got it. We need to be ready to point those people to Jesus.

Discuss

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

- What takeaway – if any – did you have from the message this week?
- Read Proverbs 13:12. Have you ever been let down by someone? How did it make you feel? What about the second part of the verse? Why do you think the Bible compares a hope being fulfilled to a "tree of life?"
- Read John 14:6. How is Jesus the best "tree of life?" How does Jesus fulfill our longings? What does that mean? What does it look like?
- Read 1 Peter 3:15. Usually we read this verse and think that it means we need to memorize a lot of Bible verses and know how to answer every question we're asked by people who don't follow Jesus (and those aren't bad things to strive to be able to do!), but in the context of when this was written, the culture was watching Christians being persecuted by Nero, and wondered how they could have such hope in the midst of so much persecution. How would you say you respond to hard times? Does your life in tough times make people curious about where your hope and confidence comes from? Discuss.