

INTRO & ICE BREAKER

Introduce yourself and answer this: Share a time when you had a false hope or when your hope was fulfilled!

RECAP & DISCUSSION

This week Pastor Mike introduced our new series, “Get Your Hopes Up” and talked about how we can keep our hope up in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation.

Discussion:

- Let’s spend a few moments sharing what stood out to us from the message on Sunday. What was new or unexpected? What impacted you the most? What did you talk about after service?

Pastor Mike shared that our “lived experiences” with disappointment or failure can lead us to a point where we do not want to get our hopes up or believe that life can be better in the future. He shared that when people feel a sense of hopelessness, it could be that they don’t see hope for themselves or even for anyone else, which can lead to discouraging others from finding hope. He elaborated that many times we’ve trained ourselves to not hold on to hope in order to prevent future hurt or disappointment. With this mindset, we end up sabotaging the outcome from the beginning or avoid addressing real issues, because we don’t want to be let down.

Discussion:

- Do you ever find yourself feeling hopeless in difficult situations?
- Are there areas of your life where you used to be more optimistic about the future, but now find yourself settling for the way things are?
- What effects might hopelessness have on your mental, spiritual and physical well-being?

Have someone read: Proverbs 13:12 and Romans 5:1-5

Proverbs 13:12 clearly addresses the issue of hopelessness, stating that “hope deferred makes the heart sick.” Pastor Mike explained the toll that being hopeless takes on the human body. It can lead to pain, lack of energy and a weakened immune system as a result of anxiety and depression. He emphasized that we can treat the symptoms, but it is important to get to the source of the issue. The “tree of life” in the proverb, is the source of nourishment and replenishment that comes from God after a period of longing. Pastor Mike cited Romans 5:4, which proclaims that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance creates character, and character leads to hope.

Discussion:

- How might these verses change the way we think about hope in difficult situations?
- Are there areas of your life where you find yourself treating the symptoms of feeling hopeless?
- Where can you go to find a “tree of life” when you are in a desert of hopelessness?

Pastor Mike encouraged us to persevere through our longing for a better life and to go to God as the source of our hope. Through God’s word, prayer and the relationships we build through church, family and friends, we can begin to hope again. He reminded us that suffering from past failures or disappointments can provide an opportunity for learning, growing and building character. He challenged us to act and speak differently if we are struggling to find hope in difficult times in order to establish a new character and a new hope.

Two practical next steps toward building hope in the future:

- Create new lived experiences: Try something different to get a different outcome.
- Stay connected to a Life Group: It’s hard to go through difficult times alone. Share your story and keep it real, while encouraging, challenging and supporting one another.

Discussion:

- What challenging times in your life have helped you build character? How might this lead to hope in the future?
- How might pursuing new lived experiences and choosing the right relationships in your life help you persevere?
- What practical ways can you help others struggling with hopelessness?

ANNOUNCE

- Meet & Greet with Pastor Chris and Brenda is 4/30 after second service! Are you newer to Our City or know someone who is new to Our City? Pastor Chris and the Our City staff would love to meet you! Please fill out this form or send it to someone you know!
 - <https://ourcity.churchcenter.com/people/forms/46499>

- Baptism Sunday is on 5/7! If you're interested, please fill out the form below or go to the blue Next Steps wall on Sunday!
 - <https://ourcity.churchcenter.com/people/forms/29047>
- Growth Track 101 starts again on Sunday, May 7th during the 11am service!

PRAY

One of the things that we want to focus on each season of Life Groups is to get comfortable praying out loud together. Close out your time together with prayer. If you're a newer Life Group, the leader can set an example by leading in prayer, but explain that we'll all be doing this over the next few weeks together. Explain that prayer is simply talking to God - there aren't perfect words to say. Next week, encourage someone else to close in prayer!

Are there any prayer requests or praise/prayer requests?

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