

Sermon Based Small Group Guide

For Dec 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 sermon:

***ReDiscovering Christmas: "The forward nature of Hope"***

**Warm up:** Have your Christmas plans changed at all?

What will you miss from your 'normal' Christmas plans?

What do you still get to keep regarding your plans?

What can you look forward to this Christmas?

**Digging deeper:** (20-30 minutes)

1. The sermon led off with an overview of the history between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. Why is knowing this history an important part of the story? How does knowing this history impact how you read the birth of Jesus? Does knowing the history change the way you think about Jesus was received at his birth and in His ministry?

2. We also discussed the two traps that our hope can get caught in, a time period and a person/place/organization. Have you caught yourself doing this before? Read the passages below to see how God's people have done this in the past.

Exodus 16:1-3, Numbers 14:1-10, 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 8 1-18,

3. As we discussed, real hope is found in a manger when it was least expected. Real hope is found in the person and work of Jesus. Discuss with your group how each of you have found hope in Jesus over the last year. Discuss if you've had moments of doubt or struggle in finding hope as you've watched the last year play out. How can our perspective be different or be changed as we head into 2021? What has this year taught us about hope that we can bring into next year?

Read Romans 8:18-30, Colossians 2:6-15, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:13-20

After reading these passages, discuss the real hope we have because of Jesus.

4. The message closed by discussing the Stockdale Paradox (have faith, but confront reality). Why is this hard for Christians (or anybody)? Why is this a fine line to balance for those of us who put our faith in Jesus? In light of all of this, why does our hope have to be pointing forward?

**Apply it:** (10 minutes)

We all hope 2021 is a year of positive change. We hope life returns to some recognizable sense of 'normal'. However, a lot of new habits and new realities have come into existence over the last 9 months. Discuss with your group what might stay and what might change. How can you 'confront the present reality and at the same time have faith in the future'? How could that impact your life of faith and how you share Jesus with your friends and neighbors?