

Small Group Bible Study

Empty Boxes Week 1: Hope

Main Theme

Pastor Hattie opened our Advent series called *Empty Boxes* by talking about how the world sells us a version of hope that looks shiny but ends up empty. We prepare for Christmas in so many ways, but Advent invites us to prepare our hearts. First Peter reminds us that our real hope is alive because Jesus is alive. It never spoils or fades.

Opening Prayer

Jesus, thank You for the chance to slow down during Advent and really see You. Open our hearts today. Help us notice where we've been placing our hope in things that cannot hold it. Anchor us in the real hope we have in You. Amen.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION

- What is the most ridiculous thing you ever hoped for as a kid at Christmas?

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Read: 1 Peter 1:3- 7

- Peter starts the section with praise. Why do you think praise matters even before circumstances change
- What stands out to you about the phrase new birth into a living hope
- The text says this hope will not perish or fade. Why is that important in a season when everything else feels temporary
- Peter talks honestly about grief and trials. How have you seen sorrow and rejoicing exist together in your own walk
- What does it practically look like for trials to refine your faith rather than crush it
- What does this passage teach us about the difference between optimism and biblical hope

2. Read: Psalm 39:7

- If you had to finish the sentence If I have _____ then I will feel fulfilled how would you honestly fill it in today
- Why is it so tempting to anchor our hope in things we can see or control
- What does it look like to shift hope from something uncertain to Someone who is certain

3. Read: Romans 8:22-25

- Paul says creation is “groaning.” What do you think he means by that, and where do you see that tension in our world today?
- According to these verses, what are we waiting for, and how does that shape our understanding of biblical hope?
- Verse 24 says “hope that is seen is no hope at all.” How does this challenge the way we typically define hope?
- What does patient waiting look like in real life when it comes to trusting God?
- How does this passage deepen or change your understanding of hope in Jesus?

SERMON RECAP QUESTIONS

- Pastor Hattie said the world sells us counterfeit hope. What counterfeit hopes do you feel most pulled toward during the holidays
- How does the empty box illustration help you think differently about the things you hope will fulfill you
- Peter says salvation and new life are our inheritance. What would change if you truly believed those things could never be taken from you
- In what ways has suffering revealed where your hope was actually anchored
- What needs to shift in how you have been filling in the sentence If I have _____ then I will feel fulfilled

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- What is one practical step you can take this Advent season to slow down and move your hope toward Jesus
- Who in your life needs encouragement or a picture of living hope this week, and what could you do to show it
- What is one thing you need to release because it has been carrying a weight it was never designed to hold
- What new habit of praise could help anchor your heart in Christ during the stress of December
- If hope is trusting Jesus even when circumstances do not change, what area of your life needs that kind of trust right now

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank You that real hope does not depend on our circumstances. Anchor us to You this Advent season. Help us recognize the empty boxes around us and choose the hope that lives because You live. Give us eyes to see Your mercy and hearts to trust You. Amen.