

Do you Hear What I Hear, Week 4 Community Group Discussion Questions

Opening Question: *As a kid, what was the one gift you hoped for but never received?*

Tell them: When the gift you get isn't what you hoped for your dreams can be dashed and that can really impact your emotions at the time and sometimes even long into the future. It can lead to sadness, hopelessness, regret and more. It can feel like a curse when you don't get what you want, but something completely different and sometimes unwanted. This week Pastor Michael talked about the difference and similarities between a gift and a curse. He explained how the "curses" we've experienced in 2020 don't have to lead to hopelessness when we put our trust in Christ.

Ask them: *What would you say is the difference between a gift and a curse? Can you imagine a way that a curse could turn out to be a gift? Can you give an example?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael read from Psalm 33:13-22 this week. Let's have another look:

"The Lord watches from heaven; he sees all people. From the place where he lives he **looks** carefully at all the earth's inhabitants. He is the one who **forms every human heart**, and takes note of all their actions. No king is delivered by his vast army; a warrior is not saved by his great might. A horse disappoints those who trust in it for victory; despite its great strength, it cannot deliver. Look, the Lord **takes notice** of his loyal followers, those who wait for him to demonstrate his **faithfulness** by saving their lives from death and sustaining them during times of famine. We wait for the Lord; he is our **deliverer** and **shield**. For our hearts rejoice in him, for we **trust in his holy name**. May we experience your faithfulness, O Lord, for we wait for you. From the place where he lives he looks carefully at all the earth's inhabitants."

Tell them: An attribute is something that is true about God. It's a part of who He is, it's His very nature.

Ask them: *What do we learn about God's attributes in this passage?*

1. "He **looks carefully at the earth**" = God is omnipresent.

Ask them: *How does it change your life, emotions or spirit when you remember that God is omnipresent?*

2. “He forms every human heart.” **Ask them:** *What attribute of God would this be included in? (Creator)*

3. Tell them: Verse 18 -19 says this “Look, the Lord takes notice of his loyal followers, those who wait for him to demonstrate his faithfulness by saving their lives from death and sustaining them during times of famine.” **Ask them:** *Who does this say the Lord is watching or taking notice of? What does it say that He does for His loyal followers?*

4. “He is our deliverer” = He saves us. **Tell them:** A lot of times we put our hope in people and things other than God to deliver us. **Ask them:** *Can you name some people or things which are seen as deliverers in our society?*
 - a. **Ask them:** *Is there a leader, idol or loved one who has let you down?*
 - b. **Ask them:** *How do you maintain hope when people and things let you down? (see Lam. 3:21-27)*

Tell them: Pastor Michael said that believing in the name of Jesus is comfort.

Ask them: *How can trusting in a name lead to encouragement? (see Phil. 2:1-11 and ask what did Christ do by way of treating others more important than Himself? See vs. 6-8)*

Tell them: For many of us, 2020 has been a year of gifts that we didn't want.

The gift of job loss.

The gift of uncertainty.

The gift of quarantine.

The gift of unrest.

The gift of illness.

The gift of death.

Tell them: It was interesting when Pastor Michael reminded us that Jesus birth was a death sentence for Him.

Ask them: *What did you think of that idea?*

Tell them: So, how do we best wait on the Lord and put our hope and trust in His name, so he sees us as loyal followers instead of disloyal rebels and runaways? Pastor Michael gave us these answers:

1. Put on your noise-cancelling headphones. Ask them: *Do you remember what he said the noise-cancelling headphones are for the believer? (God's Word)*

Ask them: *What are some ways to put those headphones on daily? (Spend time listening to scripture, sermons, and songs that are Jesus-centered)*

Tell them: Pastor Michael said something you don't hear very often when he said, "beware of scripture interpretation, sermons, and songs that are Jesus-flavored but you-centered.

Ask them: *What do you think he meant by that?*

2. Encourage one another. Tell them: Pastor Michael said that **the final destination on the road of discouragement is hopelessness.**

Ask them: *When have you been the most discouraged?*

Tell them: We are living in a season filled with discouragement. Our kids, friends, family members, neighbors are all under a great deal of weight and it can be easy to be discouraged. But Pastor Michael gave some advice for helping the discouraged. He said, "when you encourage others, you are paving new off-ramps from discouragement that can, by and through God's grace, keep people from hopelessness. But beware! If you build off ramps to hope in kings, warriors, or horses (anything but the name of Jesus,) you're just slowing down the inevitable. You're giving them the scenic route to hopelessness because that thing will disappoint and be defeated."

Ask them: *What do you think about that idea? (see 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11)*

3. Tell them: The third piece of advice he gave for taking your daily vaccination against hopelessness was to **Open the gift of grace daily.**

Ask them: *How many of you are good at accepting gifts? How many of you feel like you need to pay back someone who's given you a gift?*

Tell them: The world has conditioned us to earn our gifts, but the gift of grace is a free gift that could not be paid back even if you tried.

If you open the gift of grace to start your day, then when the rotten gifts of life come along throughout your day, you'll find you're going to have more hope than you used to, and that will enable you to encourage others going through the same rotten gift.

Ask them: *What are some ways that we can open that free gift of grace every day?* (preach yourself the gospel, worship, make a thankful list, recite verses that speak about who He is)

Tell them: This season, if you are discouraged, don't be ashamed. It comes to us all at one time or another. But be sure to confide in another. Share your burdens with one another so that we can pray for you and help where we can. You are never alone, no matter how much you feel like you are.