



Week One

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for being here with us. Please help us use this time to grow in friendship and faith. Amen.

Talk it Over

This week we heard about EastLake Church aiming to be a place where it's safe to not be okay. EastLake values being a community where each of us can own our weaknesses, our failures, and our struggles.

- In what ways are you comfortable or uncomfortable with the idea that 'it's okay to not be okay'.
- When are you most inclined to own your weakness, failures, or struggles? Why is that the case?

This week we kicked off our new series, When All Hell Breaks Loose. As we jumped into this week's talk we looked at the basic idea that we like when things go well. Many of us love a good "and then they all lived happily ever after" storyline. This is true not just in what we watch, but it's what we want in our own lives too. But the problem is, often our real life doesn't match up to our picture perfect ideals. And in turn, each of us must figure out how to maintain hope in a world that is broken.

- What are some of the picture perfect endings you expected in your life?
- How old were you when first realized life is not perfect?
- Disappointments come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Some disappointments impact us for moments, others impact us for weeks, and some linger for seasons or even years. What would you say determines how much a disappointment impacts you in the end?

Hope is the person or thing we place our confidence in. Hope is where we look for security. Examples of where we can place our hope include, but are not limited to: How much money we have saved, our education, our job, our friends, our family, our dreams about the future, our reputation, our status, our stuff, and so on.

- For better or worse, what are some things or relationships you place your hope in?
- One of the unfortunate complexities about hope is, we usually don't consider where we've placed our hope until that thing fails us. Tell us about a time you realized you had misplaced your hope.

Read Psalm 33:20-22 (NLT)

If you are a follower of Jesus, the Bible tells us we are invited and called to put our hope in God. It's the idea that while we don't know what the future holds, we do know who holds the future. This sort of hope means knowing God is with me when things fall apart.

- Placing our hope in God is one of those things that can sometimes be easier said than done. How have you seen yourself grow in your capacity to place your hope in God?

Read Acts 27:13-15

One of the added challenges to this idea of placing our hope in God is that we live in a culture that often tells us if we do the right things life will turn out good. The challenge here is that we each eventually learn we can

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do all the right things and still have things fall apart. That is what we see in the verse we just read. Despite doing everything the Apostle Paul did to follow Jesus well, he was no stranger to stress, tragedy, and struggle. As a matter of fact, in the verse we just read, Paul is actually traveling to Rome to stand trial.

- Doing the right thing and following God doesn't prevent us from stress, tragedy, and struggle. Have you ever had to journey through a struggle while simultaneously processing how unjust or undeserved the whole situation felt? How did you process through that season? If you still feel stuck, that's okay too. You can talk about that.

As we continue to read through the story of Paul encountering a storm on the sea while on his way to stand trial in Rome, we will be looking at how we can put our hope in God when we are caught in a storm.

Lesson One — Stay put.

Read Acts 27:30-32 (NLT)

While there is often a natural desire to run away or avoid the storms at all cost, sometimes the best thing to do is to stay put. Our instinct may be to react, but often the best way to encounter true hope is to stay the course.

- What are some of the ways you run away or avoid storms? Think about ways you deny, numb, or minimize storms. For example, do you run towards work, social media, relationships, outbursts, lie or cover up about the situation.
- What do you think it is about storms that make us want to run away or avoid them? Is it simply the pain or are there other motivating factors for you?

Lesson Two — Take care of yourself.

Read Acts 27:33-34 (NLT)

In storms it's easy to stop caring about the basics — like our health. Think spiritual health, financial health, mental health, physical health, or relational health. If we are going to stay the course and remain hopeful, we cannot stop taking care of ourselves.

- We all grieve differently. Looking back at the most recent storms you have faced, in what ways do you struggle most with taking care of yourself when things get hard?

Lesson Three — Give thanks.

Read Acts 27:35-37 (NLT)

Anyone can thank God when life is going well, but Paul often reminds us in various Bible passages that hope is often fostered by giving thanks to God even in hard time. The point here is not to gloss over the storm, but to thank God for the good that is still found in the midst of a storm. This empowers us to be alert and conscious of the good; it empowers us to look for what is working.

- By nature, how hard is it for you to own the storm you are in and still find good around you? Why do you think this is the case?
- What are some examples of ways we can be thankful while not denying the storm? Feel free to find examples from real life storms or thought up examples.

Lesson Four — Hold onto whatever you have to hold onto.

Read Acts 27:41-44 (NLT)

When storms hit, look to grab hold of anything you can that brings you hope. Maybe it's words of encouragement, a worship song, a Bible verse, a mantra, your purpose for starting, etc. Often times when storms have passed we can look back and see that it was a bunch of little broken pieces that helped us get back to shore.

- In what ways has this lesson proved true in your own life?

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Read Hebrews 13:5-6 (NLT)

Hope doesn't mean we wear a fake smile and pretend things are okay. But rather hope, rooted in Christ, enables us to honestly acknowledge the storms of life without adopting a doom and gloom attitude. Hope, rooted in Christ, enables us to do this because hope is found in trusting God is with us and always working on our behalf.

- During this season of life, in what ways or in what areas do you want to find hope?

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for being a God of hope. Thank you for being with us in the storms. Help us to grow in our capacity to walk through the storms of life with you. Help us to learn the art of staying put, taking care of ourselves, giving thanks, and holding on to what we can when storms come. May you truly become the one we place our confidence in. May we learn to find our hope in you. Amen.

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.