

CoreGroup Guide | Defining Moments – Part 2

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Welcome

Over the past two decades at The Gathering, countless people made countless small decisions that led the church to be what it is today. And now it's our turn. Welcome to Part 2 of our series, *Defining Moments: Celebrating 20 Years of The Gathering*. This week we reflect on the present moment and the possibilities that God has laid out for our church community today.

Opening Prayer

Good and Gracious God, we welcome you into this space today. We welcome your presence, your peace, your guidance, and your grace. Help us to be welcoming towards each other as well, Lord. Help us to be fully present here today, just as we are, with curiosity and compassion. Thank you for this opportunity to gather together. It's in your name we pray, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What one article of clothing or accessory defines you the most? Maybe it's that sweatshirt you've worn for years? Or the snazzy bowtie you pull out when you need some pizzazz? How about the skinny jeans that will never really go out of style, those fabulous earrings that make you feel confident, or that cherished baseball cap from your favorite team?

The Head

Hebrews 12 starts with an important phrase: "So then." Other translations use "Therefore." Oftentimes in scripture when we encounter words like "so then" and "therefore" it is a prompt to look at what came before. Something significant led us to this point, so now what? Last week we took a journey through the faith hall of fame in Hebrews 11, remembering some of the defining moments of the past. Today we pivot towards the present, with a call to action and a bit of encouragement that is just as relevant to us today as it was to the first followers of Christ.

Hebrews 12:1-2

So then, with endurance, let's also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let's throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up, and fix our eyes on Jesus, faith's pioneer and perfecter. He endured the cross, ignoring the shame, for the sake of the joy that was laid out in front of him, and sat down at the right side of God's throne.

- Why would this message have been impactful to the original recipients of this letter, a community of early Jewish believers facing persecution, pressure, and fatigue?
- Who is the "cloud of witnesses" that surrounds us? What exactly are they witnessing?
- What is the connection between Jesus and all of these other past pillars of the faith?
- In what ways is Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of the faith?

The Heart

Living a life of faith is not just about retelling the Biblical stories, it's also about embracing the ups and downs of the current moment, as unexpected, inconvenient, or draining as that can be. Hebrews 12:3 goes on to encourage readers to remember the example of Jesus, "so that you may not grow weary in your souls or lose heart." Truly words to live by today!

- How do you know when you are starting to grow weary in your soul? What does that experience look like, or feel like, to you?
- What is your greatest source of endurance in this current season of life?
- How does your participation in weekly worship support you to "run the race" that is laid out in front of you?
- What prevents you from running that race to the fullest? What extra baggage are you carrying?

The Hands

Present day decisions can leave a legacy far beyond what we can ever imagine. This is not to say we need to be anxious or worried about every little decision we make, but rather to remind us that our words and actions matter. Our presence matters. We matter! The small ways we choose to use our gifts and graces today can have a big impact in the future.

- Think about a decision you are facing right now that may be a defining moment at some point in the future. Share the decision with your group and invite them to pray for you this coming week.
- What type of legacy do you want to leave at The Gathering or in your local community? What is your next step to move in that direction?
- What is one action your CoreGroup could take together this year to be a part of the work God is doing in and through The Gathering, right here, right now?

Closing Prayer

Prayer of Good Courage

Lord God,
You have called your servants
to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden,
through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,
not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

(Written by Eric Milner-White, *Daily Prayer*, p. 14, Oxford University Press, 1941)