

CoreGroup Guide | Defining Moments – Part 1

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From Pastor Charity

As we move into a new CoreGroup season, I want to remind us all of one of our key values for the CoreGroup ministry: **Show Up. It's That Simple**. Your group counts on you. When we show up consistently, listen deeply, and share honestly, we become more than attendees - we become owners of something bigger, the great commandment - love God, neighbor and self.

Show Up is a focus value this year. We know nothing is possible unless you're in the room, sitting in the circle - so SHOW UP. It's that simple!

During each sermon series, we will also highlight one of our Six Shared Practices. Our practice for this series is **Worship**. Worship is more than an obligation. It's a weekly opportunity for us to participate in the body of Christ. Click on the link above to review the "Start, Grow, Stretch" opportunities listed under Worship. Assess where you are right now, choose a next step, and share it with your group.

Welcome

Hello friends, and welcome to a new season of CoreGroups! We hope your summer break included some rest and maybe some rejuvenating reflection.

Our first week of the semester will begin with a new series looking at defining moments. These moments are crossroads in our lives where important decisions are made. Sometimes these moments are inconvenient and downright stressful because the decisions are difficult. But when we examine defining moments in the Bible, we often see positive outcomes while stepping out in faith. Week 1 encourages us to take courage by examining others who stepped forward with faith in the past.

Let's open with a prayer.

Opening Prayer

Hey God! We welcome you into our time together today. Please bless us with your presence. Help us to have good conversations and deep understanding. Guide us towards peace, insight, and grace for one another. It is in your name we pray, amen.

Ice Breaker

The moment you first decide you like a song or music group is a defining moment in your life. What is the very first album, artist, or song you sought out? The format could be anything from vinyl record to 8-track to cassette tape to compact disc or even a streaming service. What was your defining music moment?

The Head

Our scripture reading this week comes from the New Testament Book of Hebrews. The author of this book has never been fully identified, but we know it was a letter written to a known population of new Christian believers who faced harsh prosecution, imprisonment, and even death for their beliefs. Their temptation was to deny their faith and to revert back to old traditions. In response, the author of this letter pointed them towards a hall of fame of Biblical heroes who overcame adversity and triumphed through a faith in God.

Our reading this week comes from Chapter 11, which is quite long. A selection of verses is included below, but you are encouraged to read the whole chapter on your own time.

Excerpts from *Hebrews 11*:

¹Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see. ²The elders in the past were approved because they showed faith.

⁴By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice to God than Cain, which showed that he was righteous, since God gave approval to him for his gift. Though he died, he's still speaking through faith.

⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he didn't see death, and he wasn't found because God took him up.

⁷By faith Noah responded with godly fear when he was warned about events he hadn't seen yet. He built an ark to deliver his household.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance.

¹¹By faith even Sarah received the ability to have a child, though she herself was barren and past the age for having children, because she believed that the one who promised was faithful.

¹⁷By faith Abraham offered Isaac when he was tested.

²⁰By faith Isaac also blessed Jacob and Esau concerning their future.

²¹By faith Jacob blessed each of Joseph's sons as he was dying and bowed in worship over the head of his staff.

²²By faith Joseph recalled the exodus of the Israelites at the end of his life, and gave instructions about burying his bones.

²³By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months when he was born, because they saw that the child was beautiful and they weren't afraid of the king's orders.

²⁴By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter when he was grown up.

²⁷By faith he left Egypt without being afraid of the king's anger. He kept on going as if he could see what is invisible.

²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, in order that the destroyer could not touch their firstborn children.

²⁹By faith they crossed the Red Sea as if they were on dry land, but when the Egyptians tried it, they were drowned.

³⁰By faith Jericho's walls fell after the people marched around them for seven days.

³²What more can I say? I would run out of time if I told you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. ³³Through faith they conquered kingdoms, brought about justice, realized promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴put out raging fires, escaped from the edge of the sword, found strength in weakness, were mighty in war, and routed foreign armies.

- What common theme(s) did the author use to weave these Biblical stories together? Why would that style be impactful to new believers back then?
- Scholars believe Hebrews was written between 30-40 years after Jesus's time on Earth. It's reasonable to think that the first readers of this letter may have even seen Jesus. Why do you think this encouragement was needed?
- Five of these verses were dedicated to Moses. Culturally, why do you think this increased attention on Moses would have been impactful?
- What else jumps out to you from this selection of verses from Hebrews 11?

The Heart

Truth be told, many of the examples on the list of heroes above include defining moments at times of high anxiety, extreme fright, and/or deep pain. Such is often the way for defining moments. The predicted outcomes are unknown, which makes decisions difficult. Before The Gathering became a church, with five worship sites, it was just a concept, a dream, a prayer. Decisions had to be made. Details had to come together. Outcomes were unknown. But like our verses above, steps were taken with faith with courage at the forefront.

- Defining moments can be as unique as fingerprints. Situations are different for all of us. What makes a moment "defining" for you?
- As you reflect back on your life thus far, what defining moments can you identify for yourself or someone else? What is the value in naming these moments from our past?
- An unknown outcome can be troublesome when considering options at a crossroads. Faith certainly helps, but what has that looked like for you? What helps guide you when making important decisions and moving through the crossroads of life?
- What role has Worship played in your life as you navigate defining moments?

The Hands

Whether you've been at The Gathering for 20 years or for 20 minutes, there was a defining moment that brought you here. But you didn't get here alone. God is always working in and through faithful communities, and small defining moments can have a huge impact!

- What defining moments at The Gathering have shaped you the most? This could be joining a group, serving in some capacity, giving generously, participating in worship, or engaging more fully in another shared practice.
- Describe a tough decision you have made in the past few years. What were the circumstances? Who else was involved? How did your faith impact the decision? If you are comfortable, briefly share the story with the group.
- Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see." As you reflect on the defining moments of your life thus far, how did you keep moving towards hope, even when you couldn't see the outcome yet?
- How might you help someone else navigate a defining moment?

Closing Prayer

God, we thank you for our time in discussion today. Please watch over us as we consider big decisions in our lives and open our hearts towards helping others. Please guide us towards good choices according to your will and forgive us when we fall short.

It is in your name we pray, amen.