



## “Hope for the New Year”

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all the pastors and staff!! We pray that in 2018 your faith deepens as you encounter God’s presence, see that nothing is impossible with God and experience hope regardless of your circumstances. At times life can feel meaningless...and that is good news because it helps take the focus off ourselves and place it where it belongs...on God. Though His nature never changes, God is always up to new things and this should bring us hope!

**WARMING UP:** Take your time with these questions. Pinpointing where God is already at work in your life will help you intentionally invest in those areas in 2018, and perhaps will help you make resolutions you will keep!

1. Share a high and a low from this Christmas holiday (or the past year).  
Where did you see God at work in you or through you?

### TALK IT OVER:

1. Do you make New Year’s Resolutions? Why or why not?
  - a. Name one of your 2018 resolutions and one you didn’t keep from 2017.
  - b. A vast majority of our New Year’s Resolutions fall by the wayside, so why do we keep making them? How many reasons can your group come up with?
  - c. **Read Isaiah 43:19.** What hope does Isaiah 43:19 give you this year? See also **Lamentations 3:21-24.**
2. Sometimes life can feel futile. Our December “Hope” sermon series explored this. Life is hard, but God doesn’t want to leave us with our fear, regret or brokenness. He wants us to come to Him for hope, peace, and perspective. **Read Ecclesiastes 9:9** (explore different translations if possible, and skim all of Chapter 9 for context).
  - a. What two-word command is found at the very beginning of Ecclesiastes 9:9? Solomon is trying to share an important idea about keeping life in perspective. How hard is this for you?
  - b. Thinking back on your life and also the “Hope” series, how is it possible to “enjoy life” today amidst suffering, pain and brokenness?

3. Paul addresses a similar idea in **James 4:13-16**. Read verse 14 aloud with the two analogies from Ryan's sermon in mind: our life is a mere "dot" on the enormous timeline of God's eternity AND there's a "better party" coming.
  - a. Think about the hard things you are carrying into 2018. How might remembering these things bring you hope? See also **Revelation 21:4**.
  - b. How can verse 15 take the pressure off you to have all the right answers, all the right plans as you think about entering a new year?

**PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE:** In the next week, with everything discussed above in mind, go through this guide. These three actions will help you craft meaningful resolutions for 2018.

1. **Remember.** In past year, what has God done FOR YOU, THROUGH YOU, IN YOU?
  - a. As mentioned in the warm-up above, pinpointing where God is already at work will help you invest your time wisely moving forward.
  - b. Consider starting a "Gratitude Journal" in 2018 to help you remember all the little ways God is at work.
2. **Keep making resolutions/goals.** Look at the relationships or areas of your life where God is at work. How can you commit time, talent or treasure to these things in 2018? How can you better care for yourself in order to better serve God and the people around you?
  - a. Make a list of 3-5 practical resolutions for January.
  - b. Mark your calendar for February 1 to review the list. Celebrate the ones you kept and re-evaluate the ones you didn't in light of the reality of your current season.
  - c. Create a new list for February, and review the next month.
3. **Keep an eternal perspective.** Live for the line not the dot!
  - a. Make an honest assessment of the hard things that you carry into 2018 and for each one, think about how it will be different in heaven. The cycle of hard things is a part of life but all bad things WILL END one day. A better party awaits.
  - b. Consider sharing your current journey with a friend, a prayer partner or a CPC Care Minister.

**CLOSE IN PRAYER.** Celebrate where God has your group and ask Him to show you any changes your group needs to make in 2018 to better follow Him.