



Opening a New Chapter!

Epiphany Sunday

Isaiah 40:28–31

Life Group Guide

1) Start your group with the following questions.

What did you do for New Year's Eve? New Year's Day?

As the 2019 kicks off are you more hopeful or more worried? Why?

Are you a "glass half empty" or "glass half full" kind of person? Why?

2) Share joys and concerns. Then prepare use this prayer or another prayer, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

O God, you opened the hearts of the Magi long ago to bring their lives and their best to worship Jesus. So, help us bring our best to him in this new year. Guide our journey and help us see that our life is full of infinite promise, if we follow where you lead. Help us open a new chapter of our lives with confidence, we pray, in Jesus name. Amen.

(Followed by the unison praying of the Lord's Prayer)

3) The Bible text for this week is *Isaiah's words to the exiled people of Israel* from **Isaiah 40:28–31**. Do a little "homework" on when the people of God were in exile to Babylon, and how many years after Isaiah's promise it took them to finally return home. Then read the four verses. When you finish reading, discuss the following:

What would have it felt like to be so far away from home and all that felt familiar, their land, culture, etc.?

When have you ever felt isolated – alone – or far from home? Was there anything that helped? What about things that didn't?

In verse 28, what does it matter to know that God is the everlasting God? What would it have meant to them? What does it mean to us?

In verse 29, is it a helpful promise to hear that God strengthens us and gives us his power when we need it? When do we need that promise?

In verse 30, why is it important to hear that even the young stumble and fall sometimes and can't handle everything themselves? Do we sometimes try to go it alone? When? Do you believe that God does help, when we call on him?

Verse 31 is sometimes called the penultimate promise of the Old Testament. Read it aloud again.

What does it mean to "mount up on eagles' wings? What does it take to truly trust in the Lord? To wait on him? How can we run and not grow weary? Does God provide strength we don't have on our own?

Read Philippians 4:13. Do you believe it? Why or why not?

4) In the message Sunday, Dr. Gardner said the following:

"What can we do today to move our lives forward in 2019? We can make a decision that only we can make - open a new chapter of life. It may be toward retirement, the empty nest, facing a health diagnosis, or going to college. It may be starting a new job, or deciding not to, or getting a new perspective about the one you already have. It might be more personal new beginning. Or picking up a postponed career, or starting a new adventure, even if it's only in your attitude about what life hands you. Don't miss the opportunity to open a new chapter of your life."

How easy or hard is it to deal with change or make a decision about a new direction for your life?

5) In the message Sunday, Dr. Gardner said the following are things he has learned about change. Discuss them.

Every new chapter begins by turning the page.

Every new attitude begins with deciding to have one.

Every journey begins by taking the first step.

6) Dr. Gardner is a book lover. I also want to leave you with a few things I learned from being a book lover.

Please discuss these comments from his message:

1. You can't open a new chapter until you stop being stuck in a previous one. You have to turn the page.
2. You can't really enjoy the story unless you turn loose of your pre-conceived ideas about what's going to happen.
3. Books end all kinds of ways. But for your life story, you can trust that God will be at work and it will be for good!

7) Review the new series that starts January 13:

Join Dr. Gardner as he teaches us to make small, incremental changes that really add up. Simple things like choosing our words, training our thoughts, taking a small step to a new habit, can add up to long-term change.

January 13	Luke 10:38-42	Your One Thing
January 20	Philippians 4:4-9	Training Your Thoughts
January 27	Ephesians 4:29-32	Choosing Your Words
February 3	I Corinthians 9:24-27	Starting a New Habit

8) Announce your next Life Group or Class meeting.