

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE BETTER WHEN MEMBERS COME PREPARED. TAKE TIME BEFORE GROUP TO GO OVER THIS GUIDE.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

Sometimes it's way to easy to just be different without making a difference, but as we find out in the 8th chapter of Esther, God had positioned Esther and Mordecai far enough upstream culturally in order to be able to affect culture radically. This week, Paul talked about why God wants us to get upstream and how he wants us to get upstream. The Big Idea summed it up like this: "If you want to change the course of culture, get to the source of culture."

1. **God wants us to get upstream:** One of the hardest truths for believers in American culture is the understanding that God doesn't just want us to be different, but he wants us to make a difference. Esther and Mordecai were able to make changes that resulted in citywide celebrations and growth of the Jewish population not only because they were different, but also because they were far enough upstream in the culture to make a difference. God wants us to be, as well.
2. **How do we get upstream?** It's easy to feel like we'll never be in positions of influence because we're in a small town or a small county, but that reveals a lack of faith in the sovereign God we've been learning about in Esther. But as we see in the lives of Joseph, Paul and Jesus, having a commitment to character, contentment and the cross prepares us to be positioned by that same sovereign God in order to move his kingdom upstream on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- What, if any, is your takeaway from this week's message?
- Throughout history, the church has had differing views on how to interact with the culture around it, from becoming just like it to having nothing to do with it. Where do you personally fall in that view? (Focus more on being honest than being wrong or right!)
- Take the time to read through the following passages and discuss how they relate to church and culture:

Genesis 1:28	Matthew 28:19-20	Mark 16:15
Acts 1:8	2 Corinthians 6:14-18	1 Corinthians 9:19-23
- Read John 17:15-17. One of the reasons we struggle with our role in culture as believers is because of the tension that naturally results from trying to be in the world but not of the world. What other tensions did you discover as your group read the passages above?
- We saw in the lives of Joseph, Paul and Jesus that they had a commitment to character, contentment and the cross. Which of these do you need to focus on developing right now? How can each of these open the door for us to have greater influence in the places where we are?