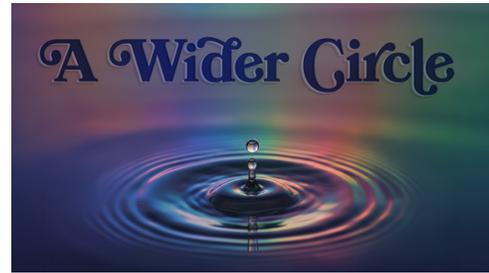


## CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 4 - Where do I find hope?



### GETTING STARTED

When you were younger, what was the easiest or funniest way you remember making a friend? How has making or maintaining friendships changed as you've gotten older?

### THIS WEEK'S THEME

The message describes how our circles – relational, emotional, spiritual – tend to shrink as we get older. Where have you noticed that happening in your own life? Why do you think that happens?

In John 12:32, Jesus says, "I will draw all people to myself." What does the word "all" mean to you personally? Have you ever quietly assumed that certain areas of your life were outside of God's help or change? What makes it easy to believe that?

Sometimes we live like there's an invisible asterisk next to Jesus' promise: "all people... except me." Why do you think people struggle to believe they are included in God's grace?

Jesus consistently crossed social and religious boundaries – eating with tax collectors, making Samaritans the heroes of his stories, healing the "unclean." Why do you think he was so intentional about that? What was he trying to show?

These are several areas where people quietly shrink their hope: marriage, parenting, faith, shame. Which of those resonated with you – or what would you add to the list? Why is it so easy to stop expecting God to work in those places?

Jesus says he draws not just *more types* of people, but *all of you* – including the parts of your life you've given up on. What would it look like, practically, to live this week as if that were actually true?

Who in your life right now might feel like they're outside the circle – someone others have written off? How might God be inviting you to widen your circle toward them?

### TAKING IT HOME

Identify one area of your life where hope has quietly shrunk – a relationship, a habit, a part of your faith. Write it down. Then, once each day this week, pray a simple prayer over it: "God, I believe your circle is wide enough for this."

### PRAY

Lord, thank you that your circle is always wider than we dare to believe – wide enough for our doubts, our failures, and the parts of us we've given up on. Help us to stop living as the exception and to extend to others the same grace you have so freely given to us. Amen.