

Introduction to San Antonio Vespers

This year's vespers are centered on the idea of virtues. Whereas in past years we have focused on theological terms, aspects of pilgrimage, and other topics, this year we turn mostly toward the internal experience of the external and the character of our kids in its current state and its development through the highs and lows of the mission trip.

Virtues are far from a recent lens from which to view our character. Virtues were first explored by Greek thinkers but were translated and appropriated for different reasons by Roman thinkers, European psychologists, and American philosophers into the 21st century. Virtues also became central to theological discussion, especially through Catholic tradition, but also into Protestant ethics. This set of vespers pulls from all those sources. I have sorted through scores of philosophies and categories of virtues and settled on these eight as promising to be most important to the life of a teenager wrestling with personal and collective faith at home and a broadening definition of that faith on this trip. These virtues are: courage, truth-telling, faith, charity, discretion, loyalty, mercy, and hope.

In order to discuss virtue, it is important to understand sketches of the philosophies that it opposes. Virtues are an alternate way to look at how we live and act for the good of ourselves, our community, and the world, primarily over and against deontology and consequentialism.

Deontology claims that the primary way to live is obedience to a set of rules that are composed with the best interests of the community at heart. They aren't laws, per se, but they are often associated with the law, as law is the most tangible set of rules that we are expected to abide by in our daily lives. These include the laws of Moses, the laws of Christ, and the laws of the nation. Of course, while we likely can all reach a consensus that laws forbidding murder or theft should be obeyed, we also easily recognize that what is law often does not reflect what is justice. This is where deontology has its greatest flaw. Of course, "no purple" is both lawful and just.

Consequentialism, as somewhat predictable by the word itself, declares that "good" and "bad" are wholly dependent on the outcome of every act. A good act is one that produces a good end. A bad act is one that results in a bad effect. It is, in essence, the tried and true line of "the ends justify the means". Here too are some fairly obvious pitfalls. A "good" and "bad" outcome is not easily defined. What is "good" for one person may be "bad" for another, or more commonly what is "good" for one community is often "bad" for another. Christianity should do its best to turn away from what could very well become a destructive wrestling match for the higher moral ground. Good and bad outcomes are rarely met with universal agreement. Of course, "no cell phones" is always universally good.

Virtues, while full of flaws as well, claim a fairly strong sense of universality. Courage, loyalty, mercy, and so forth are understood as good traits that transcend

any particular cultural or societal boundary. The point, then, is to cultivate virtues within our character, knowing that living by the fruits of our virtues will allow for a fuller and healthier life for ourselves and a communal life in which we strive for the good of all people.

These are the basics. Of course our kids are first asked to wrestle with high school relationships before the pursuit of justice in legislation. We ask them first to understand mercy in terms of family and friends before collective mercy. We ask them first to open themselves up to new communities in the short term before we ask them to fully explore the ways in which one culture can develop an ongoing set of systems by which they improve their own culture as well as expand and grow with the immersion in another. We start small in the hope that the exploration of virtue grows into a lifelong journey.

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Courage

Courage is already a virtue of this group as we prepare to travel to an unfamiliar location, dedicate ourselves to work projects that we don't yet fully understand, and begin to build relationships with homeowners and a new community.

Commonly, trust is a prerequisite of courage. We hope you trust that this church and program has your best interests at heart. We hope that you trust that we have prepared ten days of the best possible experience that you can have over February break. We hope that you trust in one another to make certain that every fish is a highly valued and completely loved member of this group. With some trust in all these things, you may be ready to awake every day to new possibilities and new stories to be shared again and again once we return home.

When we turn our attention to courage as a Christian virtue, we do our best to understand two things. The first is that we fully put our trust in God to provide what is in the best interests of the individual and the group (whether or not the "best interests" align with what we desire them to be). The second is that we put our trust in something that is, inevitably, unseen.

Most of us don't understand God as a playwright that has already prepared each and every one of our lines and every twist of the plots of our lives. A common belief is that "God has a plan" that we live into. Another is that we are granted full free will, knowing that God has some sort of a safety net when we stray too far from God's intentions for our lives. That is to say, Christian courage is rarely free of anxiety. If it were free of anxiety, after all, it would hardly be considered courage.

Trust in a God who is unseen is an act of courage in itself. We naturally want proof, explanations, and evidence of everything in our lives, not just theories of creation, resurrection, or salvation. We even want physical assurances of our love for one another, not just trust in the words. We want gifts to assure us of our own worth in the relationship. We want signs of loyalty (a virtue still to come). These desires for proof are wishes that most people find unfulfilled in Christian faith. Still we believe.

What does courage look like for a high school student? Not charging into the battle of Agincourt or diving into the lion's den. Not defending the Alamo (San Antonio reference!). Courage, like all Christian virtues, is exhibited most often through counter-cultural acts. It isn't risking the wrath of the Roman Empire, but it might be that the courage to stand up for a bullied kid brings about the ire of peers. It could be that the courage to live counter-culturally in terms of the choices one makes on a Saturday night sometimes creates a sense of exclusion from a group of friends. It is rare that sixteen-year-old courage constitutes taking one's place in a picket line, but this is the gift of virtue. As much as all of us are able to cultivate Christian courage in our current stages of life, so much better are we prepared for the stances and actions that we will take on behalf of the greater good for the rest of our lives.

Vesper Ideas:

Open with a prayer offered by a senior or team member.

Candle Pass Question: Who is someone that you consider to have great courage? What makes them courageous?

Think of who might be considered courageous in the life of the high school. Is it someone that is expected or unexpected?

OR

We hope that YG is a counter-cultural community. That is to say, we hope that while we are on a Mission Trip or in YG in any form, we are living a life that demands different things from us than the "regular world". What does YG mean to you as a "way to live". Do you think that other people find that "way to live" threatening?

OR

Christ's courage led him to the cross. This isn't what God intends for all of us, but can you think of ways in which God wants you to be courageous? Is there a way that your team can help you live into God's desire for you?

Close in a prayer, allowing time for silence for people to lift up ways or areas of their lives in which they hope God can grant them courage.

Truth-Telling

Speaking the truth, most commonly referred to as honesty, though that definition hardly fits the power contained in the virtue of truth-telling. Truth-telling is a long-standing virtue of the Christian religion, strongly based in its Jewish roots where prophets told kings about the will of God, often to the king's dismay. Truth-telling is also the implicit demand of one of the Ten Commandments that indicates "you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Here, we recognize, truth-telling is not only a constructive virtue but also one whose absence causes harmful effects on personal relationships.

Situational and consequential ethics pose the familiar question- "is it always wrong to lie?" What if the outcomes of lying, in "white lies" but also falsehoods created to ensure safety of another, are much more beneficial to a loved one than the words of truth? We could be protecting one another from hurtful words. We could be respecting the bounds of anonymity. We could be doing our very best to avoid vocal recognition of the faulty artistry of a grandmother's sweater.

Cultivating the virtue of truth-telling does not disregard these important situational questions, but it does demand that the truth be granted an inherent higher value than dishonesty, harmful or beneficial alike. It is accurate, then, to be wary of Walter Scott's famous rhyme. "Oh what a tangled web we weave, / When first we practice to deceive!" If the opposite of truth-telling is this dangerous complication where one must rest on a created narrative, then the virtue of truth-telling is the gift of difficult simplicity.

Christ told the truths that angered Rome and eventually led to his death. He could have, supposedly, remained a rather anonymous carpenter in Nazareth. God compelled Christ to be a truth-teller and so we, followers of Christ, are compelled to do likewise.

Most importantly to this group, however, is the result of relationships that collectively bear the virtue of truth-telling. The result of truthful relationships is mutual trust.

It is important to remember that as we bring the stories of our lives and faith into the vesper group, we do so with the understanding that our truths will be valued and held in proper regard both as a teammate and a child of God. This formation of trust is the foundation of team life and Christian life. We bear one another's burdens. We share one another's celebrations. We hesitantly embrace the inescapable vulnerability of the virtue truth-telling knowing that in a place of trust we are not resigned to hurt. We are, instead, brought to a place where truth is valued. We are brought to a place where we are valued.

Vesper Ideas:

Open with a prayer offered by a senior or team member.

Candle Pass Question: Can you think of a time when you knew that you had to tell the truth? Was it comfortable or uncomfortable and how?

Do you believe that the virtue of truth-telling is valued in the high school? Why or why not? What about the world?

OR

Think of three people that you trust. Have these people always shown the virtue of truth-telling? How or how not?

OR

Attempt to imagine one truth that God would want you to share with the world. Does it have to do with how we treat each other? How we live together? How we worship? As much as possible, share it with the group.

Close the vesper by offering gratitude for those in the circle that hold our truths in confidence and care. Say a few words of gratitude for the person sitting three places to your left.

Faith

We made it to the third virtue before the first necessary baseball analogy. A batting order is created in order that the player at-bat is protected by the abilities and gifts of the next batter to come to the plate. The pitcher does not take advantage of a batter knowing that disregarding one batter causes the strength of the next to be at full display. In Christian virtues, truth-telling is protected by faith.

The virtue of Christian faith contends that belief in the unseen, subscription to the stories of the Bible, and the conviction that the benefits of the life lived in the name of Christ greatly outnumber the tribulations of the life lived amidst the difficulties of a world often shackled to the burden of proof. The greatest difficulty of our lives is often the admission that there is some validity to the point that in times of trouble, we are asked both externally and internally about the absence of God in the moment. In these moments we ask why God has forsaken us. If it was a question of Jesus then certainly it can be a question of ours.

As the virtue of truth-telling begins to construct a “horizontal” trust between self and neighbors, the virtue of faith begins to construct a “vertical” trust between ourselves and God. The trust is based in a familiar refrain. God’s intentions are for the primary basic recognition of our dignity as those created in God’s own image, the present winding path of grace, and the future life in the love of God’s kingdom. God’s intentions, in other words, are always for our benefit. At least, we know on our best days, if we cling to the virtue of faith.

My father, Big Pops Bartlett, always referred to a crucial moment in his life when he was challenged to think about his own faith. The question posed (approximately) was “When were you born again?” The question posed was set with the notion that at some moment in our lives, we all accept the truth of Christ and find ourselves forever changed in a new life where faith stands fixed upon heart and mind. Upon thinking, my father contended, he was not “born again” once, but was rather born again and again. When he watched a loved one suffer, he lost faith and needed to be born in Christ again. When he lost his own father, he lost faith and needed to be born in Christ again. When he watched his two sons struggle, he lost faith and needed to be born in Christ again. The virtue of faith does not assure that the trust between God and ourselves is unwavering. Instead it assures that we are allowed, time and again, to wander away from home, knowing that we are always welcomed back.

Our roles in our faithful relationship with God have been redefined in many different theories. Perhaps there is a path of faith that is already constructed and we are set, against our knowledge, to follow. Perhaps we are co-creators, spinning the tale of our lives alongside God. Perhaps we are created and left to our own devices, believing that the end of the story is always the resurrection. All these theories contend that God is, in one form or another, involved in our lives.

We cannot claim, with absolute certainty, as to when God intervenes or blesses us with God’s presence. We have faith. God could be acting in our lives on a mission

trip. God could be acting in our lives on a sports field. God could be acting in our lives in the cafeteria, hallways, classrooms, living rooms, or shared conversation over coffee at Zumbach's. What we claim is trust, against proof and against the odds, that if we leave windows open for God, God always enters.

Vesper Ideas:

Open with a prayer offered by a senior or team member.

Candle Pass Question: As a kid, what is one thing that you had faith in? What is one thing that you didn't need proof to believe?

What are some things in your life that you have prayed for? Do you feel like those prayers have been answered? How or how not?

OR

Have you ever lost faith in God? What caused it? If you gained it back, how?

OR

In the virtue of faith, we often believe that God has a plan for our lives. Is there something that you believe God intends for you? It can be immediate or way down the road.

Close the vesper by going around the circle and talking about what you will be "bringing back to New Canaan". You can offer your own example as an example of justice but there are no wrong answers. If there is time, close in a prayer of gratitude for the buds that have helped shape the mission experience.

Charity

A common conversation in Christian ethics pits the virtue of charity against the passion for social justice. Charity, as commonly understood, is a societal “band-aid”. Our delivery of food to a soup kitchen is charity. Our monetary donations to non-profit organizations are charity. The mission trip, as valuable and transformative as it is, is an extended act of charity. Social justice, on the other hand, demands a march for long-term change rooted in long-term relationships. It demands that lives are dedicated to discipleship in one of many causes that profit the world and God’s kingdom. To simplify, the ten days of work of YG is charity. The sustained vision held by Blueprint Ministries and the dedication to the future of those in need in the city of San Antonio are indicators and traits of social justice.

It is often thought that the virtue of charity is undermined by a sense of “giver” and “receiver”. On this trip, we give to the folks in need of home restoration. They receive the gift of restoration and profit, at least in the short term, from it. This “giver” and “receiver” relationship is not the defining characteristic of the virtue of charity. More accurately, the virtue of charity is defined simply by its restrictions of time. We have a ten-day vacation. We yield it to mission work. Then, due to academic requirement and our parents missing us, we return home.

The virtue of charity is the beginning of a lifetime journey, not the end. The virtue of charity, more importantly, is a reorientation of our “home” mindset. It is obeying Christ’s counter-cultural demands- to love our neighbor, place our own interests beneath the interests of those in need, and to give all we have to fully serve those in need.

Our virtue of charity, even as it continues to grow, is always overwhelmed by a culture of selfishness, whether that selfishness is deemed excessive or just the “reality of life”. Our virtue of charity is planted in the “final say” that the goodness of human beings can, against all odds, defeat our own base instincts. As we grow in charity, the Christian counter-culture becomes the daily norm.

As we work this week, we also seek to see the virtue of charity in others, both our fellow New Canaanites as well as the people of San Antonio with whom we work. Where do we see this “reorientation” of our home mindset? Where do we see selfless giving of self? Where do we see unconditional love that, as an example of the virtue of charity, points toward the God from whom all blessings flow? Where do we see the experiences that press us further toward the compass directed by justice?

The Christian virtue of charity, first and foremost, calls to primary value the famous words of the Lord’s Prayer- “thy Kingdom come on *earth* as it is in heaven.”

Vesper Ideas:

Open with a prayer offered by a senior or team member.

Candle Pass Question: When is a time when someone showed you a selfless act?

When are some times that you feel selfish? Do you always need to put the good of others before your own good?

OR

We only have ten days on this mission trip. How can we show the virtue of charity back home?

OR

Theologians argue over whether people are inherently good or bad? The virtue of charity helps us to believe that people are generally good. But what do you think?

Close the vesper by going around the circle and talking about one thing will be “bringing back to New Canaan”. You can offer your own example as an example of charity but there are no wrong answers. Examples might be hope, service, understanding, and so forth. If there is time, close in a prayer of gratitude.

Discretion

In Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part One*, the character Falstaff claims "The better part of valour is discretion." Likely the most unfamiliar term of this set of Christian virtues, Merriam-Webster defines discretion as "the right to choose what should be done in a particular situation." Adjusting this definition slightly for our purposes, discretion is the cultivated virtue in which we train ourselves to apply great wisdom of choice to any situation.

Discretion is readily applicable to two of the virtues already discussed—courage and truth-telling. In a rather flippant example of the first—to rush into a burning building to save a friend and to rush into a burning building to save a Marvin Gaye record collection are both courageous acts. The virtue of discretion, however, would likely guide us to the understanding that the former is an courageous act driven by love of our neighbor and the latter is a courageous act driven by material goods that can likely be purchased again on eBay. In a rather flippant example of the second—to share one's own feelings in order to maintain an honest and positive relationship with another and to share one's own feelings about the weight gained over the holidays are both, in its most basic understanding, acts of truth-telling. The virtue of discretion, however, would likely guide us to the understanding that the first is truth-telling that guides the mutual growth of two people while the second is truth-telling that guides the singular disappointment of one person's side glance in the mirror. The virtue of discretion creates a mindset where actions are driven by the desire for mutual gain.

The Christian virtue of discretion runs into one major hurdle. How often at YG do we talk about God's unconditional love? If we are to follow Christ, God who lived among us, are we supposed to be discriminating about whom we love? In that sense, the virtue of discretion seems very un-Christian.

The answer (or one of many answers) is that discretion does not dictate who we love but rather how we love. Even Christ's call to follow him shouldn't necessarily lead to martyrdom should another path offer more grace and care to our neighbors. How do we love an enemy? Discretion helps us realize that there is a difference between an "enemy" dictated by social expectations and an "enemy" defined by an abusive relationship in which we are victimized. Discretion helps us realize that the first likely calls for radical inclusiveness while the latter calls for distance and love that hopes for healing of the abusive party as we remain perhaps forever separated. On a more daily basis, discretion helps us understand that the way we love should be guided by the need for our own health and the health of others.

Although discretion is likely the most unfamiliar of these Christian virtues, it is in many ways the most vital. It guides the other virtues. It helps us make positive choices. It helps us be good Christians and good people, effective to the best of our abilities and the extent of our means. It is the better part of valor, courage, truth-telling, and the realities of life on a mission trip and life in New Canaan.

Vesper Ideas:

Open with a prayer offered by a senior or team member.

Candle Pass Question: Name one of the best decisions of your life. Name one of the worst.

Think of people who influence your decisions. Who are they? Is their influence positive or negative?

OR

Discretion helps us understand HOW we love one another. How do you love someone who is very close to you? How do you love someone who you don't really like?

OR

If God had three wishes for your life, what would they be? How do you achieve them?

Close the vesper with "Lord Hear Our Prayer", focusing on God's guidance to help us navigate the choices we make in our lives.

Loyalty

Loyalty is arguably the oldest virtue. It is, at least, likely our most easily learned. We are born with a need for parents or parental figures, and immediately become loyal to them. That loyalty seems to be inherent even if that loyalty doesn't remain strong over the years or even last. We are, of course, loyal to our country, various causes, political beliefs, worldviews, and faith. More easily visible, we are loyal to our friends, our school (at least over and against Darien), our sports teams, and even YG. The virtue of loyalty has a long and storied history.

Of course, one of the most famous stories of the Bible centers on a betrayal of loyalty when Judas turns Jesus over to authorities for the price of thirty pieces of silver. While we don't have such epic stories of narratives in our own lives, we do recognize that the virtue of loyalty in others sometimes falls short of our expectations. Likewise the virtue that we exhibit may be equally flawed.

Most of the time, it isn't a complete dismantling of the virtue of loyalty that challenges our relationships. Instead it is conflicting loyalties. Imagine that one friend invites you to a birthday party while another friend invites you to see Aloe Blacc fronting the Roots at the exact same time. There is a clear choice here and so you are off to enjoy the soulful experience that is Aloe Blacc. Despite the apparent obvious choice in this matter, the point is that the expectations of one relationship may be contrary to the expectations of another. When we act in loyalty toward the friend who happens to love fantastic music, we may seem disloyal to the friend whom we should be celebrating for getting another year older.

More often than not, of course, the situations of defining our loyalty are not so clear-cut. We do want to be present to all our friends and family. We do want to meet academic expectations. We do want to be solid contributors to sports teams, clubs, and YG. How is it possible to be justly loyal to all the parties whom and organizations which we care about?

In short, it isn't entirely possible, and this is what separates the virtue of loyalty in and of itself from the virtue of Christian loyalty. Christian loyalty is not the oldest virtue. It isn't inherent and it isn't easily practiced. Christian loyalty insists that our greatest loyalty is to God. While other loyalties will inevitably call out to us, we listen first for God. When loyalties do conflict, we ask ourselves the question- "what does God want from me" and we do our best to act upon that faith.

The virtue of Christian loyalty is offered to a God who will inevitably ask more of us than any person, school, or even nation possibly could. The good news of Christian loyalty is that we are always loved, both in our best moments of living how God wishes us to live and in the times where we stumble away from that path. God's loyalty toward us is unfailing.

Vesper Ideas:

Open with a prayer offered by a senior or team member.

Candle Pass Question: Tell the group about one person who has always been loyal to you.

To whom are you most loyal in your life? Why?

OR

Is there a time when you have felt betrayed? Are there ways in which that betrayal changed the way that you lived in relationship with other people?

OR

What does it mean to you to be loyal to God? How is it different than being loyal to a good friend or family member?

Close the vesper by sharing a moment of reassurance of loyalty. One person lifts up a need in their life. When they are done, the group shares- "We promise to be loyal to you and honor your needs." End in prayer.

Mercy

The Christian virtue of mercy is defined by compassion toward neighbor and restoration of right relationships. This might not be the first jump that we make. Quite often, when we think about the virtue of mercy, we think about the act of forgiveness. There is good reason for this as in acts of forgiveness are always merciful. At the same time, showing mercy doesn't always mean forgiving. Like both theology and the English language in general, it can be confusing. Let's first address how forgiveness includes mercy.

We have all been hurt and hurtful. We have all made mistakes and been affected by the mistakes of others. We have all needed to forgive and be forgiven. We should all, at this point in our lives, be attuned to the necessity for forgiveness, hence Martin Luther King Jr. referring to forgiveness not as an occasional act but instead a constant attitude. We also know the difficulty of forgiving in our modern relationships, much less the command of Christ that we forgive one another "seventy-times seven".

Again, mercy has the particular ends of compassion and restoration. As givers and receivers of forgiveness, we show and are shown compassion despite the circumstances that brought us to the current state of offense. Likewise, as givers and receivers of forgiveness, we grant and are granted restoration of right relationships. Right relationships never insist that relationships remain the same, but they do insist that all parties (even the one that is inarguably in the wrong) begin to be healed through reconciliation with each other and one's own self. The important fact here is that when we are in a place where we feel separated from one another, neither one of us is whole.

Mercy does not necessitate forgiveness. One of the most important uses of the word "mercy" in the New Testament is when Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. The lawyer admits that in the parable, the man who shows his neighbor love is the one who shows his neighbor mercy. The one who shows compassion and tries to restore to right relationships with all neighbors, the Samaritan, the innkeeper, the Priest, the Levite, and the robbers alike.

God offers us mercy with one divergence from the above definition. Through Christ, God grants us the restoration of right relationship with God.

The Christian virtue of mercy compels us to love as Christ loved us. The Christian virtue of mercy compels us to love even the most unlovable. Perhaps that is the most important part of it all.

Vesper Ideas:

Open with a prayer offered by a senior or team member.

Candle Pass Question: Briefly talk about one time when you have forgiven someone or someone else has forgiven you. Specifically talk about how that act of forgiveness felt.

What does it mean to you to show compassion? Can you think of people on this trip that have needed compassion? Can you think of people in your life at home that need compassion?

OR

Is there a relationship in your life that seems to need mending? Is there a way that you can imagine it being restored to the way it "should be"?

OR

God shows us endless mercy. How can we grow to be merciful? How can we encourage one another to be merciful?

Close the vesper by allowing volunteers to lift up words about where we need mercy in our lives. Close with prayer.

Hope

The Christian virtue of hope is very different from the traditional idea of hope. First, the traditional idea of hope usually means that we hope for particular outcomes or “things”. We hope (more selfishly) for the Playstation 4 (at least I do), and other material items. We hope for the right team to win. We hope for the right college admission. We hope (less selfishly) for the health of ourselves and our loved ones. We hope for their needs and desires to be met. We hope for the needs and desires of the world to be met, not the least of which is peace in the immediate moment.

The Christian virtue of hope already rests in the promises of God and is founded in the desire for God’s plans, and not our own, to come into fruition. We hope less specifically for a particular outcome and instead invest our hope that the time of God’s revelation to the world is never too distant.

Second, the traditional idea of hope usually means that we have a very clear (or at least we think so) understanding of what it is for which we hope. We can paint a picture of the right path that we wish to tread with all the worldly gifts that line the walkway. Success in the present and future. Health in the present and future. Love in the present and future. We know the earmarks of all these things, and we hope, sometimes against great odds, to find our way to them soon.

The Christian virtue of hope is confined to things that are inevitably incomprehensible. We do our best to paint pictures of God’s plan yet to come (sometimes literally). We lift up words and phrases that approximate our understanding—the swords beaten into plowshares and the lion that lies down with the lamb. In scripture we learn that even Jesus is not completely aware of God’s plan for the future. He knows not the day or the hour when God will unravel the real truth of it all. We are left, as scripture also claims, with a hope in things unseen.

It is unfair to expect that we can comfortably rest with the virtue of hope completely tied up in an unforeseen and incomprehensible future, even if we wholeheartedly believe that that future is full of abounding love. So, in our day to day lives, we meet halfway. We cultivate the virtue of hope into a place where we seek God’s guidance. We hope that what we desire and need might be pleasurable in God’s eyes. We hope that the future that we build toward in our everyday lives lines up, in one way or another, with the building of God’s Kingdom on earth.

Vesper Ideas:

Open with a prayer offered by a senior or team member.

Candle Pass Question: What is one moment where you saw hope this week, either in yourself or in another person.

What are some things that you think God hopes for the world? What about the city of San Antonio? What about your family and friends?

OR

What is one hope that you have for someone in this circle? (Advisors: Make sure that everyone is lifted up.)