

hope

AN EIGHT
WEEK BIBLE
STUDY

HOW DO WE SHARE OUR HOPE?

"EVERYTIME I GET THE COURAGE TO
HOPE, I FIND PAIN. HELP ME!"

WHERE DOES HOPE COME FROM?

"EVERYTHING SEEMS SO HOPELESS
RIGHT NOW. WHO CAN I TRUST?"

South Side



contents

STUDIES & DISCUSSION GUIDES

04 Living Hope
1 Peter 1:3-21

06 Cosmic Hope
Colossians 1:15-23

08 Hope of Glory
Colossians 1:24-27

10 Suffering and Hope
Romans 5:1-5

12 Accused Hope
Acts 22:30-23:11; 26:1-8

14 Sharing Hope
1 Peter 3:13-18

16 Hold to Hope
Hebrews 10:19-25

18 Overflowing Hope
Romans 15:1-13

Through my study in preparing this guide one thing was made abundantly clear, **hope isn't something just for the hard times. It's for our every day in Christ. Hope is the propelling anticipation that what God has done in Jesus, he's also going to accomplish in us.**

What this Study is not:

A guide for me to tell you what a passage means or a space to recite standard answers to standard questions.

What this Study is:

I hope this resource can serve as a guide for your study of the word. I hope you will listen to the word of God, dig a little deeper into what you've heard, and discuss in honesty and diversity what the NT (New Testament) teaches about hope.

How to Use this Study:

1. Spend time in the passage. Pray through it. Meditate on it. Ask God to teach you.
2. Read through the notes. Spend time again in the passage.
3. As a small group, even if it's just two of you, spend time in the passage. Follow the discussion guide and be vulnerable with one another.
4. Pray together about what has been on your heart and mind throughout this study.

My Prayer (and your Memory Verse):

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit," Romans 15:13.

In Christ,
Brandon Moore





Living Hope

1 PETER 1:3-21

This study begins with one of the most elaborate descriptions of Christian hope in all of scripture. The author, Peter, is overwhelmed by the magnitude of the Good News of Jesus the Messiah. With hardly a pause to breathe, he lavishly drenches the reader with descriptions of joy, praise, power, grace and holiness. Yet, among all of these, the prominent theme of hope sets the tone of the entire passage. Peter describes a "living hope" based not in the passing expectations of this world, but in the eternal resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Digging Deeper

Background

The author of this letter is Peter, the close disciple and friend of Jesus. He is writing late in his life from Rome. He refers to the recipients of this letter scattered throughout Asia Minor as sojourners or resident aliens of the dispersion. Peter intentionally uses this descriptive OT (Old Testament) language to remind his audience that they are part of a long legacy of dispersed people. He wants to remind them that they don't belong here. They belong in the eternal home of God their Father. He is welcoming them into a holy nation of his special possession (2:9).

Context

All of 1:3-12 is one sentence in the Greek. This is a common rhetorical approach in the Greco-Roman world referred to as the *exordium*. It is used to set a positive mood and tone, so that later instruction can be given to the audience and it will be well received. Peter focuses in this section on the reader's status or identity in God. They are awaiting God's inheritance which is being held for them in heaven. For this inheritance they have been given "new birth," "living hope," and "salvation." In light of all this, their mood should be that of "inexpressible and glorious joy!"

Text Notes

"Living Hope" (1:3) - Peter uses the phrase *living hope* (Gk. *elpida zosan*). This is the only place in the NT where this phrase exists. He appears to drop this phrase in the opening statement only to return to it in 1:20-21. Whereas hope had previously been bound by the limitations of death, in the resurrection of Jesus there is now "living hope" that has no end point or limitation. Rather than dying hope, the Christian is sustained by a living hope.

Discussion Guide

Read 1 Peter 1:3-21

1. PARAPHRASE & COMPREHEND

Reword the text as a group into modern language. How would you say what the author was saying in your own words today?

2. ATTENTION CATCHERS

What catches your attention in this passage? What is odd or different? What just jumps off the page to you and why? Spend the whole group time together if you need to exploring just this area.

3. EXPLORE HOPE

What does this passage teach us about hope? Don't extend beyond this passage. What does just this passage teach us about hope? Pay attention to the language and the imagery in the text.

4. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS (AS NEEDED)

What do you think Peter means when he describes hope as living?
What would be the difference between a living and dead hope?
Why do you think he intentionally chooses this language?
Read and interact with the quote below on this passage.

5. HOPE FOR TODAY

Would you describe your life as hopeful? Why or why not?
What would it look like in today's world to have a living hope? How would this lifestyle be different than the world around us?

6. QUOTE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Read and discuss your thoughts on the following quote about this passage:

"In many ways, what makes 1 Peter difficult to read as Christian Scripture is this initial attempt on the part of Peter to identify his audience. First Peter is addressed to folks who do not belong, who eke out their lives on the periphery of acceptable society, whose deepest loyalties and inclinations do not line up very well with what matters most in the world in which they live. This is not the sort of life that most people find attractive. In terms of our ability genuinely to understand 1 Peter, all of the linguistic skills we might develop, all of the material on historical background we might accumulate - none of this will make up for the basic reality that, as a whole, we resist the possibility that this letter is addressed to us, that we might be cast as "nobodies in the world." The problem is theological. What separates us from 1 Peter is not "the strange world of the Bible" as much as its unhandy, inconvenient claims on our lives" Joel Green.

7. PRAY

How do you need to respond to God based on what you've read and studied this week?



Cosmic Hope

Colossians 1:15-23

Most people in our world today tend to think one of two things about the world. Either, (1) the world is progressively getting better and we can help it in this way, or (2) the world is decaying and we need to escape its eventual demise through good works or a salvation event. Yet, scripture teaches a third reality that was the basis of hope for all early Christians. They believed that what God did in the resurrection of Jesus, he was also going to do for the entire world in Christ. Their hope was cosmic and total not individualized and personal. Not only did they profess this through baptism, but they sang about it in their hymns such as the one found in Colossians 1:15-20.

Digging Deeper

Background

Colossians 1:15-20 is a beautiful display of Greek poetry that most scholars agree is an early Christian hymn Paul quotes to support his argument. The hymn is divided into two main sections: 1:15-18a (ends with “church”) and 1:18b-20. Notice the mirrored language of Christ as the firstborn in 1:15 & 1:18. Initially, he is the firstborn over all creation. This does not mean that he is the first created but refers to his status within the creation. In most cultures the firstborn held special status as the heir over the estate. Jesus is the firstborn in that he is the heir and holds special status. He is then also the firstborn from the dead, which also refers to his status. The whole cosmos then anticipates their own resurrection into the inheritance of the firstborn among the dead, Jesus.

Context

The scholar Tom Wright contends that there are six key themes in the NT description of cosmic hope found in the NT: Seedtime and Harvest, The Victorious Battle, Heavenly Citizenship on Earth, God Will Be All in All, New Birth, and the Marriage of Heaven and Earth. All of these themes refer not to the hope of a personal, spiritual salvation, but to a total redemption and restoration on a cosmic scale. As Wright points out, this is why the gospel has been proclaimed to “every creature under heaven” (Col. 1:23) and why “all creation is waiting in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed” (Rom. 8:19).

Text Notes

“If indeed you stay” (1:23) - “If” makes this a conditional statement but in the Greek there are a wide variety of conditional statements. In this case the verb, “to stay,” is in a grammatical form that indicates Paul thinks this is most likely to happen. He accentuates this with an empathetic participle “indeed.” In using the phrase this way, Paul is showing his confidence that the audience will stay faithful. He is not doubting whether they will make it.

Discussion Guide

Read Colossians 1:15-23

1. PARAPHRASE & COMPREHEND

Reword the text as a group into modern language. How would you say what the author was saying in your own words today?

2. ATTENTION CATCHERS

What catches your attention in this passage? What is odd or different? What just jumps off the page to you and why? Spend the whole group time together if you need to exploring just this area.

3. EXPLORE CHRIST

What does this passage teach us about Christ? Don't extend beyond this passage. What does just this passage teach us about Jesus? Pay attention to the language and the imagery in the text.

4. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS (AS NEEDED)

Why is it important to understand the cosmic dimension of what God has done and is doing in Christ?

How does Jesus's resurrection serve as the basis for hope? What does it matter for Christians that Jesus has been resurrected?

5. HOPE FOR TODAY

How does it change your view of hope when you realize the whole creation is also waiting for the resurrection of all things?

Do you think a personal or individualized view of hope could actually be harmful to your faith in the long run? Why or why not?

6. QUOTE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Read and discuss your thoughts on the following quote about this passage:

"All our language about the future... is like a set of signposts pointing into a bright mist. The signpost doesn't provide a photograph of what we will find when we arrive but offers instead a true indication of the direction we should be traveling in. What I am proposing is that the New Testament image of the future hope of the whole cosmos, grounded in the resurrection of Jesus, gives as coherent a picture as we need or could have of the future that is promised to the whole world, a future in which, under the sovereign and wise rule of the creator God, decay and death will be done away with and a new creation born," Tom Wright.

7. PRAY

How do you need to respond to God based on what you've read and studied this week?



Hope of Glory

Colossians 1:24-27

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

This thought is stunning. It is especially stunning coming immediately after Paul has extravagantly expounded on the fullness of the glory of Christ in 1:15-20. We are not autonomous, menial specks of dirt aimlessly wandering to our demise. Rather, God has unified our very being with Christ. The king of all the universe, the one who holds all things together, and the firstborn from among the dead is being formed within us to the point where some day we will fully share in all of his glory! This is our hope, the hope of glory.

Digging Deeper

Background

Paul writes this letter to the Colossians to counter what is referred to as the “Colossian heresy.” Most scholars agree that it is a form of religious syncretism that combines elements of extreme Jewish piety involving self-denial, abuse of one’s body, and angel worship in pursuit of a more spiritual state with the Greco-Roman mystery cults of the day. Mystery cults believed a person could know certain mysteries of the universe or reach a higher level of being through a series of strict practices and prayers reserved only for the elite. Paul counters this with the claim that God has already made known the real mystery of the world, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Context

Union with Christ (“Christ in you”) might be one of the most difficult concepts to tangibly nail down in all of scripture. In two massive works, the Greek scholar Constantine Campbell tackles the topics of union with Christ and hope. He contends that for Paul union with Christ is organic and communal. It refers to our status and identity, and it is a work of the Spirit in our lives both individually and as the church. Rather than being a theme in the NT, union with Christ is the web that ties all the themes together. Similarly, hope then is the propelling expectation and anticipation of the fullness of this union. Hope keeps us faithful and causes us to act honorably.

Text Notes

“Glory” (1:27) - The Greek word *doxa* (glory) is the translation of the Hebrew word *kabod* (glory). In both the NT (Greek) and the OT (Hebrew) the word means two different things: honor and visible splendor. With the use of the English word “glory” we most often understand it to mean visible splendor. Yet, honor might often be a better translation. When translated this way there is a moral dimension to it. The Son honors the Father. We honor God and wait in hope for when we will be honored by God with the son.

Discussion Guide

Read Colossians 1:24-27

1. PARAPHRASE & COMPREHEND

Reword the text as a group into modern language. How would you say what the author was saying in your own words today.

2. ATTENTION CATCHERS

What catches your attention in this passage? What is odd or different? What just jumps off the page to you and why? Spend the whole group time together if you need to exploring just this area.

3. EXPLORE UNION WITH CHRIST

What does this passage teach us about our union with Christ? Look at the whole first chapter of Colossians as needed. Pay attention to the language and the imagery in the text.

4. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS (AS NEEDED)

Do you think the statement "Christ in you, the hope of Glory" could adequately summarize all of the Christian life? Why or why not?

How does thinking about glory as honor change the way we read this passage?

5. HOPE FOR TODAY

How does our future glory give us hope for the present?

In what ways are we different than the world around us because Christ is in us?

6. QUOTE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Read and discuss your thoughts on the following quote about this passage:

"Ultimately, Paul reveals that our union with Christ is corporate in nature, involving our union with Him as the Head of the Body and with one another as fellow members of His Body. Our experience of this union ensues in God's enlarged expression in the church as the Body of Christ and the new man. Consequently, the building up of the Body and the manifestation of the new man, made possible through the cultivation of our organic union with Christ, signals the consummate fulfillment of the indwelling Christ as the hope of glory," David Yoon.

7. PRAY

How do you need to respond to God based on what you've read and studied this week?



Suffering Hope

Romans 5:1-5

There might be no NT author more qualified to speak on the relationship between hope and suffering than Paul. Paul was routinely flogged, beaten, and imprisoned for his hope in Christ. In this passage specifically, he succinctly lays out the relationship between suffering and hope. The long play of suffering is hope in Paul's mind. The way that hope develops in a Christian is through their character which is strengthened in endurance. Innately, endurance can only be achieved through suffering. You must suffer to develop the endurance and character that produces hope.

Digging Deeper

Background

Paul writes this extensive and theologically rich letter to the Roman Christians whom he has never met to address the return of the Jewish Christians into the churches where only Gentiles had remained. In late 49 AD the emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome. They could only return after Claudius' death in 54 AD. During this five year period, Roman Jewish Christians were scattered throughout the Roman world. Undoubtedly, this expulsion would have caused hardship and suffering. It would seem hard to remain hopeful in the midst of everything in their lives.

Context

Paul attempts to help them process their suffering through the lens of hope. This is the same hope that prompted their patriarch Abraham to trust God in his suffering as Paul expounds in the previous section of the letter (4:17-21). Paul ties together hope and belief (faith) in the narrative of Abraham. Paul writes in 4:18, "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed." Most scholars take this phrase to mean that Abraham kept hope even when it seemed hopeless. Abraham's endurance created lasting hope.

Text Notes

"Boast, rejoice, glory, etc." (5:2, 3). Paul uses the Greek word *kauxometha* twice in 5:2-3. Some translations use two different words to translate this (NIV, "boast," "glory") while many others use something like "rejoice" (ESV) or "exult" (NASB). The word means "to speak loudly" and most often refers to boasting. Paul uses this word to refer to the Jews boasting in the law in Romans 2. Here, he is making a theological point. Rather than the law, those faithful like Abraham boast in hope and suffering. To boast in hope is also to boast in suffering. They go hand in hand.

Discussion Guide

Read Romans 5:1-5

1. PARAPHRASE & COMPREHEND

Reword the text as a group into modern language. How would you say what the author was saying in your own words today?

2. ATTENTION CATCHERS

What catches your attention in this passage? What is odd or different? What just jumps off the page to you and why? Spend the whole group time together if you need to exploring just this area.

3. EXPLORE HOPE

What does this passage teach us about hope? Don't extend beyond this passage. What does just this passage teach us about hope? Pay attention to the language and the imagery in the text.

4. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS (AS NEEDED)

What is the direction relationship between suffering and hope for a Christian?

Does this relationship between suffering and hope change if you're not a Christian?

What do you think it means to "boast in hope" and "boast in suffering?" Why would these go hand in hand for us?

5. HOPE FOR TODAY

When is a period of time in your life when you have suffered? What was that like?

How is a Christian perspective on suffering different than the worldly perspective?

Why is hope so vital in the midst of suffering?

6. QUOTE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Read and discuss your thoughts on the following quote about this passage:

"We are saved for glory, not merely from punishment. Stressing the former has implications. What we hope in determines our willingness to pay the cost of discipleship. Paul's focus on the glory of God, not of people, enables him to rejoice even at the cost of following Christ, reflecting the glory of Christ's character. Disciples who boast in suffering aren't concerned about seeking honor from peers. Those with worldly perspectives cannot rejoice when shamed by people they want to please. They will not accept the suffering that produces Christlike endurance and character," Jackson Wu.

7. PRAY

How do you need to respond to God based on what you've read and studied this week?



Accused Hope

Acts 22:30-23:11; 26:1-8

As Christians we stand accused of a lot of things in our culture today. We seem surprised, but the book of Acts reminds us that we shouldn't be surprised. Time and time again in Acts, Paul often faces accusations by both his own people and those outside of Judaism. Multiple times he stands trial based on these accusations. Though each accusation is somewhat different, Paul lumps them all into one theological point when he repeatedly in Acts states in his defense that he stands accused because of his hope in the resurrection.

Digging Deeper

Background

Both of these stories fall within Paul's final journey in the book of Acts (19:21-28:31). Paul is set to take the good news of Jesus Christ to Rome, the capital of the empire. He longs to share the news of the resurrection with the highest powers in the empire. It is important to understand that throughout this final narrative Paul is a prisoner on trial, petitioning his way through the levels of the Roman court system in hopes that he will reach Caesar himself. Roman prisoners were responsible for paying their own housing and food while under arrest. Paul is dependent upon the relationships he has made throughout the Roman world to provide and care for him. It is from this imprisonment that he writes many of his letters that we now study such as Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon.

Context

Acts should be thought of as the second part to the Gospel of Luke. Luke writes both and they are tightly connected in style, themes, and structure. This is important because Luke does not anywhere speak anywhere in the Gospel about Christian hope. Yet, it jumps off the page multiple times in Acts. In other words, Hope for the Christian comes after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This is why Paul routinely stands accused by the Jews. They hope that a messiah will come and restore the earthly throne in Jerusalem, but Paul says the real hope of the Jewish people is in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and his establishment of the eternal throne in heaven.

Text Notes

"Resurrection" (23:6) - The word translated "resurrection" is important in understanding NT theology. The Greek word is anastasis. Ana meaning to stand up and stasis meaning to be still (or dead). This word occurs very rarely in the OT (LXX: Dan 12:2). It seems to be the specific description of that which was dead coming back to life.

Discussion Guide

Read Acts 22:30-23:11; 26:1-8

1. PARAPHRASE & COMPREHEND

Reword the text as a group into modern language. How would you say what the author was saying in your own words today?

2. ATTENTION CATCHERS

What catches your attention in this passage? What is odd or different? What just jumps off the page to you and why? Spend the whole group time together if you need to exploring just this area.

3. EXPLORE HOPE

What does this passage teach us about hope? Don't extend beyond these passages. What do just these passage teach us about hope? Pay attention to the language and the story.

4. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS (AS NEEDED)

Why do you think Paul routinely express that it is his hope that has put him on trial? Think about being on trial. Could hope be a motive in a trial? If you were a judge in one of these courtrooms, what would you think of Paul?

5. HOPE FOR TODAY

Imagine a group of local non-Christians dragged you to court, what would they accuse you of? How is this similar or different than what Paul was accused of? Is your hope secure enough that you would go to prison for it? Why or why not?

6. QUOTE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Read and discuss your thoughts on the following quote about this passage:

"Paul is rescued from being the victim of the debate by the tribune. Sometimes Christians may rely upon the order and power of the state to preserve them, even though the purposes of Paul and those of the tribune are diametrically opposed. Perhaps Luke is a bit chagrined that sometimes in the fierce debates between believers it takes a non-believing pagan to keep believers from tearing one another to bits! No doubt the tribune was less than impressed by the spectacle of this Jewish intra-family feud—as little impressed as the contemporary world is with current Christian name-calling and interdenominational jealousy. That night, Paul is visited by the Lord who has directed him throughout his ministry; this same Lord urges him to "Take courage," and now directs him to "bear witness also at Rome" (23:11)." William H. Willimon.

7. PRAY

How do you need to respond to God based on what you've read and studied this week?



Sharing Hope

1 Peter 3:13-18

We have already explored the living hope that Peter sets forth in the opening of his letter. Now, we return to this letter for the same admonition that Peter gives his original audience. His reminder to the early church facing persecution and scattered throughout the world is still the same for us today. “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” When Christians spend every day of their lives secured by a living hope, they are able to clearly articulate to anyone who asks them the reason for their hope.

Digging Deeper

Background

As discussed in the notes on Living Hope, Peter’s audience are the churches scattered throughout Asia Minor. They are a strong minority trying to live out their new found faith in Jesus. They are undergoing immense social and, possibly, physical persecution for following Jesus. Even within their suffering, their hope in the resurrection compels them to face this suffering, whether deserved or undeserved, with the same steadfast character of Jesus.

Context

Peter adopts legal courtroom language in this section to make his point. This might be because he is specifically addressing those facing actual trial for their hope in the resurrection (like seen in Paul throughout Acts). He uses the word *apologia* (from which we get apologetics or apology) that is translated as give an answer or reason and is used commonly in courtroom settings. Peter expects the believers to suffer through trial with gentleness and respect, but they should also have a clearly articulated defense for their hope, always ready to share.

Text Notes

“Revere,” “set apart” (3:15) - The NIV translates 3:15a as “in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.” The word translated revere is *hagiazō*. It is the NT word for holy. This is the verbal form. Nearly every time this word exists in the NT the subject is God, Jesus, or the Spirit. Such as in the Lord’s Prayer, “Holy be your name” (Mat. 6:9). Yet, in this passage the subject is actually the Christian who is making Jesus holy in their heart.

Discussion Guide

Read 1 Peter 3:13-18

1. PARAPHRASE & COMPREHEND

Reword the text as a group into modern language. How would you say what the author was saying in your own words today?

2. ATTENTION CATCHERS

What catches your attention in this passage? What is odd or different? What just jumps off the page to you and why? Spend the whole group time together if you need to exploring just this area.

3. EXPLORE HOPE

What does this passage teach us about hope? Don't extend beyond this passage. What does just this passage teach us about hope? Pay attention to the language and the story.

4. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS (AS NEEDED)

What is the relationship between social persecution and hope in this passage? If you were a judge in one of these courtrooms, what would you think of Paul?

5. HOPE FOR TODAY

Can you give a reason for your hope? If someone asked you why you are so hopeful, what would you say?

What keeps us from sharing about our hope? Is that any different than the early Christians?

6. QUOTE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Read and discuss your thoughts on the following quote about this passage:

"Christians in the ancient world were at risk of being persecuted for their faith. In the midst of such suffering, they gave witness to the power of that faith. The same is true of Christians in some parts of our world today.... But that is not usually our situation.... What is it that Christians do in our culture that makes them stand out enough that others ask what is the source of their strength and joy?" Catherine Gonzalez

7. PRAY

How do you need to respond to God based on what you've read and studied this week?



Hold to Hope

Hebrews 10:19-25

Hope can be slippery. In both easy and hard times, hope can be hard to hold. In just the everyday stress and anxiety, it is so easy to slowly let hope slip out of our hands. Yet we know that to lose hope means to drift aimlessly in the sea of doubt and despair. How then does a person hold tightly to hope in the midst of despair? How does a person hold on to hope in every day life? The author of Hebrews contends that you can't hold to hope on your own. Rather, you need the entire community of believers, the assembled faithful, to help hold on to hope.

Digging Deeper

Background

Hebrews is a well-written sermon that was most likely delivered in a Jewish-Christian gathering in Alexandria and then shared as a letter among many churches. The author is specifically addressing the problem of Christians becoming lazy in their faith and starting to drift away from one another and God. By pointing to the greatness of Christ, he calls them to be reinvigorated in their faith and refocused on their hope.

Context

In these verses the author of Hebrews uses a common approach of reflecting on what God has done to encourage what God wants done. These are called the indicative and imperative. First, the two indicative statements used the key word "since." "Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place" and "since we have a great priest over the house of God." Second, he lays out three imperatives with the key phrase being "let us:" "let us draw near to God," "let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess," and "let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." What Jesus has done for us through his death is not simply for our reflection and thankfulness. Rather, his ministry propels the church to draw near to God in holding tightly to hope and encouraging one another on toward love.

Text Notes

"Hold Fast" (10:23). This is one of the great words in Hebrews. The Greek word *katexo* means hold tightly, to hold down, or to secure. The author of Hebrews uses lots of nautical imagery and this word was used commonly in the Greco-Roman world to describe securing a ship in a certain direction or to check its headway. The author specifically says to hold fast to hope both here and in Hebrews 3:6.

Discussion Guide

Read Hebrews 10:19-25

1. PARAPHRASE & COMPREHEND

Reword the text as a group into modern language. How would you say what the author was saying in your own words today?

2. ATTENTION CATCHERS

What catches your attention in this passage? What is odd or different? What just jumps off the page to you and why? Spend the whole group time together if you need to exploring just this area.

3. EXPLORE HOPE

What does this passage teach us about hope? Don't extend beyond this passage. What does just this passage teach us about hope? Pay attention to the language and the story.

4. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS (AS NEEDED)

How do the three "imperatives" (see Context notes) in this passage all work together? In what way is hope a relational activity between the Father, Son and Spirit?

5. HOPE FOR TODAY

Why do you think joining with other believers is so important for holding on to hope? Martin Luther King Jr. said, "we must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." How have you seen this quote play out in the church?

6. QUOTE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Read and discuss your thoughts on the following quote about this passage:

"I am reminded of the language of Zechariah 9:12: 'Return to your fortress you prisoners of hope...' To be a prisoner of hope is not the same thing as being optimistic. Life has been too realistic for that. Optimism is rooted in sentimentalism and believes in the inevitability of progress. Hope is rooted in a redemptive realism and the promise of the victory of God in Jesus," Dante Stewart.

7. PRAY

How do you need to respond to God based on what you've read and studied this week?



Overflowing Hope

Romans 15:1-13

The memory verse for this study has been from Romans 15:13. Paul's magnificent letter to the churches in Rome close with his prayer over them for joy and peace that originate in the God of Hope. He prays also that they will overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. In his nature God is filled with hope. He is the God of Hope. In fact, Paul contends in v. 4 that everything written about God in the scriptures was given so that the believers might have hope. Those who are in relationship with God are filled with hope because God is filled with hope. The expression of God's outpouring of hope then in our lives is to live in the nature of Christ filled with joy and peace.

Digging Deeper

Background

Of special interest in this passage is the standing of gentiles in the kingdom of God. In biblical history, a gentile is a person who is not Jewish and who does not by birth belong to the people of Israel. The OT teaches that the Jewish people are to be set aside and different than the gentiles around them. This distinction is first and foremost about the character as members of God's kingdom. There are accompanying physical markers such as circumcision. God's hope was that through the Israelites he could bless all people of the world. This was accomplished in Jesus who was an Israelite but died on behalf of all people. Part of the Good News of Jesus Christ is that all people are now welcomed into the kingdom of God. Gentiles now have hope.

Context

Paul correlates hope as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This isn't a surprise as Paul routinely teaches that the Holy Spirit is the one transforming believers more and more into the likeness of Jesus, the likeness of God. This process is called sanctification. To understand hope in a Christian's life you must understand the work of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Spirit is what brought Jesus back to life. The Holy Spirit is the one taking our prayers before God. He is the one putting to death our sinful flesh. He is the one who brought about our adoption as children of God. He is the one who will resurrect the whole cosmos. He knows not only what God can do but he knows perfectly what God is going to do. So then, his power not only fills a Christian with hope, but it overflows hope in us.

Text Notes

"Trust in him" (Rom 15:13). The Greek word translated "trust in him" or "believing" is *pisteuō*. This is the verbal form of the noun *pistis*, which means faith. Thus, Paul is saying that there is a correlation between faith and hope. Faith and hope are constantly in relationship throughout Paul's writing. It appears faith is active trust and hope is the motivation for this faith.

Discussion Guide

Read Romans 15:1-13

1. PARAPHRASE & COMPREHEND

Reword the text as a group into modern language. Focus especially on v. 4- & 13. How would you say what the author was saying in your own words today?

2. ATTENTION CATCHERS

What catches your attention in this passage? What is odd or different? What just jumps off the page to you and why? Spend the whole group time together if you need to exploring just this area.

3. EXPLORE HOPE

What does this passage teach us about hope? Don't extend beyond this passage. What does just this passage teach us about hope? Pay attention to the language and the story.

4. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS (AS NEEDED)

What connection does Paul find between hope and the Holy Spirit?

When you think about the larger context of scripture what else is accomplished or promised to be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit?

5. HOPE FOR TODAY

Who have you encountered that you would describe as overflowing with hope?

What would have to change for you to be described as overflowing with hope?

Paul says joy and peace comes from a life full of hope. Can you have joy and peace without hope? Why or why not?

6. QUOTE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Read and discuss your thoughts on the following quote about this passage:

"Without faith's knowledge of Christ, hope becomes a utopia and remains hanging in the air. But without hope, faith falls to pieces, becomes a fainthearted and ultimately a dead faith. It is through faith that man finds the path of true life, but it is only hope that keeps him on that path. Thus it is that faith in Christ gives hope its assurance. Thus it is that hope gives faith in Christ its breadth and leads it into life." Jorgen Moltmann.

7. PRAY

How do you need to respond to God based on what you've read and studied this week?



A Final Word

As I finish up my final thoughts in this study, it is a cold, grey, and snowy day. The news lately has been depressing to say the least. I want to crawl into bed and just sleep sometimes. Yet, scripture calls me to hope. Regardless of the weather, regardless of the news, I am overflowing with hope expressed in joy and peace.

So here's my three quick takeaways:

1. My hope is in the resurrection of Jesus and anticipates the resurrection of all things.
2. This hope propels me to live differently than the world around me.
3. Hope is growing in me as I grow in Christ. This is a work of the Holy Spirit.



Suggested Readings

A Great Read For All

SURPRISED BY HOPE - NT WRIGHT

"In *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, top-selling author and Anglican bishop, N.T. Wright tackles the biblical question of what happens after we die and shows how most Christians get it wrong. We do not "go to" heaven; we are resurrected and heaven comes down to earth—a difference that makes all of the difference to how we live on earth."

A Challenging Read to Make you Think

A THEOLOGY OF HOPE - JORGEN MOLTMANN

"The following efforts bear the title *Theology of Hope*, not because they set out once again to present eschatology as a separate doctrine and to compete with the well known textbooks. Rather, their aim is to show how theology can set out from hope and begin to consider its theme in an eschatological light. For this reason they inquire into the ground of the hope of Christian faith and into the responsible exercise of this hope in thought and action in the world today."

UNFETTERED HOPE - MARVA J. DAWN

"In *Unfetter Hope: A Call to Faithful Living in an Affluent Society*, Marva Dawn identifies the epidemic socio-cultural attitudes that destroy hope in our modern lives. Because affluent persons don't know what to value—how to choose what's important and weed out the rest—we remain dissatisfied with what we have and are compelled to want more. Dawn demonstrates, however, how Christians can organize their lives to live in ways that allow them to love God and neighbor and, in the process, alleviate the despair in their lives and in the lives of others in the world."

A Technical Read for the Budding Scholar

PAUL AND THE HOPE OF GLORY - CONSTANTINE C. CAMPBELL

"In *Paul and the Hope of Glory* Campbell conducts a thorough exegetical study of the relevant elements of Paul's eschatological language, metaphors, and images including "parousia," "the last day," "inheritance," "hope," and others. He examines each passage in context, aiming to build inductively an overall sense of Paul's thinking. The results of this exegetical study then feed into a theological study that demonstrates the integration of Paul's eschatological thought into his overall theological framework."



