

“Our Hope in the Face of Despair”

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INTRODUCTION

At times we all will face discouraging circumstances, and we may find ourselves overwhelmed and desperate. But if we have placed our lives in God’s hand, then we have reason to hope, even in the face of despair. This study looks at three reasons God gives us for that hope.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Is there something you hope to see happen in your lifetime?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

The Faithfulness of God’s Word

Q1. Read 1 Corinthians 1:9, Romans 15:4, Psalm 119:74

When we face difficulties in life we need to have an unshakable rock in which we put our faith. What does 1 Corinthians 1:9 tell us about God’s nature that encourages us to trust him? How does the Apostle Paul connect hope with God’s Word (see Romans 15:4)? What part does our “endurance” play in us finding hope through God’s Word? Can you share an instance that required your endurance as you put your hope in God?

The Encouragement of God’s People

Q2 Read Romans 15:5-6, Hebrews 10:24-25

God never intended for us to live the Christian life in isolation, but rather to be members of a body of believers. Romans 15:5-6 gives us insight into God’s plan for His body. What do you find in these verses that would create hope within you? Hebrews 10:24-25 directs us to stir up one another to love and good works and to encourage one another. Consider the members of your group and share a brief word of encouragement or affirmation with someone right now.

The Power of God’s Spirit

Q3. Read Romans 15:13, 1 Peter 1:3,

Jesus said that our hope would come from a dynamic relationship with him through the Holy Spirit. Peter called our hope a “living hope” because it comes from our living Lord Jesus! Paul says in Romans 5 that hard times can develop character in us and bring hope because we see his

work in our lives. How have you discovered the living hope of Jesus in the hard times you’ve faced?

What is Our Strategy?

Q4. Read Ephesians 5:17-18, John 16:33

We never know where life’s path will lead us. But even if you are not facing challenges now, you need a strategy to hold on to hope in the difficult times you may face in the future. What important truths from Ephesians 5:17-18 will help you to be prepared for the tough times? What do you do to discern God’s will in your life? What is one thing you can do to allow God’s spirit to fill you daily?

WRAP-UP

The Christian life is not free from difficulty and challenges. In fact, Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble.” But we need not be overwhelmed and fall into despair. God provides us with a reason to hope. He has given us promises in his Word and we can trust that his Word is true because God is faithful. He has also made us members of a body of believers from which we gain encouragement. The hope we have is alive and powerful because it comes to us through the power of God’s Holy Spirit, who fills us with joy and peace so that we may overflow with hope.

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 NIV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more space) _____

Challenge: Pray for someone you know who might need encouragement and hope. Let the Holy Spirit bring people to mind, see their face, listen for prophetic leading in how to pray for them.

