

The Wonder Of Hope

Scott Haus
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GROUP ICE BREAKER

What is your favorite item on the Thanksgiving menu and why?

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

What, if any, next step did you commit to last week, how did it go?

- I will remember and reflect on the wonder of our salvation.
- I will notice the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit at work renewing me.
- I will pray, "God, help me do what is good."
- I will notice people who are far from God and extend an invitation to Blue Oaks.

MESSAGE SUMMARY

Hope is the expectation that with _____ I will be satisfied or complete. Hope is defined as wanting something in particular to happen or to be true and believing that it can and will make your life better. A Christ-centered hope is the confidence that, because of God's past actions and trusting him in the present, I will experience his goodness now and in the future.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Rome, said, "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed..." God began his pursuit to restore the sin broken relationship with his creation with Abraham. God promised that he would father a nation, and the nations would be blessed through him. But Abraham was 75 years old and childless. 11 years of waiting he remained without a son, and herein lies the struggle; what do you do when hope goes unfulfilled? Sarah took control, and Abraham gave up, and fathered a child with Hagar, Sarah's slave.

25 years after the promise, God repeats it, asking, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Even if we take control, doubt or lose hope, God is faithful to his promises. Christian hope is based on a promise given. Abraham and Sarah have a son, Isaac. This begins the genealogy of Jesus found in Matthew 1. It's a story of hope because it tells of the coming to earth of the One who is our hope, Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews reflects on the story, telling us God guaranteed his promise by his unchanging nature, and you can hold to the hope he gives as an anchor for your soul. We look back on the birth of Jesus, but also forward to his return. The hope we have in Jesus is not just wishful thinking, but faith and trust that the God who sent his Son to be born in a stable, and later raised him from the dead, is now alive in you and accomplishing his promises to you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your greatest hope in life?
2. Discuss the difference between optimism and hope. How are they similar? How are they different?
3. Read Romans 4:18-21. What stands out to you from these verses?
4. Eleven years of waiting on God's promise, and Abraham was still without a son. Think of a time you have been in the place of waiting on God, your patience waning and wearing thin. How did you react?
5. Read Genesis 18:1-15. In the midst Sarah's doubt for a promise that now looked improbable and impossible, God asks, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" How do you think they felt at that moment?
6. Share a time a promise made to you was broken, or when you broke a promise. Now read Hebrews 6:13-20. How are God's promises different?
7. Consider for a moment where you have placed your hope. Is that something you can anchor your life to? What keeps you from fully placing your hope in Jesus?

NEXT STEPS FOR THIS WEEK (COMMIT TO GROW)

Use these as a guide to take your next step and commit to what you learned this week:

- I will honestly examine where I have placed my hope.
- I will renew my hope in Christ in this season of waiting.
- I will resist the temptation for instant gratification in my journey with Jesus.
- I will rejoice in the promises of God to me.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Romans 4:18
- Matthew 1:1-2, 16
- Hebrews 6:13, 17-19
- Galatians 3:29
- Romans 15:13

PRAYER REQUESTS

Take time to share how you can be praying for each other over the next week:

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