

WEEK 6 HOPE IN THE LORD

Israel, put your hope in the Lord

THEME: We wrap up our study by focusing on hope. We are called to put our hope in God, today and always.

WATCH VIDEO: *Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust. Episode 6: The Reporter's Formula*
Watch this week's video before the small group gathering.

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

- What was your favorite blow-off class?
- Who is your Israel, the people you want to hear the message of hope?
- What are the earthly things that you put your hope in, the things that you try to control?
- When do you put your hope in the Lord and when do you hope in yourself?
- How can waiting in hope lead to calm and quiet?

WEEK SIX DISCUSSION GUIDE

ICEBREAKER: Each week the discussion begins with a question that allows the group to share from their own personal experiences.

Icebreaker Question: What is one thing that you will take with you from our pilgrimage?

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty.
I do not get involved with things too great or too wondrous for me.
Instead, I have calmed and quieted my soul
like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like a weaned child.
Israel, put your hope in the Lord, both now and forever.

WEEKLY DEVOTION DISCUSSION:

Discuss:

- What were your thoughts on the various translations of Psalm 131?
- How did they reshape your understanding of this Psalm?
- Which translation had the most on impact on you? Why?
- How did the Ideaphoria shape your engagement this week?
- What else inspired you in writing your version of Psalm 131?

POETRY READING:

Each of the members of the group will share their poem and any other insights that they gleaned while going through the writing process.

Discuss:

- How was it sharing your Psalm 131?
- How did hearing other people's version encourage or inspire you?

HOPE: *Psalm 131:3*

"Israel, put your hope in the Lord, both now and forever."

Discuss:

- What is hope?
- How is biblical hope different from worldly hope?

VIDEO DISCUSSION

- Who is your Israel, the people you want to hear the message of hope?
- What are the earthly things that you put your hope in, the things that you try to control?
- When do you put your hope in the Lord and when do you hope in yourself?

UNDERSTANDING HOPE:

Discuss:

- How would you define hope?
- How is Christian hope different than earthly hope?

QUOTE: By Tim Keller

The word *hope* in English is rather weak. To *hope* means to want something without certainty, but the Greek word underlying it, *elpis*, means conviction. Christian hope is not a hopeful wish, it is hope-filled certainty. (Tim Keller: Romans 1-7 For You, page 111)

QUOTE: by John Stott

Christian hope (elpis) is not uncertain, like our ordinary everyday hopes about the weather or health; is a joyful and confident expectation which rests on the promises of God. (John Stott: The Message of Romans, 140)

Discuss:

- How do Keller and Stott open up our understanding of hope?
- How does the Christian separate hope from worldly hope?

THE MESSAGE VERSION

The message version on Psalm 131 opens up a new understanding and perspective on hope: waiting.

READ: Psalm 131:3 (MSG)

Wait, Israel, for GOD. Wait with hope. Hope now; hope always!

Discuss:

- What do waiting and hope have in common?
- Can we have hope without waiting?

READ: Psalm 130:5-7a

I wait for the Lord; I wait and put my hope in his word.

I wait for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning—
more than watchmen for the morning.

Israel, put your hope in the Lord.

Discuss:

- How does waiting in hope compare with the image of a watchman waiting for the morning?

QUOTE: Eugene Peterson

The words wait and hope are connected with the image of a watchman waiting through the night for the dawn. A watchman is an important person, but doesn't do very much. He does nothing to influence or control such things. He knows the dawn is coming, there are no doubts concerning this. Meanwhile he's alert. (Peterson 142-143)

Discuss:

- Have you ever had a job that required you to stay up all night? What challenges did you face? How did it feel to see the sunrise?
- Why must a watchman be alert?
- Why does a watchman wait for the morning?
- Why do you think Peterson stressed that the watchman cannot influence or control the coming dawn?
- How does this connect with our understanding of hope?

HOPEFUL ENDURANCE:

READ: Romans 5:3-5a (NLT)

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment.

Discuss:

- How does hope build endurance?
- How does endurance build character?
- How is our character shaped through hope?
- Why does the hope of salvation not disappoint?

QUOTE: John Stott

The correct Christian posture is that of waiting; waiting eagerly with keen expectation and waiting patiently steadfast in the endurance of our trials... We are to wait neither so eagerly that we lose our patience, nor so patiently that we lose our expectation but eagerly and patiently together. (John Stott: The Message of Romans, 243)

Discuss:

- Why is a posture of waiting important during difficult times?
- How do hopeful expectation and patient endurance work in tandem?
- How does hopeful waiting calm our hearts and calm our souls? How does it help wean us from infantile dependencies?
- Are you ever disappointed in the waiting? What does that say about where you have placed your hope?

READ: Psalm 130:7-8

Israel, put your hope in the Lord.
For there is faithful love with the Lord,
and with him is redemption in abundance.
And he will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

HOPE FULFILLED:

The hope we have is different from that of the psalmist. We have hope fulfilled, because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is because of his faithful love that we can find redemption in abundance. It is because of his sacrifice on the cross and his glorious resurrection that we are redeemed from all our iniquities. We do not have to wait for hope, hope has come. When we put our hope in Jesus *now* we find salvation. When we put hope in him *always*, we are transformed.

Discuss:

- How has the work of Christ on the cross reshape our understanding of hope?
- How does placing our hope in Jesus bring salvation and transformation?

QUOTE: John Stott

Hope does not disappoint us and never will. It will never betray us by proving to be an illusion... The reason our hope will never let us down is that God will never let us down. His love will never give us up. (John Stott: *The Message of Romans*, 140)

Discuss:

- Why can we hope in Jesus? Why won't he let us down?
- How have you seen Jesus bring hope into your life?
- How does knowing Jesus lead to calm, quiet, hope, and trust?

THE FINAL WEEK: PUT YOUR HOPE IN THE LORD

Weekly Devotion: For your final leg of the pilgrimage, we focus on hope. Eugene Peterson wrote, "We need hope. We need to know that we are in relation to God. We need to know that suffering is a part of what it means to be human and not something alien. We need to know where we are and where God is."⁵² As you spend time with God this week, remember where you were at the start of this journey and what God has taught you along the way. As you work through this week's study, thank God for what you have been taught and what you will continue to discover during a lifelong voyage of calm, quiet, hope, trust.

Spiritual Practice: This week's practice is the *Prayer of Examen*, a prayer that allows you to review your previous day, and prepare for the day ahead through prayer and reflection. You will walk through the four steps of calm, quiet, hope, and trust. Calm your heart. Quiet your soul. Hope in the Lord. Trust now and always. As you participate in the *Prayer of Examen*, pay attention to where God has placed you and where he is leading you. Repeat this practice for at least three consecutive days at three times, starting around the same time each day.

Artistic Expression: As you reflect all that God has done for you doing this journey, consider processing your journey through an artistic medium. Look back at your previous artistic expressions and ask God to help you sum up your experience. Draw or paint, take photos, write a song or poem, create a video, allow your creative juices to flow.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Calm my heart, O Lord, so that my heart is not proud. Fix my eyes on you, God, so that my eyes are not haughty. Grant me a spirit of humility, so that I do not get involved with things too great or too wondrous for me.

Instead of feeding the chaos around me, calm and quiet my soul. Comfort me like a weaned child with its mother. Quiet my soul until I am content, like a weaned child, so that I may grow in maturity.

May those around me know that I put my hope in you, Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. You alone are trustworthy, both now and forever. Amen.

⁵² (Eugene Peterson, *Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, pg 144-145)