

**WEEK SIX
ADULT SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE**

Hope in the Lord

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. Put your hope in the Lord, both now and forever. Amen

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION: WEEK FIVE IN REVIEW

Using the supplemental guide, discuss with the group their experiences with week five. How did reading Psalm 131 from other translations inspire their one creation of this Psalm.

POETRY READING:

Invite each of the members of the group to share their version and offer insights that they gleaned while going through the writing process.

SHARE:

Have them share their version along with anything that inspired them while writing their version of Psalm 131.

DISCUSS:

- How did it feel sharing your psalm?
- How did other people's psalms encourage or inspire you?

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION: VIDEO DISCUSSION

Using the supplemental guide, discuss with the group this week's video on hope, The Reporter's Formula. As we look at verse 3, Dave invites us to ask the questions who, what, where, when, why, and how to discover the depths of placing hope in the Lord.

UNDERSTANDING HOPE:

QUOTE: William R. Nicoll

The Psalmist closes this song with a call for the people of God to hope in the Lord, whereby they, too, may enter into peace. It is a song that reveals both a secret of forgiveness and deliverance from iniquities and is also the secret for rest from tyrannous longings and disturbing desires. Hope in God brings pardon, purity, and peace.¹ This week we wrap up our journey together as we answer the call to put our hope in the Lord, now and always.

DISCUSS:

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

¹ William R. Nicoll: The Expositor's Commentary

QUOTES:

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.²

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.³

DISCUSS:

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

HOPEFUL WAITING: The *Message* version on Psalm 131 opens 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 hoping have in common?
- Can we have hope without waiting?
- How was waiting fueled your hope?

SAY: Psalm 131:3 echoes the theme of wait and hope from the previous psalms. Psalm 130 expands on this theme by casting the image of a watchman. The watchman keeps an eye out for danger and is prepared to sound the alarm at a moment's notice. But much of what they do is simply watching and waiting, waiting, and watching.

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:

- What is the watchman looking for?
- Why does the watchman wait for the morning?
- What can the watchman do to bring about the morning?
- 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.⁴

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?

² Keller, Timothy. *Romans 1-7 For You*, page 111

³ Stott, John. *The Message of Romans*, 140

⁴ Peterson, Eugene. *The Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, 142-143.

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.⁵

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?
- Have you ever been disappointed in the waiting? What does that say about where you have placed your hope?

HOPE FULFILLED:**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.

SAY: 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 being transformed.

READ ROMANS 5: 1-11 (NLT)

Since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. 2 Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. 5 And this **hope will not lead to disappointment**. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

6 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. 7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 9 And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation.

⁵ Stott, John. The Message of Romans, 243

10 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. 11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

DISCUSS:

- How has the work of Christ on the cross reshape our understanding of hope?
- These verses talk about how Jesus brought salvation while we are still sinners. What does this say about God's love for us and our hope in him?
- How does God's work in our lives to develop our character, and how does that strengthen our confident hope?
- How does the promise of hope that does not disappoint help calm your heart, quiet your soul, and trust in God?

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? How can we be confident that he will never let us down?
- There will be times that we will feel that God has let us down, how should we respond during those times?
- How have you seen Jesus bring hope into your life?
- Where do you need confident hope in your life today?

PATHS FOR THE JOURNEY:

Leaders: Here are a few options for continuing your journey together. Choose the option that best fits your group in the time provided. Once you have completed one option, either wrap up your time with the closing prayer or do an additional activity below.

- **Week Five Review:** Discuss with the group their experiences creating their own version of Psalm 131.
- **Video Discussion:** In this week's video Dave uses the reporter's formula to break down the last verse of Psalm 132, discussing what it means to place our hope in the Lord, now and always.
- **Jesus Connection:** On Easter Sunday, Jesus is found walking with some men who were leaving Jerusalem heading toward the town of Emmaus. Their eyes did not recognize him, but their soul's did as they confessed, "Weren't our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road."
- **Wrap-up Survey:** Take some time to process the Pilgrimage through Psalm 131 as a small group, or encourage them to complete the survey on their own and send it to Dave Reiss, dave@sppcsa.com
- **Prayer Practice: Prayer of Examen:** In this week's prayer practice, you examine the previous day, seeking where God moved in your life and you look toward the day ahead seeking His calm, quiet, hope, and trust.

WRAP UP:**READ: Psalm 131**

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.

DISCUSS:

- How has this study helped you with your faith journey?
- What have you learned about your pride, ambition, and arrogance?
What are some ways this study has helped you calm your heart and quiet your soul?
- How has this study helped you grow in childlike maturity?
- Have you placed your hope in the Lord? Where do you need to hope and trust in him more?

CLOSING PRAYER: EXPANDED VERSION

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.