

I Want Hope

Lesson 01 of the series, "All I Want for Christmas"

A. We live in a fallen world that desperately needs hope.

"I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards... I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me. I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire! Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere." Ecclesiastes 2:4-11 (NLT)

"No one is righteous— not even one... No one does good, not a single one. Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies... Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. They rush to commit murder. Destruction and misery always follow them. They don't know where to find peace." Romans 3:10-17 (NLT)

"It seems so tragic that everyone under the sun suffers the same fate. That is why people are not more careful to be good. Instead, they choose their own mad course, for they have no hope. There is nothing ahead but death anyway." Ecclesiastes 9:3 (NLT)

10 Common Causes of Hopelessness:

- Feeling alone/abandoned
- Life seems out of control
- Lack of purpose
- Overwhelming grief
- Lack of resources (money, job, food, medicine, etc.)
- Guilt / shame / regret
- Wounds from others
- Self-destructive habits, addictions and hang-ups
- Fear
- Failure

B. Jesus came into our world to bring us hope.

"Look at my Servant, whom I have chosen. He is my Beloved, who pleases me. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations... And his name will be the hope of all the world." Matthew 12:18-21 (NLT)

"The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son." John 1:9-14 (NLT)

Life Application: Through a personal relationship with Jesus, we can be reborn, and our lives can be filled with hope.

Hope = earnest expectation and desire that comes with believing something good.

"You lived in this world without God and without hope. But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:12-13 (NLT)

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you. ..." 1 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

Life Application: Even when life is hard, believers must endure and NOT give up hope.

“And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)”

Romans 8:23-25 (NLT)

“...we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)

Life Application: We can be confident that our hope in Christ is not misplaced.

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life.” Proverbs 13:12 (NLT)

“...it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls.”

Hebrews 6:18-19 (NLT)

“...if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.” 1 Peter 3:15 (NLT)

10 Reasons for Hope:

- God is always with me. I am NEVER alone. (Romans 8:35-38, Matthew 28:20, Hebrews 13:5)
- God is in control and promises to guide me. (Psalm 23, 32:8-9, 37:23-24, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 30:21)
- God has plans and purposes for my life. (Psalm 139:1-17, Jeremiah 29:11, Ephesians 2:10)
- God comforts me in grief and promises eternal life to all who trust in Him. (1 Thessalonians 4:13, Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 26:19, John 3:16, 5:24)
- God will provide for all of my needs. (Proverbs 3:9-10, Matthew 6:25-33, Philippians 4:19)
- God forgives all of my sins and remembers them no more. (Isaiah 1:18, 43:25-26, 1 John 1:9)
- God heals my wounds and enables me to forgive others. (Matthew 6:13-15, Roman 12:17-21, Colossians 3:13)
- God gives me the power to overcome sinful habits. (Romans 7:19-25, Philippians 2:13, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 3:30)
- God is bigger than all my fears. (Isaiah 41:10, Psalm 27:1, 34:1-8, Zephaniah 3:17)
- God can use even the failures in my life for good. (Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Philippians 3:13-14)

“And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.” Romans 15:4 (NLT)

“I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13 (NLT)

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CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think hope is such an important part of our lives? What happens when a person has no hope?
2. In your opinion, why do friends and family keep from sharing their feelings of hopelessness? What suggestions do you have for overcoming those obstacles to ensure those important conversations happen?
3. Read Proverbs 13:12. How would you explain this verse to a friend?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. Over the last year, in what area of your life has God comforted you? How can you share that comfort and hope with others?
5. Which of the "10 Reasons for Hope" listed in this week's outline stood out to you and why?
6. Name a family member, friend, or co-worker that you know is feeling hopeless this Christmas season. Brainstorm on ways you can encourage them and give them hope. Then spend some time together as a group praying for them.