



SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WEEK SIX

HOPE IN THE LORD

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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

POETRY READING:

This past week you were encouraged to write Psalm 131 in your own words. Share your version of Psalm 131 and insights that they gleaned while going through the writing process.

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

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. This week we wrap up our journey together as we answer the call to put our hope in the Lord, now and always.

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

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.

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.

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

SERMON DISCUSSION:

On Sunday we celebrated Palm Sunday. Pastor Dave Reiss used Psalm 132 as our guide to worship. Take some time to review the sermon, discussing the themes, application, and questions.

- How does Psalm 132 connect with Palm Sunday? How does it connect with our journey through Psalm 131?
- What were some of lessons of Psalm 132 that were discussed during the sermons?
- How did these lessons connect with you and your spiritual life?
- How were you encouraged to apply the lessons from this psalm to your life?

Share any questions or concerns that came to you have been wrestling with over the past few weeks.

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!

- What do waiting and hoping have in common?
- Can we have hope without waiting?
- How was waiting fueled your hope?

Psalm 131:3 echoes the theme of wait and hope from the previous psalm. 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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: 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.

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. 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.

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. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. 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. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 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.

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. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

- 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.

- 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?

FINAL THOUGHTS: Read Psalm 131 for a final time as a group and discuss any final thoughts or insights you have about this short but powerful psalm.

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 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.

- How has God spoken to you through our pilgrimage?
- Are there any last insights you have from our final reading of this Psalm?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, my heart is proud and my eyes are haughty. I get involved with things greater than myself. I surrender control to you. Guide my spirit toward peace. Help me discover the calm and quiet of a weaned child. Lead me into maturity. I put my hope in you, for there is faithful love and redemption in abundance. I am trusting you to guide me both now and forever. Amen.