



**grow. pray. study.**

## **April 19, 2020 HOPE – “At The End of Your Rope”**

Scripture: Psalm 40:1-3a (CEB) and Lamentations 3:17-23 (NSRV)

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

**Family Activity:** Visit our [KiDSCOR page](#) for links to a variety of activities.

### **“I put all my hope in the LORD”**

#### **MONDAY 4.20.20 Psalm 40:1-8**

“All my hope in the LORD,” Psalm 40 said. Okay, we may think, I put some hope in God, maybe a lot. But there’s also my job, my family ties, my retirement account and.... Part of what makes the current pandemic frustrating is that it shows the fragility of so many of the human possessions and activities in which we tend to put our hope. The psalmist said it was folly to pay attention to “the proud” and “those who follow lies.” Instead, he called us to celebrate God’s wonderful deeds and plans.

- “An arresting phrase in Psalm 40:6 serves admirably as a metaphor....: *`aznayim karitha li*, literally, “ears thou hast dug for me”....the psalms poet was bold to imagine God swinging a pickax, digging ears in our granite blockheads so that we can hear, really hear, what he speaks to us.” \* What steps can you take to use those God-given “ears” to implant God’s hope-giving instruction deep within yourself?
- “Those who put their trust in the LORD...are truly happy,” said verse 4. We’re bombarded with claims that nearly anything, from whitening toothpaste to a luxury cruise to the best new smartphone, will make us truly happy. Do you believe that the source of true happiness to which Psalm 40 pointed is more credible than the ads that barrage you from all sides? In what ways have you found a greater depth of true joy and hope by trusting in God?

**Prayer:** Lord God, sometimes it’s hard for me to look beyond today’s circumstances, beyond even tomorrow’s problems. Keep teaching me how to focus on your wonderful deeds and your plans for us. Amen.

\* Eugene H. Peterson. *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Kindle Locations 1048-1051). Kindle Edition.

### **The link between hoping and waiting**

#### **TUESDAY 4.21.20 Psalm 130:1-8**

Times like now, as deaths and job losses keep mounting up, are painful and frightening. Psalm 130 cried out to God “from the depths.” “The psalms regularly pray from the depths....‘The depths’ suggests a place where you are overwhelmed by suffering and oppression—not merely emotionally but physically and materially.” \* Right now that sounds awfully relevant, doesn’t it?

- “Translations use the word ‘hope,’ which is fine, though it [can be] misunderstood. We can talk about having hope or being hopeful without implying anything about the object of our hope....the words ‘expect’ and ‘wait’ need an object—we expect something or wait for someone....The psalms thus talk about being expectant for Yahweh or for Yahweh’s word and about waiting for Yahweh.” \* How would

you define the difference between trustingly hoping for God to be with you from hoping for, say, an economic recovery or the lifting of travel restrictions?

- The psalmist “waited” for God’s redemption, not just an abstract idea about God (verses 4-6). Yet “the word wait can also have a misleading implication. Waiting may suggest an attitude of...calm mellowness. In the Old Testament, waiting is impatient. It implies urgency....” \* The psalmist waited like watchmen in the darkness looking for morning light’s first gleam. And the psalmist trusted that God was just as reliable as the dawn. What helps you to count on God’s presence?

**Prayer:** Lord God, tragedies like the Covid-19 pandemic tempt me to despair. I thank you for the promise that “the worst thing is never the last thing,” and that there is dawn after every dark night. Amen.

\* All three quotations are from John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone, Part 2: Psalms 1–72*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014, p. 180-181.

## A hope beyond human problems

### WEDNESDAY 4.22.20 Psalm 27:1-5, 14

This powerful Hebrew poem called every child of God to live without fear, which is hard in tough times. But living without fear did not mean that God would solve all immediate problems. Instead, the psalmist trusted that God was with us in any situation. “Living in hope relates to living with a focus on ‘one thing’—not living in hope that we will be able to achieve and get everything but living in hope of gaining the ‘one thing.’” \*

- The Hebrew language linked “hope” and “wait.” The *Common English Bible* used “hope” in verse 14. Other good translations chose “wait.” Israelites prayed Psalm 27 yet saw Babylon destroy Jerusalem, saw Greece and Rome conquer their land—but kept on waiting and hoping. Christians prayed Psalm 27 yet saw Jesus crucified, the apostles Paul and Peter killed—but kept on waiting and hoping. What most tests your trust and tugs you toward fear? How can you choose to wait and hope that in the end God will set you “up high, safe on a rock”?
- Verse 4 said, “I have asked one thing from the LORD...to live in the LORD’s house all the days of my life, seeing the LORD’s beauty.” The humble monk Brother Lawrence said he found hope in “seeking [God] only, and nothing else, not even His gifts.” \*\* What is helping you learn to value and praise God without making it conditional on God delivering exactly what you want?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you so often greeted your people with the words “fear not.” Teach me how to look to you as my light and my salvation even at the most frightening times. Amen.

\* John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone, Part 1: Psalms 1–72*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013, p. 87.

\*\* Brother Lawrence’s *Practicing the Presence of God* is in the public domain. A free but copyrighted English version of the book is available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5657/pg5657.html>.

## Standing your ground in faith and hope

### THURSDAY 4.23.20 Hebrews 10:32 – 11:1

Jesus taught that his followers can rejoice even when they are wronged ([Matthew 5:11-12](#)). The apostles Paul and Silas sang hymns in prison after a flogging ([Acts 16:23-25](#)). Today’s text said some of Jesus’ early followers “accepted the confiscation of your possessions with joy.” Clearly these Christ-followers were “banking on” the world to come more than this one. Hebrews 11:1 defined their faith (and ours) as “the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don’t see.”

- Oxford scholar Alister McGrath wrote, “Coming to faith doesn’t mean merely having a new idea. It means recognizing in our minds who God is and what he is like, and responding to him in our hearts.” \* What experiences or people helped you to move past thinking of God as an important idea to knowing God as a loving, personal being you trust, obey and are committed to?

- Hebrews said its readers could accept even the confiscation of property with joy “since you knew that you had better and lasting possessions.” In what “better and lasting possessions” had those first-century Christians put their confidence? To what extent can you, too, have those better and lasting possessions to anchor your security in life? How can you increase your “inventory” of those possessions?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you call me to trust that your spiritual world truly is more real, joyful and free than the material world that’s always tugging at my heart. Keep growing that faith deep within me. Amen.

\* Alister McGrath, *“I Believe”: Exploring the Apostles’ Creed*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1997, p. 22.

## **The path from trouble to hope**

### **FRIDAY 4.24.20 Romans 5:1-5**

The apostle Paul sketched the spiritual process through which every Christ-follower can have a character that meets life’s dark twists and turns with hope and trust, not despair. Greek literature told stories in which humans grew more noble through terrible suffering. Paul, too, said that as we meet trouble with God’s grace and hope, we grow. But Pastor John Ortberg noted, “At the end he added as a climax what would never have occurred to a noble pagan: ‘and character produces hope.’” \*

- Have you ever experienced the progression Paul described bringing you to a powerful sense of God’s love being “poured out” in your heart? Later in Romans, Paul wrote, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13). How close to “overflowing” is your inner supply of hope today in this crisis time? How can you open your heart and let God fill you to overflowing with hope?
- In Paul’s day, a “realist” would have said the Christian message he preached wouldn’t even alter the actions of the invincible Roman Empire, much less outlast it. 2000 years later we can see how “realistic” that was. Do you tend to lean more to the view that hope is a largely wishful mirage, or to Paul’s view that hope (based on God’s saving love) is a vital element of strong character? What role has hope played in keeping you going at tough times, including now?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I like the image of overflowing with hope—but, many days, my reservoir gets pretty low. Keep me attuned to your power. Shape me into a fountain of hope for myself and those around me. Amen.

\* John Ortberg, *Who Is This Man?: The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012, p. 195.

## **Future gone? Wait, wait—hope!**

### **SATURDAY 4.25.20 Lamentations 3:18-26**

The writer of today’s passage lived through a great tragedy when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. It was as though on September 11, 2001, a huge army of enemies had leveled and burned not just some buildings, but all of Washington, D.C. and New York. It was as though a tiny highly contagious virus had killed thousands and sent unemployment skyrocketing and stock prices plunging. Amid the bodies and the rubble, the writer of Lamentations did not deny or hide the pain of the experience (verse 19). Yet he still voiced a gritty trust in God: “I have hope....great is your faithfulness....It’s good to wait in silence for the LORD’s deliverance.”

- “[God’s compassions] are renewed every morning” (verse 23). Pastor John Guest wrote that in that verse “the grieving mind was learning to live one day at a time. It is an art we all must learn, but it is a difficult one. We would much rather see the burden removed once and for all.” \* In grief, we often begin to doubt that things will ever get better. But the painful sense of loss we call grief is not a reason to abandon hope; it is why we desperately need hope. What losses are you feeling most sharply today? What experiences, relationships and words of Scripture can anchor you daily to God’s loyal, never-

ending love, and bring you the hope that waits for the LORD's deliverance even in the most desolate of times?

**Prayer:** Lord God, your compassions are renewed this morning. I wish you'd have just removed all the burdens overnight. But I ask you to help me wait in hope for your deliverance. Amen.

\* John Guest, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 19: Jeremiah / Lamentations*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988, p. 357.

**Prayer Requests** – [cor.org/prayer](http://cor.org/prayer) *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Marianne Smith and family following the death of Steve Smith (husband), 2/18/2020

Carrie Kupchin and family following the death of Lyn Wilson, 3/30/2020

Kristin Stoneman and family following the death of Wayne Leikam (father), 4/3/2020

Bryan Denton and family following the death of Pegi Denton (mother), 4/4/2020

Brian Beach and family following the death of Brandon Beach (son), 4/5/2020

Magi Tilton and family following the death of Margery M. Oyer (mother), 4/7/2020

Katherine Eisele and family following the death of George Eisele (husband), 4/7/2020

Linda Faucett and family following the death of Virginia Faucett (mother-in-Law), 4/9/2020