



Hope Abounds Leader Guide

(Leaders and participants are encouraged to look up Bible passages for most effective study. Passages are printed below in blue for ease in presentation.)

Someone once said: “Let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future.” Discuss this statement with your small group or a partner and think about these questions: How have your hopes shaped your life? How might your hopes shape your future? Have you ever been in the situation where you may have heard yourself say, “But I really had hoped that _____”? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should start to begin discussion.**

Even in the midst of trials and uncertainties, our God of hope is with us. The power of the Spirit works faith in us through Word and Sacraments and our God-given hope *abounds* (Romans 15:13). This hope shapes our future days as we look forward to eternal life in heaven worshipping at the feet of our Lord.

Opening Prayer: God of all hope, You have created us and given us gifts and abilities. We know we sin against You daily in thought, word, and deed. Thank You for seeing our hopeless condition and giving us Your Son Jesus to be our Savior. He lived a perfect life, suffered, died for our sins, and rose to life again so we might live eternally with You. In the midst of our sufferings and hopelessness, we cling by Spirit-given faith to the sure and living hope of glory. Bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

The Hebrew word for wait could mean to hope or to wait with anticipation. “‘Wait’ and ‘hope’ in Hebrew come from the same root word.”* See **Isaiah 40:28–31** where this Hebrew word is used. Discuss how this understanding of the word “wait” could enhance the impact of Isaiah’s words.

Isaiah 40:28–31: ²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. ³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹ but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Rather than looking at the word “wait” as normally understood (waiting for something to happen), especially in verse 31, the passage would read *but they who hope in the Lord*; it is an accomplished fact — we look to the hope God gives; we are renewed by our Creator.

Read **Isaiah 40:1–2** and **2 Corinthians 1:3–7**. What has the Lord done for His people in Jesus Christ?

The Lord has won the war; He has forgiven His people; we are comforted by our God even in our sufferings. How could these words affect the exiled Israelites’ lives? **God was with them during every trial and affliction during exile — every day and every year.** Ours? **Answers will vary, but encouraged everyone to share. Answers should include the fact that we are no different than the exiled Israelites; we suffer and are afflicted just as Christ was, but His comfort and salvation are ours; we have a hope that is unshaken.**

Isaiah 40:1–2: ¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.

2 Corinthians 1:3–7: ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷ Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

In **Jeremiah 29:11**, the words of the Lord are given to the children of Israel while they were held in captivity, exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon. Considering their circumstances, how might these words have affected their outlook on life? **God's words could have motivated the people to not wallow in their misery, but to keep their focus on the future God has planned for them.** What feelings might they have had when hearing the words of the Lord? **Hope, joy, peace, optimism, love, honor, awe, happiness.**
Jeremiah 29:11: ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

What is the source of the Psalmist's hope in **Psalms 33:20–22** and **42:11**? **The Lord God, our help, our shield, our salvation.** How does hope affect the Psalmist's outlook on life? **It changes His perspective — instead of being in the pit, he is looking up to His God. Hope in God becomes a way of life.**
Psalms 33:20–22: ²⁰ Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. ²¹ For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. ²² Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.
Psalms 42:11: ¹¹ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Faith Talk: In what ways can hope in the Lord affect a Christian's daily life, even in the midst of trials and adversity? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Answers could include: as we are in the pits of life, we can look up to our Lord God, our Hope.**

Hope in the New Testament also means expectation, looking towards the future with assurance, trust, and confidence. Hope is all about Jesus! Look up the following passages. Identify phrases that describe the Christian's hope. According to these passages, how does this hope manifest itself in daily living?

Colossians 1:3–8, 21–23

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.
²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.
We have a hope laid up in heaven, the hope of the Gospel, the hope of glory; we are holy and blameless, live in the Spirit, have faith, bear fruit, and are stable and steadfast.

Hebrews 10:23, 11:1

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.
¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
We confess our hope, the hope faithfully promised by God; we live lives of faith in Jesus.

1 Peter 1:3–5, 13–25

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." ¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the

world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Our hope is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven; we hope in the grace of God in Christ; we are transformed, not conformed to the world; our faith and hope is in God; our lives are His — we live to His glory; we are sanctified by the blood of Jesus; the Spirit continues to sanctify us as we live for Christ; love one another in Christ; we rely on His Word.

Read **Romans 5:1–5**. Outline the path to God-given hope in this verse. **The Holy Spirit is at work in us; we are justified by faith through Jesus; peace with God; recipients of His grace; rejoice in the hope and glory of God; rejoice in sufferings that produce endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope that doesn't shame us; it's all about Jesus!** As a group, define *the hope that does not put us to shame*. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Answers could include: this hope is assured in Christ; God has said it, He will do it; we have hope of salvation and eternal life.**

Romans 5:1–5: ¹Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

How does hope in Jesus help to produce real change? Share an example from your life. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Faith Talk: It has been said, "End-time hope gives us real-time purpose." What is your purpose on earth as you live in the sure hope of eternal life? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Answers could include sharing the Good News of Jesus, living in the sure hope of the resurrection, looking to the future with our Lord, instead of staying in the pit.**

Faith Walk: Meditate on **1 Peter 3:14–16**. Identify someone with whom you can share the *reason for the hope that is in you*. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen you as you tell about the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ and your hope of eternal life because of Him. **Encourage group to do this!**

1 Peter 3:14–16: ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

Closing: Share the blessing of **Romans 15:13** with one another: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope*. Pray, sing, or listen to "Lord of All Hopefulness" (LSB 738).

**The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB), page 1154.*

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