

One truth shared: The Living Water brings hope.

And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Romans 5:5

Hope

“God has a plan.” “Everything always works out for good.” “Jesus is with you.” “Don’t be sad, you’ll see her again in heaven.” Bible based truths such as these are the kinds of things Christians share with each other in times of hardship... and rightly so. God says all these things in the Bible. But if you or someone you love has ever gone through a hard time, saying those things doesn’t always make you feel better! Words don’t make the hard things go away! So how can promises of things to come bring hope right now?

Some have described this kind of hopeless feeling as “thirst.” Not the physical thirst for water, but a spiritual thirst for life the way God designed it to be. This spiritual thirst is a thirst to be rid of the sinfulness and frustrations and disappointments of a broken world. One might call it a thirst for heaven. In the Bible, God promises that such thirst is satisfied in Jesus—what he does, and what he promises. This good news does satisfy spiritual thirst and does provide hope, even now as we continue to live among the effects of sin.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul puts it like this: “hope does not disappoint us.” Why not? He continues, “You see, at just the right time... while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Our hope for the future based on God’s promises is not a vague wish for good things to come. Biblical hope anticipates the results of something that is an accomplished fact! In other words, Jesus already took on human flesh and inserted himself in the real history of the world at just the right time, to fulfill prophecy, to live as God required, to die for our sins, to rise from the dead. That’s not the future—it’s the past. It happened! It’s an accomplished fact, and it can’t be undone! That means all the blessings connected to it also are done and can’t be undone! There’s no “unforgiving” of sins. There’s no undoing heaven, or of any of the other results of Jesus work! That’s why biblical promises are not just words or some nice sayings. Even though they don’t always remove the outward hardship right now, they serve as a rock-solid guarantee of what’s to come based on what already happened and can’t be changed: Jesus’ work for you.

When the present is hard, cling to the good news of the past: a Savior who intervened in history! That fact guarantees that in the big picture, the future is bright!

This is your hope!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, you inserted yourself into human history to be our Savior. Thank you for leaving your heavenly throne to satisfy our deepest needs! Use the realities of what you accomplished to bring us hope, even in the darkest of times! Comfort and strengthen us with the certainty of a bright future to come! Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

Year A – Lent 3

Our Greatest Needs

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Hope

Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

- List the top challenges the future holds for *American society*. Then do the same for the *church*. Then do the same for *individual Christians* like each one of us. Then do the same for *your own personal life* situation.
- What might you as a Christian do to handle challenges such as these when they arise? (*Point: Many of the challenges we see in the future are not “handle-able.” We will have to deal with them as they arise and lean on God for help. Admit that at first glance, this makes for a rather pessimistic and hopeless outlook on life.*)

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they’ve looked at it.*

Read the account of the Samaritan women at the well who met Jesus. Put yourself in her shoes and do some speculating about what her life might have been like.

- What challenges might she have been facing? (*Samaritans were social outcasts, later conversation realizes she has a tumultuous family life, etc.*)
- What things may have been disappointing to her? What unmet needs might she have had? How might she have looked to the future?
- What did she focus on doing to address the challenges before her? (*She was focused on meeting her own physical needs in whatever way she was able.*)
- For what reasons might the future have appeared hopeless? (*The problems she could see were beyond her ability to handle.*)
- How did she think Jesus might help her? (*Perhaps she understood that he was capable of miracles and hoped he might do one on her behalf.*)

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Look at the conversation between Jesus and the woman.
 - List the “objections” the woman has to leaning things from Jesus. (*There is a racial/ethnic divide, he has no obvious/visible way to meet her needs, living water sounds impossible, Jews and Samaritans are divided spiritually too.*)

- How does Jesus answer each objection? *(He is patient, he is persistent, he is focused on her spiritual needs more than her physical needs.)*
- Assuming that the woman did come to trust in Jesus as her Savior, in what ways might her memories of this conversation and Jesus words to her help her in her daily challenges? (He approached her and cared for her, he knew what her deepest needs were and how to meet them, he loved her despite her faults, he looked past culture and ethnicity.)
- Read Romans 5:1-5.
 - Describe the distinction between the way the Bible uses the word “hope” and the way we often use the word “hope” in contemporary English. *(The Bible’s version of hope is more in line with excited anticipation than wishfulness.)*
 - Paul expresses more specifically the message of “hope” Jesus was sharing with the woman. For what reasons does Paul have enough hope to “rejoice in his sufferings”? *(Hardship leads to benefits, we have access to grace and the blessings it brings through Jesus, we can be certain that our hops for the future will be fulfilled.)*
 - How might a similar perspective have been beneficial for the woman Jesus was talking to? *(She didn’t know the future, but she did now know her Savior. Her joy in having that perspective is evident in her reaction.)*

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the “connecting question” above.*

- Describe the situation of a person you know who is suffering in some way. On what occasion(s) might you have the chance to have an open conversation with them? *(Answers will vary. Make the point that often the door is open for spiritual conversation when people are under hardship and outwardly have little reason for hope.)*
- In what ways might you express biblical hope for your own future? How might you express such hope for a person who is undergoing a particularly challenging time of suffering? *(Answers will vary. Point out that calm confidence in hard times has a tremendous impact on those who watch. The gospel can be “preached” through actions as well as words.)*