

2011 MISSION PROGRAM / DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

OPEN THE MEETING

Hope is vital to living well – spiritually, mentally, emotionally and even physically. Hope is one of the Christian virtues (1 Cor. 13:13).

Ask the group: What do you hope for? What are you hopeful about? What diminishes hope? What strengthens hope?

BIBLE STUDY

Hope is a major part of faith in the Old Testament and New Testament.

1. Hope in the Old Testament

Ask someone to read Psalm 42: 1 – 5; Psalm 33: 18 – 22; Psalm 130: 7; Psalm 147: 11; Jeremiah 29:11.

In the Old Testament, hope in God connected a person to the other side of distress. In times of turmoil and fear, the children of Israel cried out to God for deliverance. Their hope was based on their trust in God's steadfast love. Hope came from the belief that their future was in God's hands. They could live more hopefully in the present knowing there were possibilities for the future.

2. Hope in the New Testament

Ask someone to read Romans 15:13.

The word "hope" is used 79 times in the New Testament. Hope is based on God's actions and promises – in the past and in the future. God acted on behalf of His people, beginning with Abraham (Romans 4: 18), and He fulfilled His promises. Hope is also grounded in the assurance that God will act in the future to deliver His children to eternal life (Colossians 1: 5; Titus 2:13).

The children of Israel's hope in the past, and the Church's hope in the future, are fulfilled in Jesus. Hope in Christ fills the present with faith, joy and peace.

God is able to work in every situation for good (Romans 8:28) – to deliver and restore us. Because of His unending power, no situation is hopeless. Because of God's grace in Jesus Christ, no person is hopeless either.

The God of hope is the source of joy. Joy is not the same as happiness – and does not depend on external circumstances. Joy comes from the assurance of Christ's presence in our lives.

The God of hope is the source of peace. Peace is not the absence of suffering but the presence of Christ's love. Peace is an inner well being that comes from trusting ourselves to the sure, loving hands of God (Romans 8: 35 – 39; Phil. 4: 7).

Ask the group how these scriptures from the Old Testament and New Testament speak to their lives.

MOTHER'S DAY OFFERING APPLICATION

The patients and families you help through the Mother's Day Offering struggle to keep hope alive because of the tremendous hardships they face. Serious financial distress comes on top of the stress of illness. They face constant pressures about how to pay their medical bills, maintain their households, and not lose everything.

Janet Martin, Maggie Mena, Susan Thornton, Rev. Ed Tablazon, and their families carried these burdens. Their stories are on the 2011 Mother's Day Offering video

Ask the group to imagine what these burdens would be like.

The God of hope delivered these families (and hundreds of others just like them every year) through the Mother's Day Offering. They received a letter that said, "Your hospital bill has been paid by compassionate and mission-minded North Carolina Baptists in the name of Jesus Christ and His love." What would it be like receiving that letter?

Please show the Mother's Day Offering Video. Free copies can be ordered by contacting Rev. Paul Mullen at Baptist Hospital (pmmullen@wfubmc.edu).

SHARE THE STORY

Please share with other church members how God is at work, bringing life-changing hope, through the Mother's Day Offering.

PRAY WITH GRATITUDE

Close the meeting with prayers of thanksgiving for the hope God gives. Pray for God to bless the Mother's Day Offering. Pray for God to bring great hope to hurting patients and families. Pray for people to open their hearts and give generously.