

Life Group Topic #41
Romans 8:18-25
Living with Hope

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

What is one thing that you eagerly hoped for in the past (maybe for Christmas) but never received? How did you respond?

WORSHIP: (15 minutes)

Use whatever means possible to turn the group's attention to the wonder and majesty of our God- including music, prayer, meditation on the Psalms, and other art forms.

WORD APPLICATION: (45 minutes)

Introduction on HOPE: With the advent season upon us, it is a good time to consider the theme of hope. There is a clear difference between hope as we understand it from the perspective of the world and hope as the bible defines it. In the world, the concept of hope usually shows up in the context of something that is unsure and uncertain. We hope for things that may or may not turn out as we expect. Sometimes these hopes work out, at other times we're left disappointed. It's sort of a carry over of the ancient Greek understanding of hope in which people were actually warned that hope was dangerous, since it's wrought with uncertainty.

The hope of the bible is very different. In nearly every instance, especially in the NT, hope looks to that which is certain ... that which is absolutely assured. It points us in the direction of something that cannot and will not disappoint. And in nearly every instance, it calls us to lift our gaze beyond this life and understand that the fulfillment of true hope is that which lays beyond this temporal existence.

Biblical hope, by and large, speaks to the resurrection and our eternal existence with God. My challenge is to ensure that your gaze is focused beyond just the things of this world ... that our hope in what lies beyond this life is meant to be the fuel which allows us to live to the fullest in this life ... it's what gives perspective in the midst of this life's "light and momentary troubles". God's people need to recalibrate their understanding of hope from looking to that which might happen, to that which will happen ... to understand, as Lewis Smedes stated, that hope "is no longer a passion for the possible. It becomes a passion for the promise."

Word Application Questions:

Following the "Lectio Divina" model, read through **Romans 8:18-25** audibly twice as a group and then silently meditate on the passage for a few minutes. Let the group share the things the Lord impresses on them. Feel free to use the application questions below.

1. What are some of the things you most eagerly hope for, in the years ahead of you here on this earth?
2. What have been some of your greatest disappointments; those barriers that have foiled your hopes and dreams?
3. What is Paul's perspective of suffering in the life of a Christian in Romans 8:18-25? How are we to suffer?
4. What are we to fix our hope on, according to this passage?
5. How all-encompassing is this hope? Is this simply a promise for individuals or something much broader?
6. What aspect of your life most causes you to despair, and most needs an infusion of hope?
7. What is our hope for South Abbotsford as a corporate body? For your Life Group?

WITNESS: (15 minutes)

This section is a vision-casting time designed to get the group strategizing and making concrete plans towards reaching outward to a lost world. Relational outreach always has the goal of ultimately enfolding those we reach into the Life Group.