

Sermon: A Life of Hope

Text: Romans 15:13

Discussion Questions:

In doing some research on the topic of hope, it is said that, “people seek after hope like moths seek after light. It’s intrinsic to who we are.” Experts tell us that hope is so essential to our survival that it is hardwired into our brains, arguing it can be the difference between living a healthier life versus one trapped by despair.

- Studies show hopeful college kids get higher GPA’s and are more likely to graduate.
- Hopeful athletes perform better on the field, cope better with injuries, and have greater mental adjustment when situations change.
- In one study of the elderly, those who said they felt hopeless were more than twice as likely to die during the study follow-up period than those who were more hopeful.

Do you agree with these findings? Why or why not?

Do you believe that hope is intrinsic to who we are as human beings—that every person is “hard wired” to be hopeful?

There’s a quote (unknown author) that says, *“Man can live about 40 days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only for one second without hope.”* Do you agree with this? What would it be like to live without any hope at all?

What would you say is the difference between hope and faith?

Would you say that there is any difference between the way our current culture defines hope and the way the Bible talks about hope?

Examination:

Read **Romans 5:1-5**

- Verses 1 & 2 mention three of the key pillars of our faith as children of God: Faith; Peace; and Hope. How do these two verses describe the relationship that these things have with each other? Which one comes first?
- What does it mean to be “justified through faith” (v. 1)? How does faith justify us?
- What is the result of this faith—what does faith naturally produce?
- How does faith grant us access into grace?
- What do you think it means to “...boast in the hope of the glory of God” (v. 2)?
- Verse 3 uses the same word—“glory”—but in a very different way. It seems reasonable to boast in the hope of the glory of God. We can take great pride and comfort in how great and glorious God is. It’s quite a switch to then find glory in our sufferings. What do you think it means to glory in your sufferings? Is this something you’ve ever been able to do?
- Verses 3 & 4 describe a progression: Suffering → Perseverance → Character → Hope. Talk about how this works. Does suffering always lead to perseverance and ultimately hope? What are some other things that suffering can lead to? For many people,

suffering ultimately leads to despair and hopelessness. How can there be two very opposite results?

- What role does the Holy Spirit play in turning suffering into hope (v. 5)?
- Why do you think verse 5 mentions shame? How does perseverance and character move us toward hope as opposed to shame?

Read **Romans 8:18-25**

- Paul returns to the topics of suffering and glory (v. 18). What does he say about them?
- Verse 18 seems to be describing an outlook—or a way of thinking about our situation. He’s describing the way things are now—and the way things will be at a later point in time. How are things currently, and how will things be in the future? Why is there no comparison?
- How does this future-looking outlook give us hope?
- If God subjected the created world to frustration in the hope that it would be liberated and brought into freedom—do you think God does the same thing in our lives? In other words—does God use suffering to serve a higher purpose?
- What is Paul trying to say about life on this earth when he talks about “groaning inwardly”? According to verse 23, what is the reason for our groaning? What are we (either consciously or subconsciously) waiting for?
- Not only do we wait—but according to verse 24 we HOPE. What is the object of our hope? How does this hope SAVE us?
- Verses 24 & 25 indicate that there are two essential qualities of hope: futuristic and invisible. In other words, hope can only be present when we’re looking forward to something we can’t see—and it’s something that’s in the future. Does this make sense to you? Do you understand that if you can actually see something that you have right now—there’s no hope involved?
- According to verse 25, what does hope produce?

Read **Romans 15:13**

- Think about the word “fill”. We can all visualize what this looks like. It’s not hard to imagine water being poured out of a pitcher into a glass. Who is doing the pouring—and what is being poured?
- Is there anything on our part that we have to do?
- Other than the God of Hope pouring peace and joy into our lives—is there any other way for us to acquire peace and joy?
- Not only does God “fill us to the rim” with peace and joy—He fills us to overflowing. Do you honestly think it’s possible to literally overflow with peace and joy? Have you ever seen this happen in a person’s life?
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in this?
- What role does Jesus play in this (see v. 12)?

Application:

I want you to “connect the dots” in these three passages of Scripture. We live in a world of suffering. This world is broken and groaning. We have to look beyond this world to find any hope. We have to wait patiently. We can’t lose hope. We worship and serve the God of Hope. He WANTS to fill you to overflowing with peace and joy. And He Can! The key is to trust in Him. Yield to the Holy Spirit. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Believe that your current suffering produces endurance, character, and HOPE!