

STUDY GUIDE

ENCOURAGED 07.09.2017

[set up]

Share about a time when you experienced or observed either the presence of hope or the absence of hope when someone you cared about passed away.

[digging deeper]

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and then briefly give an answer to these questions:

- What does the Apostle Paul want the Thessalonian church to know?
- Why does he want them to know it?
- What is the source of their greatest hope?
- Who has provided this understanding?
- How will the coming of Christ come about?

How can this message to the Thessalonians also have an impact in our lives?

Discuss several well-known spiritual beliefs. What hope does each one attempt to give when someone has had a loved one pass away? Do these views offer true comfort? How does the death and resurrection of Jesus provide true comfort and hope for the believer in comparison?

Does that mean we do not grieve at all or that our grief is minimized?

It's hard enough to keep our hearts focused on the hope that is ours because of Christ's resurrection, but what can we say or do to comfort a friend or family member when someone passes away and no one is certain of their relationship with Christ, or worse yet, they made it clear they did not know Jesus?

Note: A great exercise for this question is to make two columns on a large post it note and write down what to say and do on one side and what not to say and do on the other - then circle the top two answers or actions that seem most comforting and caring.

How does Genesis 18:25 help us still trust God if we have unbelieving family and friends that die?

A lot of people get fixated on the details of the return of Christ. What do we ultimately need to know regarding Christ's return to give us the hope we need?

How do these verses also reinforce the hope we have in Christ's death, resurrection and future coming?

John 14:1-3

Acts 1:8-11

1 Corinthians 15:50-55

2 Corinthians 5:8-9

Philippians 1:21-24

Philippians 3:20

In light of this lesson, complete these two statements from your own understanding of God's Word:

- Although losing someone hurts, if they are a believer in Christ I can hope because...
- If someone I love dies but I do not know where they stand, I can still experience hope and trust in God because...

[living it out]

Pick one of the following options to apply. Ask your LifeGroup to hold you accountable to courageously follow through.

Option 1:

Is there a fellow believer who you know and love that is near death? Take the insights and Scriptures from this lesson and write a card or visit with them in person to have a conversation about our hope in Christ. You can ask questions like:

- Are you afraid?
- Are you experiencing hope in this moment?
- How does the resurrection and return of Christ give you strength and peace right now?
- Pray for them and the promises that are theirs in Christ.

(If they are not conscious, do not underestimate the fruit of reading these passages and explaining them and speaking about them.)

Option 2:

Is there an unbeliever that you know who is close to death? Take the insight and Scriptures from this lesson and sit down with them personally and share the Gospel. You can use the 3 Circle conversation guide as well. Ask permission to share/ask questions:

- Are you afraid right now?
- What are your thoughts about eternity and the afterlife? What do you believe?
- Can I share with you some insights that I think you will find hopeful?

Wisely discern the next best step: ask them to profess Christ if they give you a green light to receive Christ, ask if it's ok to revisit the conversation in a couple days if they give you a yellow light, politely respect their request to not share if they give you a red light and commit yourself to pray for them. But ask if you can pray for them right then as well. (If they are not conscious, do not underestimate the fruit of reading these passages and explaining them and speaking about them.)

Option 3:

Is there someone you know who has recently had someone they love die (family, friend, neighbor, co-worker, etc.)?

1. Pray for them, that God would encourage and comfort them.
2. Encourage them by writing a card that expresses the hope we have in Christ for eternity (you can even use some of the verses from above). For the extra-caring touch, you can send it with a plant, flowers, or a gift.
3. Follow up with them personally after a week or two to check in on them.
4. If they do not know Christ, pray for God to open conversational doors to share the love of Christ and the hope they can have.

Close in prayer as a LifeGroup and lift up the people who come to mind from today's lesson as well as anything else that is going on in the lives of your group members related to today's topic.