

CHRIST AS HOPE

A YOUTH MINISTRY RESOURCE FOR YOUTH AGES 12-18 (ADAPTABLE FOR YOUNG ADULTS AGES 18-28)

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Duration: 45-60 minutes

Format: In person/remotely via Zoom (if using with larger groups, utilize small groups/breakout rooms for more engaged discussion)

Objective: Guided discussion exploring secular understanding of hope as compared to Biblical comprehension of our hope in Christ

Materials Provided: PowerPoint presentation (optional); Discussion Guide (participant handout for use in both large/small groups)

Supplies Needed: Whiteboard/Google Jamboard; newsprint; markers; pens; strips of paper (for closing prayer)

Ages: Middle/High School/College

LEADER'S GUIDE

*"May the God of hope fill you with
all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

Romans 15:13



GETTING WARMED UP

- **How would you define hope? Let's create a group definition so we have a collective understanding of what hope is.**
 - Distribute *Discussion Guide* and encourage participants to use handout to follow along with discussion
 - Ask for definitions from participants and write on whiteboard – invite a participant to record answers
 - Refer to definitions provided on *PowerPoint Slide #2 and #3* for guidance
 - **Dictionary Definition: Hope is:**
 - a **feeling of expectation** and desire for a certain thing to happen.
 - Similar: aspiration, desire, wish, expectation, ambition, aim, plan, dream, longing, yearning
 - a **feeling of trust.**
 - **Hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes.**
 - **"Hope is the belief that circumstances will get better. It's not a wish for things to get better – it's the actual belief, the knowledge that things will get better, no matter how big or small."** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/reading-between-the-headlines/201307/the-power-hope>
 - **Hope is forward-looking rather than focusing on the past – a positive, optimistic outlook for our future.**
- *After reviewing these definitions and soliciting feedback from participants, **CREATE A GROUP DEFINITION AND POST IT** somewhere to be seen throughout the discussion.*
- **Based on this definition of hope we have created, what are the kinds of things people your age hope for?** *PowerPoint Slide #4*
 - Have students call them out and write them on whiteboard or have them write their answers anonymously on Google Jamboard if it is a remote lesson.
 - To increase engagement in person, place blank newsprint on wall and participants to add their answers on the page and then review as a group.
 - Review responses with entire group – responses may include good grades, getting into the school you are applying to, having a boyfriend/girlfriend, a new pair of sneakers, being popular, a position on a school team, health for parents loved one, etc.

- **Take a moment now to write down some of the things you personally hope for.** *PowerPoint Slide #5*
 - Ask students to write or think about their answers using the *Discussion Guide*
 - Encourage participants to be honest, no one will see their answers and only those who want to can share.
 - Ask if anyone would like to share their answers. If not, it's fine to move on.
- **Thinking back to last year at this time, how would you have answered this question? Would the things you personally hoped for last year have been the same or different? What has changed?** *PowerPoint Slide #6; Discussion Guide*
 - What has changed for them?
 - Ask them to share what has changed (e.g. they have gotten older, likes/dislikes or needs have changed, they received what they hoped for, etc.)
 - The objective is to illustrate that our day-to-day hopes often change – it's the big "hopes" in our lives that often remain unchanged over time.

GOING DEEPER: PERSONAL REFLECTION

- **In your own words, what does it mean to have hope?** *Discussion Guide*

- Solicit answers – possible answers below:
 - Believing you will be successful.
 - Believing what you desire is possible.
 - Being optimistic and positive about your future.
 - Believing that things will be OK

- **Share the following quote:** *PowerPoint Slide #7; Discussion Guide*

- **There is a quote from an 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?** *Discussion Guide*

- Solicit answers
 - Depressing, sad, lonely, hopeless, uncertain, etc.

- **Why is hope important?** – *PowerPoint Slide #8; Discussion Guide*

- Solicit answers – possible answers below:
 - It gives us strength
 - It helps us feel like things will be OK
 - It helps us help and encourage others
- Hope teaches us that we can:
 - make something new from very little
 - share our stories and learn from others
 - give of ourselves
 - reach for our goals
 - connect with hopeful, positive people
 - be grateful and
 - act to make the future a brighter place for ourselves and others

- **Where does hope come from?** – *PowerPoint Slide #9; Discussion Guide*

- Solicit answers – possible answers below:
 - Past experience
 - Our faith
 - God
 - Our role models/examples
 - Our parents

SMALL DISCUSSION GROUPS

- If group size is large, break off into small groups of 3-5 and have participants discuss in small groups before returning to larger group to discuss.
- If remote, have group leader in each breakout room read questions, or if self-led groups, post questions on Jamboard so group can discuss prior to returning to larger group
- If small groups used, notes provided and PowerPoint should be used by leader during debrief when small groups return



- **What types of situations cause us to lose hope?**

PowerPoint Slide #10; Discussion Guide

- Solicit answers

- **How have you—or someone you know—reacted when something hoped-for didn't happen?**

- **Who can you think of that demonstrates/exemplifies the power of hope?**

PowerPoint Slide #11; Discussion Guide

- Solicit answers

- Perhaps parent, grandparent, school teacher?
- Friends or family members who are dealing with illness or a difficult situation?
- Are there any well-known/famous examples they can share? (do a Google search to have some examples ready – e.g. St. Gregory the Illuminator, St. Hripsime, St. Gayane, St. Nersess the Builder, Helen Keller, Henry Ford, Anne Frank, Martin Luther King Jr., Thomas Edison, Harriet Tubman, Mother Teresa, etc.)
- If time allows, have them work in pairs/small groups to do a quick online search for examples of famous people who exhibited hope. Ask them to each find 1-2 examples and present back to the group with a brief synopsis of why they exemplify the power of hope.
- If no time for the above exercise, solicit their feedback asking for any examples they may know of and then provide other examples from your list.



- **What attributes do people with hope have?** *PowerPoint Slide #12; Discussion Guide*

- Solicit answers

- Positive outlook?
- Resilience?
- Kept going despite tragedy?
- Turned tragedy into something positive?
- Forgave others and were able to move on?

- **What are some ways we can demonstrate hope in our lives?** *PowerPoint Slide #13; Discussion Guide*

- Solicit answers

- Having a positive attitude, even when facing difficult situations.
- Being willing to work hard and always doing our best.
- Pursuing our goals and following our dreams.
- Helping and encouraging others when they are down.
- Practicing our faith.
- Being around others who are hopeful/have a positive attitude and outlook

- ***If you are using small groups/breakout rooms – return to larger group at this point and debrief***

- Ask small groups to share general feedback from the questions discussed.

- Once debrief is complete, continue in large group with next section.

- If did not use small groups, continue with next section.

GOING DEEPER: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HOPE?

- **Is there a difference between the world's understanding of hope and the kind of hope we hear about in the Bible? i.e. Hope in God?** *PowerPoint Slide #14*

- Solicit answers – see additional discussion prompts below:

- Would you say that there is any difference between the way our current culture defines hope and the way the Bible talks about hope?
- Is there a difference between our society's view of hope and the hope we have in Christ?
- What are some of the differences between how society views hope and how we view hope in the Bible?

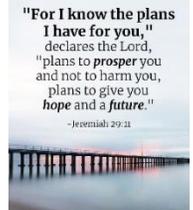
- **The world's understanding of hope can become distorted into "if only" thinking.** [see examples below]

- Our hope to do well in school can become clouded, thinking our college future is set "if only" we get an A in biology.
- Our hope to be happier may rest in the notion that I would be happier/life would be good "if only" I had a better body, or "if only" I had a boyfriend/girlfriend
- As an athlete or a musician, our hope for success may be tied to thinking "if only" our team or band wins the regional competition.
- Our hope to be popular could rest with "if only" I had the right clothes.

- **PowerPoint Slide #15 – How do we define Christian hope?**
 - **The hope of believers/people of faith – is more than a desire or a wish.**
 - **It's an unshakable confidence in God — even when circumstances give us every reason to doubt.**
 - *Stress the importance of understanding the difference between having hope in “if only” scenarios and having hope in God.*
 - *Our desires for the future may not come true, but we can still trust that God loves us and guides our life and that His timing is known only to Him.*



- **Discuss Proverbs 16:9: PowerPoint Slide #16**
 - *“In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.” Proverbs 16:9*
 - *Ask someone to restate this in their own words – what does this verse mean?*
 - *Reiterate that God is in control, and He cares for us.*
 - *Rather than settling for an “if only” attitude, we can have hope and confidence that God has a plan for us and His plan is meant to prosper us and not harm us. [see below]*
 - **PowerPoint Slide #17:** *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11*



- **Why is it hard sometimes to place our hope in Christ?**

PowerPoint Slide #18

- **Solicit answers**
 - *Share the Bible verse: “Now faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Hebrews 11:1*
- **What does it mean then when we say, “we hope in God?” PowerPoint Slide #19**
 - **Solicit answers**
 - **When we say that we hope in God it's not like the “if only” hope that is considered optimism or wishful thinking;**
 - **It's not wishing that something will turn out the way you want it to**
 - **Hope in Christ is an essential part of our faith.**
 - **When the Bible speaks of hope, it doesn't refer to something that is merely possible or even probable--it means confident assurance.**
 - **In other words, Christian hope refers to God's guarantee to us that He will not break His promise and that we can rest in complete confidence because He is faithful.**
 - **We are saying that we trust Him and know that He will do what He says He will do and that we are not alone.**
 - **We know that He sees the greater picture, and all is done on His timetable through His wisdom.**
 - *“Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.” Psalm 25:5*
 - **This verse reminds us that God is our hope.... the One on whom our expectations are set.**
 - **The great thing about God being our hope is that we also know He is faithful and that He will keep all His promises, so we can hope in Him, knowing that He will do what He says He will do.**



- **What can happen when we put our hope in Christ?**

– *Solicit answers and then go through three points below (strength – patience – encouragement)*

- **Hope in Christ gives us strength. PowerPoint Slide #20**

- **Society teaches and encourages us to have self-confidence and to find strength within ourselves, but as Christians, we are to place our confidence in the Lord.**
- **When we hope in Him, we find the confidence and strength to face any challenge that comes our way.**
- **These Bible verses remind us of how hope in Christ can give us strength:**
 - *“Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9*
 - *“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 40:31*
 - *“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10*
 - *“Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.” Psalm 31:24*

- **Hope in Christ teaches us patience.** *PowerPoint Slide #21*
 - Society encourages us to solve our own problems.
 - But when we face an impossible or hopeless situation, we must learn to trust God. We do not need to be anxious or worried. We can find peace in God’s unfailing love for us.
 - These Bible verses remind us of how hope in Christ can teach us to be patient:
 - *“But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”* Romans 8:25
 - *“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”* Romans 12:12
 - *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”* Philippians 4:6
- **Hope in Christ brings encouragement.** *PowerPoint Slide #22*
 - You know that feeling you get at the end of a long week? The anticipation of the weekend lifts your spirits and fills you with hopefulness.
 - Now think about stretching that weekend out for eternity.
 - We can find encouragement and joy amid our daily struggles because we know we will live forever with Jesus. That is why we are told to anticipate His glorious return (Titus 2:13)
 - *“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”* Deuteronomy 31:8
 - *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33
- *PowerPoint Slide #23* – In the Armenian Divine Liturgy, this “hope in Christ” is spoken of many times, but perhaps no more powerfully than when the priest turns to the people with the chalice in his hands and says these words – **READ THE ENGLISH:**

Քահանայն

Ի սուրբ, ի սուրբ, պատուական
Մարմնոյ եւ յԱրեւնէ Տեառն մերոյ
եւ փրկչին Յիսուսի Քրիստոսի՝
նաշակեսցուք սրբութեամբ. որ
իջեալ ի յերկնից բաշխի ի միջի
մերում:

**Սա է կեանք, յոյս, յարութիւն,
քաւութիւն եւ թողութիւն
մեղաց:**

Սաղմոս ասացէք Տեառն
Աստուծոյ մերում. Սաղմոս
ասացէք երկնաւոր թագաւորիս
մերում անմահի, որ նստի ի կառս
քերովբեականս:

PRIEST:

*Ee soorp, ee soorp, badvagan
marmno yev hAreneh. Diarun meroh
yev purgchin Hisoosi Krisdosi
jashagestzook surpootyamp. Vor
ichyal ee hergnitz pashkhi ee michi
meroom. Sa eh gyank, hooy,
harootyun, kavootyun yev
toghootyun meghatz.
Saghmos asatzek Diarn Asdoodzo
meroom, saghmos asatzek yergnavor
takavoris meroom anmahi, vor nusdi
ee gars kerovbeyagans.*

The Priest:

In holiness let us taste of the holy,
holy and precious Body and Blood of
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
who, having come down from
heaven, is distributed among us.
**This is life, hope of resurrection,
expiation and remission of sins.**
Sing psalms to the Lord our God,
sing psalms to our immortal heavenly
king, who rides in chariots of
cherubim.

- **Because of Christ, we have hope both for this life and for eternity.**
- **What we hope for in life may or may not come to pass. But our hope as believers, as Christians, is more than just the secular understanding of hope. It is so much more than just a desire or a wish.**
- **Our hope as Christian believers is an unshakable confidence in God — even when circumstances give us every reason to doubt.**
- **Our hope is in God’s promise that we shall have eternal life, and this is the greatest hope there is.**

End with John 16:33 GRAPHIC – *“I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

PowerPoint Slide #24

WRAP UP

SHOW VIDEO

CHOOSE VIDEO BASED ON YOUR GROUP'S NEEDS/AGES

For younger group (12-15): "R. Y.S.I.M. YOUTH MINISTRY HOPE VIDEO" on Jeremiah 29:11

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLzppPvKqKo> – (1:31)

For older group (16+): "Hope (Christian Inspirational & Motivational Video)"

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOWhEY9awc4> – 2:21

- *Solicit feedback after video – Any comments/reactions?*
- *Summarize with the following points:*
 - **Hope is essential to our faith as Christians**
 - **Hope is an unshakable confidence in God, despite one's circumstances.**
 - **Hope gives us strength**
 - **Hope teaches us to be patient and wait on God's timing and plan**
 - **Hope brings encouragement in knowing that God's promise of eternal life is unshakable and that He has overcome the world.**

CLOSING REFLECTION

- *Preferably done in the sanctuary for greatest impact.*
- *Ask participants to find a quiet corner where they can still hear the speaker but are not distracted by their friends/other participants.*
- *If done remotely, ask students to get comfortable, make sure they are in a quiet space, and to close their eyes and listen.*
- *Pose the following questions, allowing time between each for participants to think about their answers (15-20 seconds between questions – it's longer than you think!)*

We are going to spend our last few minutes together in quiet reflection. Find a quiet corner away from one another, without any distractions. Spend a few moments reflecting on the questions. This is your time to connect with God.

- 1. Think about any areas of your life that you are feeling a sense of hopelessness about right now?**
- 2. What would it take for that hopelessness to turn around? What would it take for you to be filled with hope?**
- 3. How can God help you in this situation? How can God help fill you with hope?**
- 4. Think about God's promise to never leave us – how can that change how you feel in your moments of hopelessness? How does knowing that God will never leave us, that He is always with us, help fill you with hope?**
- 5. Take a moment to think about how God has shown His love and hope to you today?**
- 6. When you are ready, take a moment to ask God to help you this coming week in those moments that you feel anxious, or scared or hopeless. Ask God to fill you with hope and to help you remember that you are not alone.**

CLOSING PRAYER

OPTION 1: GROUP PRAYER:

- *Have participants each write a one-line prayer relating to hope. Collect prayers, shuffle them and then redistribute to participants. End with each participant reading aloud the prayer they were given.*
- *This can be done remotely as well. Have each participant send their prayer in a private chat to the leader. Copy and paste the prayers into a document and then screen share, asking each participant to read one line, or leader reads all.*

OPTION 2: “A PRAYER FOR HOPE” and/or “I CONFESS WITH FAITH”

- *Group leader ends session by reading one of the following prayers (or use a prayer of your choosing):*

A PRAYER FOR HOPE

Lord, on those days that things don't seem to be going my way and life seems hopeless, help me to hear Your voice over all the other voices. Help me remember that You are my hope and an unending source of hope for the hopeless.

Lord, You know those things in my heart that I barely dare to hope for. Today I give them to You for You are my hope and I trust in You. “Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long.” [Psalm 25:5]

Fill me with the strength and peace that comes from knowing that You have overcome the world and that when I put my hope in You, I am never alone. Amen.

“I CONFESS WITH FAITH”

St. Nerses Shnorhali the Gracious (1102-1173)

Prayer 21

*O Christ, the true Light,
make my soul worthy to encounter with joy
the light of Your divine glory,
on the day I will be called by You;
and to rest in good hope,
in the mansions of the righteous,
until the great day of Your coming.
Have mercy upon your creatures,
and on me, a manifold sinner.*