

ICE BREAKER

When have you experienced a hope, which you were holding onto, become a reality, either in little ways or big ways?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message was most encouraging to you? What part do you find challenging?
2. What did You notice about God in the passage? What did you notice about yourself and other people in it?

GOSPEL EXCHANGE (REDEMPITIVE WORK)

Jesus asks us to give Him our burdens (Matthew 11:28-29), whatever they may be (a lie we have believed about God or ourselves, our hurt or negative emotions, or even our concerns for loved ones), so He can carry them for us and give us His peace (wholeness and completeness) in exchange.

What do you want to exchange with Jesus today?

What is the burden? “Lord Jesus, I give you my...”

What’s His gift? “Lord Jesus, I receive your...”

ACTION QUESTIONS

1. What is one step of obedience you can take this week, based on what you’ve learned today? *(NOTE – You might consider stopping and prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence for an answer, then write it down.)*
2. During the coming week, who is someone with whom you can share what you learned today? *(NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.)*



Sermon Study - Conversation Guide

November 12, 2023

“Holding Hope”

Ephesians 4:3-6

This guide is a discipleship tool for personal reflection, family conversations, for home groups, and for Table Talk on Sundays @10:40 am and 12:15 pm on the Lowell Patio

Coastal Community Church
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We can easily skip over the following few verses because we might not understand them. I want us to see that Paul didn't just take these words and put them into a blender. He means every word.

4:3 *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

Unity takes effort, starting with God. We are all united through the Spirit and at peace with God because God is at peace with us. Did you know that? God isn't anxious or frustrated with you. God the Father is at peace with you. That's true because of Jesus. He made it possible for us to be not only at peace with God, but within ourselves and with each other.

The dividing walls we put up because of our different cultures, opinions, and ideologies are meaningless compared to the Creator of the Universe, who died so that your captivity and death would end. Therefore, we must also make the effort to unite with each other. Often, that means we must live in tension.

You'll have to give time, money, effort, and energy for the benefit of others. That's tension. For example, we are like the strings on a mandolin connected to the headstock, which is Jesus. But we also must stay connected to the body of the mandolin or the strings are pointless.

When we're connected to each other as the body of Christ, we're put in tension. That tension is what makes our strings vibrate. With each person only playing the notes we are called to play, rather than trying to play all the notes alone, our lives are joined together in the incredible song God wants us to sing together. Make every effort to keep this unity.

Show up. Give your time and invest your money into what Jesus is doing. Serve. Connect deeply with a few others here in our groups. The tension of your efforts towards unity produces more than you can ask or imagine. You are powerfully significant. Your prayers, love, generosity, and efforts matter. God the Holy Spirit dwells in you, leading you to build connections, which change lives forever. This is why Paul writes...

4 *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;*

When I first read this, I got the meaning all wrong. I thought if I make every effort to maintain peace and unity in my relationships, then hope will come. But that makes hope dependent on me, which diminishes it. Hope is not about me. It's about the Spirit working through us all.

There's one church, which is the body of Christ, which means each of us is now unified by one Spirit – the Holy Spirit. That's our hope. You don't have to save yourself or anyone else. You can't raise yourself from death to life. That's the Spirit's job.

There's tremendous freedom in all of us knowing that we have the same story – I was dead, and therefore at a dead end, but God made me alive by the power of the Spirit. Hope is our assurance in the certainty that God will make a way forward for our good, no matter what we face. God will make something good out of this.

I'm learning to choose whatever good thing God has for me, even if it looks completely different than I could ever imagine. Jesus is with me and has a way forward. So, I choose to hold onto hope. I choose to let others love me, bringing us all into unity through the Holy Spirit.

4:5 *one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

I'm not in charge anymore. Jesus is. We have one faith. All of us go through the flip flop of choosing to trust Jesus or not. And all of us experience the same joy, belonging, hope, and love when we put our faith into action and see God do miracles. All of us have the same baptism, which represents the truth that we were all dead, but now alive.

Please understand. I'm not saying hope means nothing bad will ever happen. Bad stuff happens all the time because of my choices, because of others' choices, because we live in a broken world. Yet, with Jesus, I know that He is redeeming that pain, and me, as I suffer through it. It's what the watching world around us hopes is true. We get to show them that hope is real when we choose unity in the Spirit, despite our pain.

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: Tips for great conversation

- We aren't here to teach/fix each other, but to share our experiences.
- Show respect by listening to one another, asking clarifying questions.
- If you're quick to share, allow space and time for others to speak up.
- If you're slow to speak, your experience is valuable so please share.