





- 1 **In Proverbs 13:12, Solomon gives a profound summary of the Bible's teaching on hope.** Simply put, hope in anything besides God will always disappoint us, but placing our hope and desire in God alone can be a source of satisfaction no matter how difficult life is. Biblical hope is not just a feeling that something will get better. It is a settled, determined expectation that is located on something/someone outside of yourself.

 What is the source of biblical hope? Discuss specifically the aspects of God's character that build your hope in Him.


 How do the following passages give you confidence? Romans 15:13, Psalm 42:5, Proverbs 8:32–36, Rom 8:19, 23–25, Romans 4:18.

- 2 **Solomon says in Proverbs 13:12 that “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.”** When Solomon refers to the heart he is referring not only to our emotions and feelings, but the whole inward person. When we wait so long for something that expectation and desire are replaced with hopelessness, we can wither spiritually and find ourselves vulnerable to despair. What are some of the signs in your own life that you are experiencing the heart sickness of hope deferred?


 Are there situations or circumstances in your life right now where you are experiencing hope deferred? Think through how you might be able to share this with the group for prayer and encouragement.

 One of the manifestations of the heart sickness that Solomon is describing here could be categorized as depression. See also Proverbs 18:14. In depression, people struggle with the concept of hope. Perhaps they do not see a way out of their despair. Something is clouding their hope. If you have ever been depressed, what was that experience like? If you came out of that depression, what place did hope play in your healing?

- 3 **In Psalm 62, David is surrounded by enemies who are trying to murder him.** Though he had little reason to cling to hope, David still was able to say, “My hope comes from God.” David, like many other people in the Bible, faced difficult times with no evidence that things would get better, but they chose hope anyway.<sup>1</sup>

 Notice how David repeated the word “alone.” What do you think the significance of that is?

 Review verse 11–12. What would change in your life if you really believed this and lived it out? What specifically in verses 11–12 help you put your hope in God?

 Compare David's situation to that of Lamentations 3. Skim verses 1–20, especially vs18. What stands out to you? What encourages you about hope in Lamentations 3:21–24? Personalize those lines. What would it look like for you to hope in God in your difficulties this week?

When we think about the Bible's teaching on hope, we often think about how we need it to make it through difficult times, but we also need biblical hope when our riches or status increase. (Ps 62:9-10) What "false hopes" are revealed as shaky foundations when the truth of God's word is applied? How have you seen a positive circumstance to be a source of hope deferred and heart sickness?

**4** **Charles Spurgeon once preached, "My dear friends, you will never see the tree of life aright unless you first look at the cross... Thus then, Jesus Christ hanging on the cross is the tree of life in its wintertime."** What do you think he meant when he spoke of the tree of life in its wintertime?

How does the work of Jesus (in His life, death, and resurrection) strengthen you to live wisely in a world of deferred hopes and disappointed desires? See also Luke 9:24-25, Philippians 3:7-8, 1:21, Matthew 19:29, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Hebrews 11:24-26.

**5** **What are some of the ways that God uses our disappointed hopes to grow us in godliness?** After discussing a few, share which ones you have been experiencing recently in your relationship with the Lord.

How does Romans 5:2-5 encourage you in the sufferings of hope deferred?

Interact with the following quote: "When you've passed through your own fiery trials, and found God to be true to what he says, you have real help to offer. You have firsthand experience of both his sustaining grace and his purposeful design. He has kept you through pain; he has reshaped you more into his image. . . . What you are experiencing from God, you can give away in increasing measure to others. You are learning both the tenderness and the clarity necessary to help sanctify another person's deepest distress." - David Powlison, *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, 166.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

**6** **In Mere Christianity, CS Lewis said "hope... means... a continual looking forward to the eternal world . . . It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought the most of the next...it is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth "thrown in;" aim at earth and you will get neither."**

What are some practical ways that you can aim at heaven while we remain here on earth? In what ways can you actively bring to mind the glory that you are heading to? (Romans 8:18) Brainstorm several ideas as a group and seek to implement them this week.

How can this type of thinking transform your view of your life and your circumstances?

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