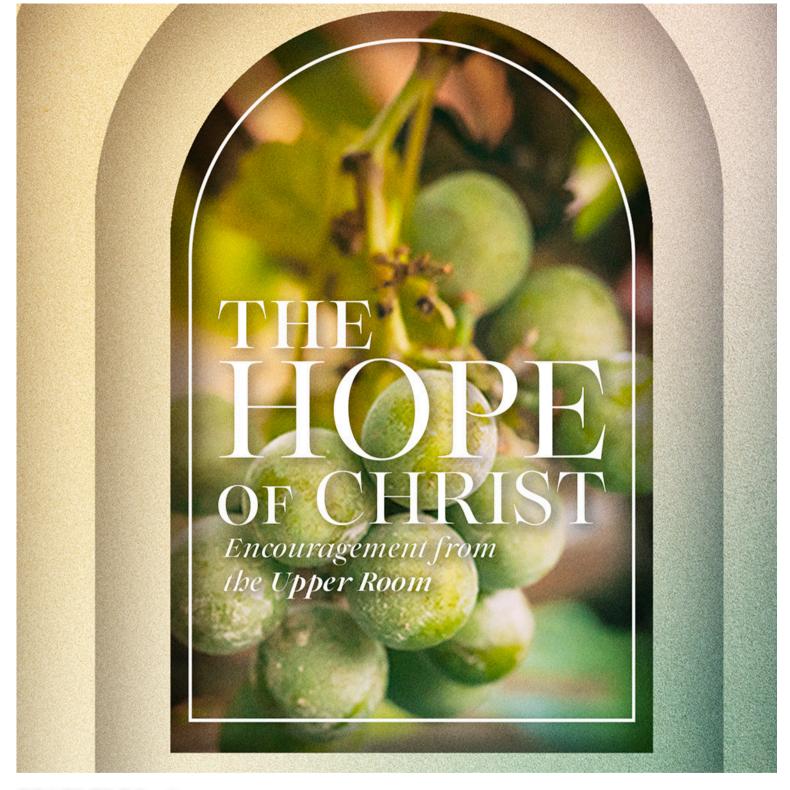


LEADER GUIDE WEEKS 1-3



WEEK 1

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

WEEK ONE



We serve a God who is able to understand us. There is a reason for this: God became flesh in the form of Jesus Christ. He was miraculously conceived, yet naturally delivered. He was born, yet born of a virgin. Had Jesus simply descended to earth in the form of a mighty being, we would respect him but never draw near to him. After all, we would wonder how God could understand what it means to be human. On the other hand. had Jesus been biologically conceived with two earthly parents, we would draw near to him but not want to worship him. After all, we would wonder if he was any different than you and me. But because Jesus is both-at once God and human-we have the best of both worlds. He is fully human, so we draw near to him. He is fully divine, so we worship him. Our God gets us. As a result, we are not left to languish on our own but find mercy and grace when we need it. This week, we will be studying God's promise in His Word that He understands us and everything we will face on this earth.

<u>Passages we'll review:</u>

Colossians 1:15-23; Luke 2:41-52; Matthew 26:23-46; Hebrews 5:7-10; Hebrews 10:19-23; Isaiah 40:28-31

LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED!

WEEK ONE

OPENING

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

When you "blew it" as a child, how did you feel about your mistake? About yourself? About others involved?

From whom did you draw comfort?

WATCH

This week's video is found in RightNow Media. We will be viewing the <u>Week 6 video</u> of the Unshakable Hope series by Max Lucado, God Gets You.

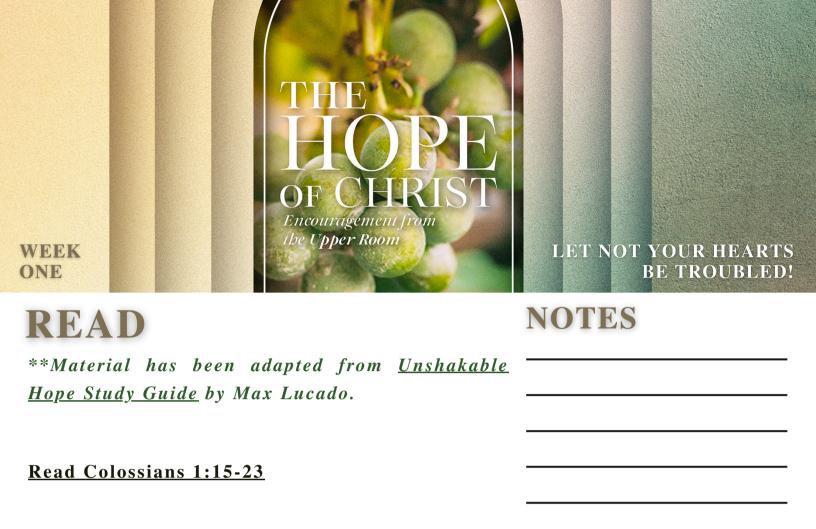
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

What jumped out at you from the video in this session? What are some of the key points that impacted you more than others?

NOTES

LET NOT YOUR HEARTS

BE TROUBLED!

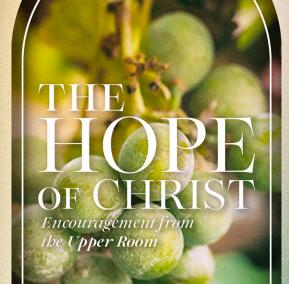


How would you answer someone who genuinely asked, "Who is Jesus"?

(Open for discussion)

Of the list of statements Paul makes of Jesus, which one is most meaningful to you? Which one surprises you most? Which one have you not thought of before?

(Open for discussion)



LET NOT YOUR HEARTS

NOTES

BE TROUBLED!

WEEK ONE

What would cause you to lose hope and shake your faith? How does Jesus' deity give you confidence in His ability to overcome anything you face?

(Open for discussion. Jesus is the image of God. Because Christ is the Creator of all things, He all things together. He has absolute holds supremacy over all of creation. While He came to earth as a man, He had existed before all things. Everything we need can be found in Christ. He is the head of the church and He is its source of life. He has conquered death through His resurrection, and we can find comfort and assurance in knowing that we, too, will be resurrected with Him for eternity. Through Him, we have been reconciled to God, and we are no longer His enemies, but His friends. As a result, we can have peace while we live this life on earth and hope for our future with Him.)

<u>Read Luke 2:41-52</u>

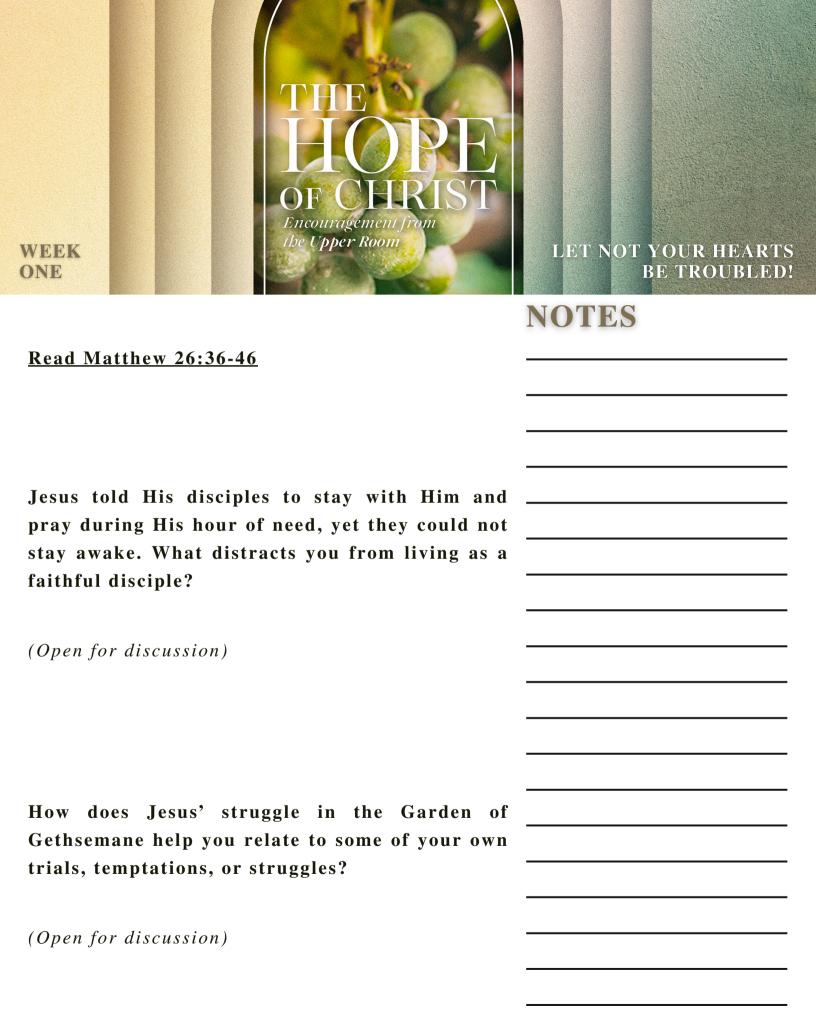
WEEK

ONE

Why is the humanity of Jesus important in building an ongoing relationship with Him? How does Jesus' humanity give you a greater appreciation of His ability to understand what you face in this life?

Encouragement from the Upper Room

(We know that Jesus has experienced a life much like ours. He was raised in a working-class family with other siblings. His parents, though they knew that He was the Son of God, did not fully understand what this would mean. However, Jesus grew and had experiences much like those we encounter. He honored His earthly parents, He learned a trade, He personally experienced and understood the physical and emotional life of those He came to save. As a result, He understands everything we encounter. We are not alone in our struggles!) LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED!



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WEEK ONE

LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED!

NOTES

Read Hebrews 5:7-10 and Hebrews 10:19-23

How do these passages remove any barriers to approach God with your struggles and increase your confidence that He will hear your prayers?

(Open for discussion. We know that Christ agonized and suffered as well, but He chose to do the will of God above everything else. His obedience can sustain and encourage us in our own struggles, because He is with us. He has provided us with a way to enter into God's Presence as our great HIgh Priest. No matter what we face, even death, we are to follow the example He set for us, knowing that, through HIm alone, we will be victorious, because He is strong, mighty, faithful, and holy.)

DIGGING DEEPER Read Isaiah 40:28-31

WEEK

ONE

LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED!

NOTES

Isaiah wrote this passage in response to the Jews who had been held captive in Babylon for many years. They were refugees in a foreign place. They had no power and no leaders to lead them. They were weak and helpless, unable to fight for themselves. They had rebelled against God and, as a result, found themselves destitute and humiliated. But God had not forgotten them! He had a plan for them, but first, they had to redirect their focus from themselves to the God who loved them and had plans for them.

Encouragement from the Upper Room

How was God described in this passage? What encouragement can we get from being reminded of Him in this way?

(He was described as the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. Our creator is never taken by surprise. He always knows what we are going through. He may not remove our struggles, but He can give us the strength to endure those struggles, even when we feel exhausted and overwhelmed.)

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WEEK ONE

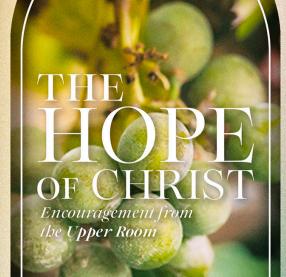
Why do we find waiting on the Lord so difficult?

(Open for discussion)

To whom does God want to give renewed strength? Why does He want to do this?

(God wants to give renewed strength to those who put their hope and trust in Him - His people! While His strength may not look like what we expect, it will be exactly what we need to endure, to keep fighting, to not give up, even in the toughest times. God wants us to look to Him for all that we need, reflecting on His character and His promises and bringing glory to Him!)

On our own, we will fail, but if we put our trust in God's promises and His timing, we will have the strength to endure whatever comes our way as we exchange our weakness for His power! LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED!



PRAY

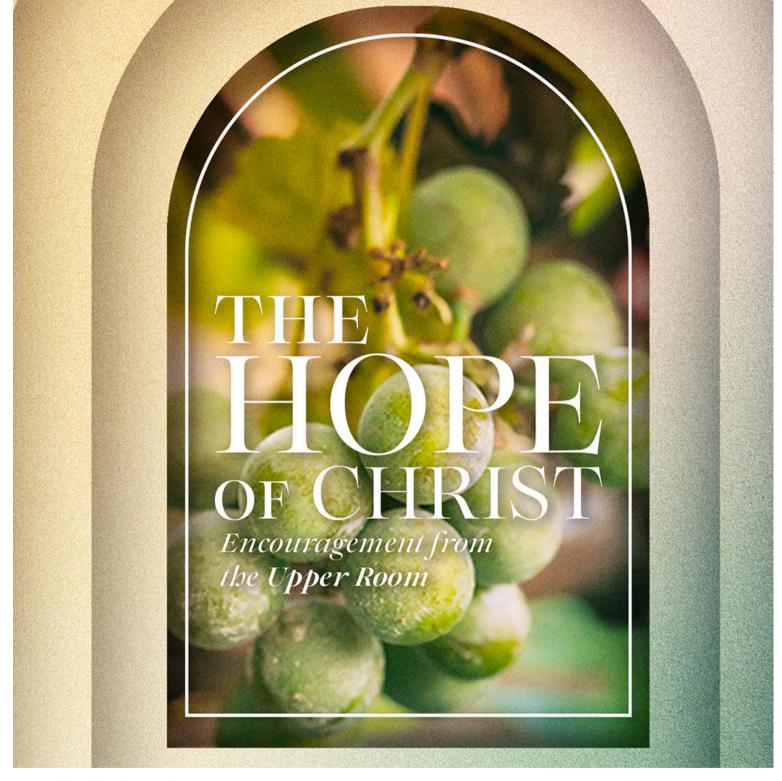
WEEK

ONE

Consider the following as you pray together:

- Write down a few areas in your life that you view as weaknesses. Commit this week to reminding yourself that you have a high priest who understands and accepts you, and that you can and will approach Him with confidence in these areas.
- In what difficult situation in your life do you need to experience the comfort of the Lord? You may need the prayer of others for this. Find a friend who will pray for you or share with your LifeGroup.
- There are people in your life who need the confidence of knowing God understands their weaknesses. How can you pray for one of these important people in your sphere of influence?

LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED!



WEEK 2



Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

BIG IDEA

WEEK

TWO

NOTES

LIVING IN THE

PRESENCE OF GOD!

The Holy Spirit was central to the life of the church. In fact, everything that happens from the beginning of Acts to the end of Revelation is a result of the Holy Spirit's work. The Holy Spirit came alongside the disciples, indwelt them, and gave them the push they needed to face the challenges ahead. He wants to do the same for us. The Holy Spirit entered our lives when we confessed our faith in Christ. From that point forward, we had access to the very power and personality of God! As the Holy Spirit has his way in our lives, a transformation occurs. We begin to think like God thinks, love like God loves, and see like God sees. We can minister in power and pray in power and walk in power. The Holy Spirit promises to baptize us in power, just as he did for the believers in the early church. We just need to be open to his promptings and be willing to move in step where he leads. This week, we will be studying God's promise in Word that He will give us power through the Holy Spirit within us.

Encouragement from the **Upper Room**

Passages we'll review:

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-14; Romans 8:26-27;
- 1 Thessalonians 5:19-24; Ezekiel 37:11-14

OPENING

WEEK

TWO

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

Encouragement from the Upper Room

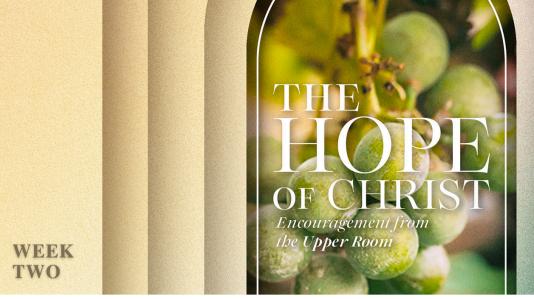
What is the greatest gift you have ever been given? Why was it special to you?

WATCH

This week's video is found in RightNow Media. We will be viewing the <u>Week 10 video</u> of the Unshakable Hope series by Max Lucado, You Will Have Power.

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!



READ

**Material has been adapted from <u>Unshakable</u> <u>Hope Study Guide</u> by Max Lucado.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:15-23

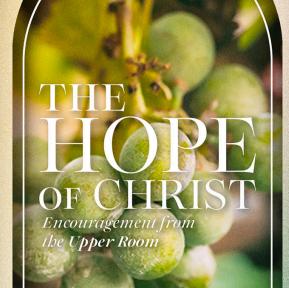
According to this passage, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in the work of the church?

(The Spirit gives us gifts that enable us to serve in and benefit the body of Christ - the Church - and to glorify God.)

What are the gifts the Holy Spirit has given to you? How is He empowering you for ministry inside the church? How is He empowering you for ministry outside the church?

(Open for discussion)

LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!



WEEK TWO LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!

NOTES

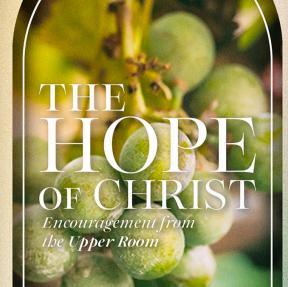
Why do you think God gives people different gifts? Ultimately, why has God given His people gifts?

(Just as our physical bodies have many different parts that are necessary for our life and health, the church has many different parts that are needed in order to be a living, growing body of believers. The Spirit knows what is needed and each member has a gifting that is specific to them. Every part is equally important to the life of the Church. We are to use our gifts as an offering to God and to bring glory to Him.)

Read Romans 8:26-27

What is your main hindrance to prayer? How can you overcome it?

(Open for discussion)



WEEK TWO

What do you think it means to pray in the way described in this passage? How could you begin to make this your regular practice of prayer?

(When we find ourselves weak, suffering, afraid, and unsure of what God is doing, the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. He feels the burdens we are carrying, and He is able to communicate to God in a way that our words cannot express. As His Spirit intercedes for us, we will find renewed hope, refreshed hearts, and strengthened faith. Open for discussion.)

If God knows our needs and the Spirit is praying for us, why do we need to pray?

(God wants us to have a personal relationship with Him. He does not force HImself on us, and He desires that we come to Him by our own decision. Through prayer, we are able to communicate with Him and encounter Him personally. We are able to surrender our own desires and seek His will above everything else.)

LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!

Read Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-24

WEEK

TWO

What are some ways you can quench the Holy Spirit in your life?

Encouragement from the Upper Room

LIVING IN THE

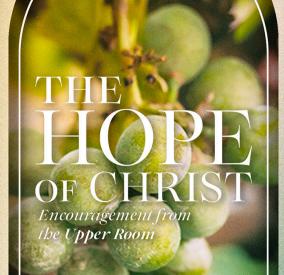
PRESENCE OF GOD!

NOTES

(We can quench the Spirit by ignoring the gifts we have been given. We can also quench it when we allow thoughts and actions that are contrary to God's ways and His teachings to guide our lives or reject His Spirit. Our sinful choices can also quench the fire in us - doubt, anger, immorality, etc.)

How do you think you can learn to live more by the leading of the Holy Spirit?

(We can test everything by studying and knowing God's Word. We can depend on the guidance and conviction of the Holy Spirit to reveal His Truth to us. We can hold on to the good, which comes from God, and stay away from evil. Open for discussion.)



WEEK TWO

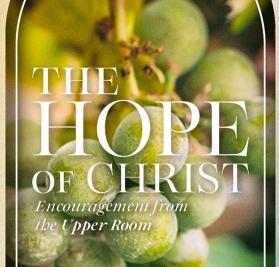
> What are some practical ways we can abstain from every form of evil and stay true to our faith?

(Open for discussion)

DIGGING DEEPER Read Ezekiel 37:11-14

Once again, we find God's people in captivity. But once again, we see God's promise to restore their land and renew their lives. God gave Ezekiel a vision of a valley full of dry bones, the bodies of people who had been dead for many years. God instructed Ezekiel to prophesy to them, and as he did, they came together and were filled by breath from the Lord, standing as a vast army. As God explained this prophecy to Ezekiel, He revealed their source of life, His Spirit. Just as in His vision to Ezekiel, we have this same Spirit breathing life into us.

LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!



LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!

NOTES

How do we crowd out the Holy Spirit from our lives and feel like Ezekiel 37:11 describes us?

(We crowd out the Spirit from our lives by focusing on the world and our own efforts. We lose sight of God and what He is doing. We avoid fellowship with other believers and the studying of His Word. We feel overwhelmed by the expectations of this world and the trials we face.)

We find that the most significant part of the revival of the "dry bones" was when God breathed His Spirit into those dry bones. We can feel like those dry bones at times. Describe how important it is for us to be filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit?

(On our own, we are much like the valley of dry bones, lifeless and worn down, void of hope. Only through His Spirit can we become alive and empowered to live the lives He has called us to live. Open for discussion.)

LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!

NOTES

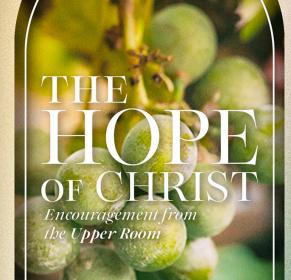
Why do we find waiting on the Lord so difficult?

(Open for discussion)

To whom does God want to give renewed strength? Why does He want to do this?

(God wants to give renewed strength to those who put their hope and trust in Him - His people! While His strength may not look like what we expect, it will be exactly what we need to endure, to keep fighting, to not give up, even in the toughest times. God wants us to look to Him for all that we need, reflecting on His character and His promises and bringing glory to Him!)

Just as God promised to restore His people, He can also restore life to us, no matter how dry or dead we may feel. Our hope and prayer in times of despair should be for His Spirit to renew us and bring us back to life! He is our only Hope!



PRAY

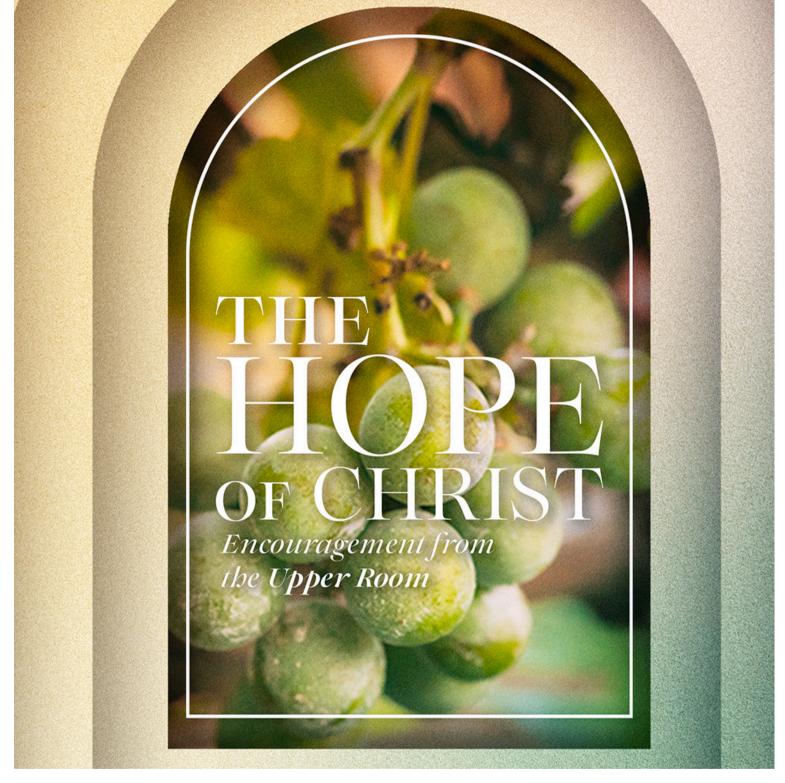
WEEK

TWO

Consider the following as you pray together:

- Write down some things that tend to distract you from following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Recognize the sources of those distractions. Reflect on practical ways to change your rhythms and routines to allow for greater work of the Holy Spirit.
- If God withdrew His Holy Spirit for a week, would you notice? Where do you need to see the power in God's Promise working more clearly?
- Think about those in your sphere of influence who may not be experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. As the Lord told Ezekiel to prophesy to the dry bones, He is also telling us to prophesy to those around us who are spiritually dead - to lovingly share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Are you equipped, ready, and willing to see others restored to life? If not, what needs to happen?

LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!



WEEK 3

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

OF CHR DF CHR Encouragement from the Upper Room

BIG IDEA

WEEK

THREE

The Christian hope depends entirely upon the assumption that Jesus Christ died a physical death, vacated an actual grave, and ascended into heaven where he—at this moment—reigns as head of the church. The resurrection changed everything. If we embrace this promise, it changes our own eternity. There will come a moment where we pass from this life to the next. No more struggle with the earth. No more shame before God. No more tension between people. No more death. This is our hope for tomorrow—but it can bring strength to us today. Our finest moment will be our final moment! We have a promise from the living God that our death will be swallowed up in victory! Jesus Christ rose from the dead not just to show us his power but also to reveal our path. He will lead us through the valley of death. This week, we will be studying God's promise in his Word that Jesus has won the ultimate victory over death and the grave.

Passages we'll review:

1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 15:50-58; Luke 23:39-43; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Peter 3:9-14; Isaiah 26:1-6

LIVING WITH THE PEACE OF GOD!

OPENING

WEEK

THREE

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

Encouragement from the Upper Room

Which do you believe more: What you hear? What you see? What you want? Why do you think that is?

WATCH

This week's video is found in RightNow Media. We will be viewing the <u>Week 8 video</u> of the Unshakable Hope series by Max Lucado, Death Has Been Defeated.

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

LIVING WITH THE PEACE OF GOD!



READ

**Material has been adapted from <u>Unshakable</u> <u>Hope Study Guide</u> by Max Lucado.

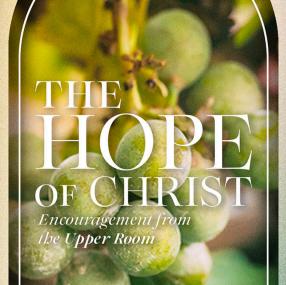
Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 and 15:50-58

Why is the topic of death so difficult for people to discuss?

(Open for discussion)

What encouragement do these passages provide about the future?

(Open for discussion. Christ's resurrection guarantees our future resurrection. We know that all of those belonging to God, who have passed on before us, will be resurrected when Christ returns. Those who are still living when He returns will be changed. We also know that when He returns, it will be quick, in the blink of an eye. Those who pass on before His coming will be with the Lord after they die.) LIVING WITH THE PEACE OF GOD!



LIVING WITH THE PEACE OF GOD!

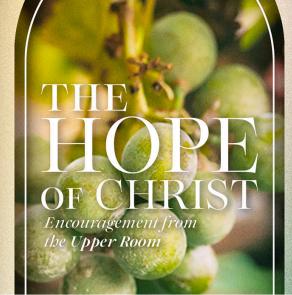
NOTES

What encouragement do they provide for your present?

(In our present, earthly condition, we are destined to perish because of our sinful nature. Our only hope is for our earthly condition to be changed. We can find present encouragement in knowing that Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, was able to reverse the penalty of death that came with the sin of Adam. We no longer have to be afraid of death, because we can live in the light of His victory. Much of the work that is done here on earth is done in vanity, for our own good or personal gain. However, Paul tells us that anything we do for God's glory and in His Name will have eternal value, even if we don't see it at the time.)

Read Luke 23:39-43

What was the unshakable hope for the second thief on the cross?



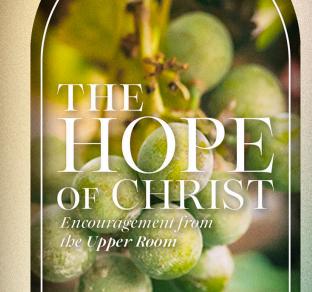
(Open for discussion. The second thief on the cross realized that while he and the other thief deserved to die, Jesus was innocent; He did not deserve to die. He understood that nothing he could ever do or say could save him, only his faith in Christ. While he did not fully understand, he had great faith that Christ could somehow overcome sin and death, even as He hung on the cross. As a result, even though he was facing death for the sins he had committed, he could rest in knowing that he would be in the presence of God after he died.)

How does this give us assurance and comfort today as Christians?

(Open for discussion. Jesus even saved a criminal as he was dying on a cross as a consequence of his sin. For those of us who come to know Christ sooner, not only can we rest in knowing that we will spend eternity with Him, but our lives can be so much more useful and so much more fulfilling when we surrender to and believe in Him. In this case, we can definitely say the sooner, the better!)

Read Matthew 25:31-46

LIVING WITH THE PEACE OF GOD!



How do these words of Jesus comfort you? What concerns do they raise in you? What does this passage mean for you personally?

(Open for discussion)

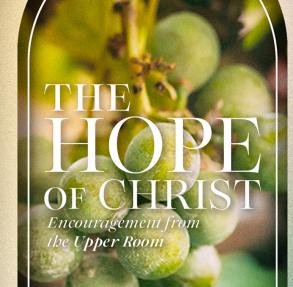
The true evidence of our belief in God is found in how we treat "the least of these". What we do for others, or how we treat others, demonstrates what we really think about Jesus. If we truly love Him and are committed to Him, then we should seek to do His will and treat those who represent Him the same way. Our actions will separate His obedient followers from the pretenders and unbelievers. We know that Jesus is coming again, so we must live in a way that shows we are alert and ready, not wasting any opportunity. We can be faithful with what He has given us, looking forward to the day He returns.

Read 2 Peter 3:9-14

How does God's patience comfort you? How does it challenge you?

(Open for discussion)

LIVING WITH THE PEACE OF GOD!



How can you anchor your hope in this passage when the trials of your day seem overwhelming?

(Open for discussion. We must remember that God's timing is not the same as ours. Even when we are going through difficult times, we must live knowing that the time is short, and we have been given important work to do for Him. In anticipation of His return, we ought to live holy and godly lives, being found spotless and blameless. Since we know the end of the story, we can live at peace with Him, even in the midst of trials and suffering!)

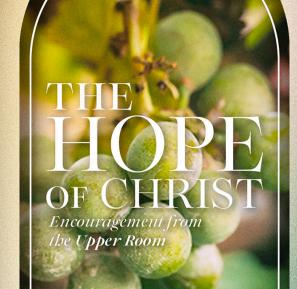
DIGGING DEEPER

Read Isaiah 26:1-6

This passage looks to the time when Jesus will reign here on earth, as Christ establishes His kingdom. Who will be allowed to enter in?

(The righteous will be the ones allowed to enter in. This refers to those who have trusted in Christ and chosen to follow Him.)

LIVING WITH THE PEACE OF GOD!



LIVING WITH THE PEACE OF GOD!

NOTES

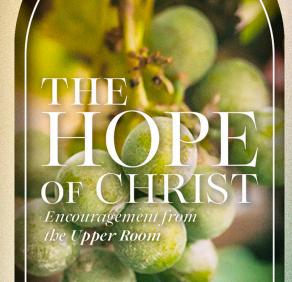
What is the key to perfect peace? Why is this essential to our lives as followers of Christ?

(The key to perfect peace is setting our minds on Christ alone and putting our trust in Him. We can never avoid trials and difficulties in the world we live in, but when we trust in Him, we have His support, held strong by His mighty power and unchanging love. Open for discussion.)

Why is God called the Everlasting Rock?

(No matter the circumstances, God is always with us. He always protects those who trust in Him. He is our shelter in times of need. He will defend us against our enemy.)

The peace we find in Him is so much more than just the absence of war or trouble. When we have the peace of God, we can experience wholeness, quietness of soul, preservation, and completeness, no matter the external circumstances!

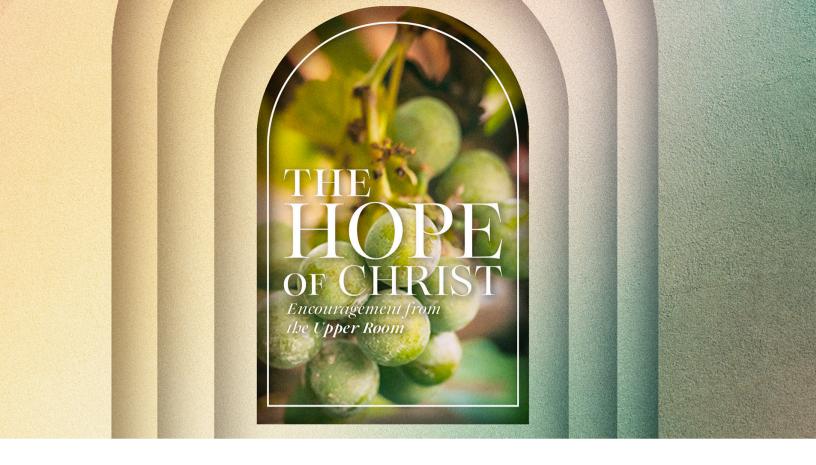


PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- Think about an experience you have had with death. Maybe you lost a parent, child, friend, or coworker. Think of a few of the thoughts and emotions you experienced. Then write two words: hope and victory. How do those two words compare to your other list of words? Talk to God about how you can view death as victory.
- God has won the victory over death. Where else have you seen God's victory in your life this week? In what areas do you need to ask God to reveal the victory?
- How can you pray for someone in your life who is struggling right now and coils use a reminder of this unshakable promise from God?

LIVING WITH THE PEACE OF GOD!



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