

Champions of Hope Small Group Study #3

EPHESIANS: God's Word... A USER MANUAL for CHURCHES

I. Welcome

II. **Introductions:** Name a 'saint' in your life... someone who has had a deep impact in your life

III. **Purpose of the Small Group Study:** *"To explore HOPE theologically and spiritually for everyday life."*

IV. Opening Prayer:

A prayer reflection inspired by Romans 4:18, where Paul writes that, *"Hoping against hope..."*

Week One and Two:

Hope nonetheless.

Hope despite.

Hope regardless.

Hope still.

Hope where we had ceased to hope.

Hope amid what threatens hope.

Hope with those who feed our hope.

Hope beyond what we had hoped.

Week Three and Four:

Hope that draws us past our limits.

Hope that defies expectations.

Hope that questions what we have known.

Hope that makes a way where there is none.

Hope that takes us past our fear.

Hope that calls us into life.

Hope that holds us beyond death.

Hope that blesses those to come.

Week Five: All of the Prayer Reflection

~ written by Jan L. Richardson, and posted on **The Painted Prayerbook**. <http://paintedprayerbook.com/>

V. Ice Breakers

- Share high and lows of the week
- What have been your take-aways of this Small group experience thus far?

VI. **Hope Quote:** ... ""To choose hope is to step firmly forward into the howling wind, baring one's chest to the elements, knowing that, in time, the storm will pass" Desmond Tutu

VII. Scripture Background on Ephesians:

The New Testament Book of Ephesians is a letter. St. Paul spent 2.5 years in the large and important city of Ephesus. The church in Ephesus had lost its way. They had become exclusive to people of different cultural backgrounds.

Paul's teachings on Jesus were revolutionary! His emphasis on salvation as a gift of grace and not earned was (and is) controversial! Paul moves religion from a static, far-off god to be appeased, to a God, who in Jesus Christ, came to save us by grace.

VIII. Scripture Study... Going Deeper Ephesians 3:8-21 (NRSV)

⁸ Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make everyone see^[a] what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^[b] God who created all things; ¹⁰ so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.^[c] ¹³ I pray therefore that you^[d] may not lose heart over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,^[e] ¹⁵ from whom every family^[f] in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶ I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸ I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

- What do you find "hopeful" in this Scripture? What words or phrases speak to you?
- How does the Scripture speak about the church?
- Take closer look at vs. 17... what God saying in these words?
- How can Hope Lutheran Church be a sign of hope in our community and in the world?
- Imagination and hope are synonymous... how can our imagination enliven our church and our own lives?
- Was there anything in this week's sermon that connected 'hope' to your life?

IX. Take-Away

- Claim your sainthood and understand God as bigger!
- Your take-aways?

X. Good Morning/Good Night Prayer

Amazing and Mysterious God, you have revealed your love to us in Jesus and I am anchoring my life on the hope that is in your promise... your promise of presence, forgiveness, and love. May my trust in you ignite a revolution of hope! Amen.