

CHAMPIONS of HOPE Small Group Study #1

"Mystery of Hope" Ephesians 1:3-14

- I. Welcome/Introductions
- II. Purpose of the Small Group Study: *"To explore HOPE theologically and spiritually for everyday life."*
- III. 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/>

- IV. Ice Breakers
 - Who can name (without Googling) the first person on a Wheaties box, the 'breakfast of champions'? (hint: a baseball player in 1934)
 - What holiday do you like best... Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter? Why?
- V. Hope Quote: ... *"remember that Hope is a good thing... maybe the best of things, and a good thing never dies."* Andy Defresne in the movie Shawshank Redemption
- VI. 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 have become exclusive to people of different cultural backgrounds. Paul's letter is about teaching them to grow up... in Christ.

How will they grow up? Paul says that growing up is anchoring our hope in the beautiful mystery of Jesus Christ. The mystery of God active in the world, present in the lives of people, and at work through the church. Our “firm foundation” is living into the mystery!

VII. Scripture Study

“Hope is found in MYSTERY”: Ephesians 1:3-14 (NRSV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ^[a] before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,^[b] having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this^[c] is the pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory.

What do you find “hopeful” in this Scripture? What verses capture the gift of hope in our faith?

- How does God feel mysterious to you? Does the mystery of God strengthen or weaken your faith?
- Re-read verses 7-12... What does God promise? How do these promises anchor our lives in hope?
- Was there anything in this week’s sermon that connected ‘hope’ to your life?

VIII. Take-Away

- Why is ‘Hope’ so important in our lives?
- The Christian symbol for Hope is an Anchor. Why an Anchor?

IX. 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. I stand on unshakable hope in You! Amen.