



WEEK ONE

Our Hope



Day One // You Have Hope

“There’s nothing more calming in difficult moments than knowing there’s someone fighting with you.” —Mother Teresa

SEEK GOD

Dear sister, I want to encourage you to begin each daily lesson by using the *Seek God* section as a prompt to spend some time in prayer. Every bit of truth you learn and are strengthened by in this study will be straight from the Holy Spirit, your Teacher. Open your heart to His lessons and invite Him to lead you.

OBTAIN TRUTH

Today is the beginning of our hope journey! I am thrilled you have this guide and have joined me. To start, we’re going to figure out what hope truly is. No doubt, the concept of hope can sometimes be confusing. One reason is because there are two uses of the word “hope.” There is a worldly hope we use in everyday life— where we hope we get the job or hope our loved ones travel home safely. With this type of hope, we are uncertain of the outcome and cross our fingers as we hope for the best.

This everyday, worldly hope is quite different than the biblical hope the Scriptures refer to. The hope we have in Christ is not a desire nor wishful thinking. The Bible’s use of hope conveys an entirely different meaning. Biblical hope is “confident expectation.”

Read Ephesians 1:16-19 again printed here for you. This will be the foundational Scripture for our study.

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ... Ephesians 1:16-19 ESV

Wow, what a power-packed prayer!

Although the Apostle Paul prayed this prayer for the Church in Ephesus, it is certainly a prayer that applies to all followers of Christ, both then and now.

I want us to zoom in on verse 18, *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you*. What is Paul praying we gain enlightenment for? Let's zoom in a little more... *that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you*.

Having the blessings of God is wonderful, but not knowing what these blessings are or not living from these blessings is a tragedy. Let me explain it this way:

Have you ever discovered money in your jacket or pants pocket you forgot about? I love when this happens! It's like receiving an unexpected bonus. The funny part is I had the money the whole time but just forgot about it. It's like I temporarily robbed myself. Do you see how this can happen with our abundant riches in Christ?

Now read Ephesians 3:7-8 ESV, printed here for you, and notice what Paul has been commissioned to do.

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ...
Ephesians 3:7-8 ESV

What was Paul given the grace and power of God to do?

What is the gospel, which means "good news," Paul was called to preach?

Are you grasping the beauty of the gospel? *The unsearchable riches of Christ!* This, sisters, is what Paul preached. And this glorious hope is a sure promise! We can confidently expect all that Christ lavishly gives. That's why I'm so passionate about this new study. Because such good news must continually be shared! Because we need to know the hope to which we were called; because we need to remember our hope. And because we need to be ready to share the hope our Lord offers anyone who accepts Him.

But, how can we know the hope of what we have in Christ if Paul describes it as "unsearchable"?

Some versions use the word "unfathomable," but the original Greek word is *anexichniastos*, which means "past finding out, unsearchable, not to be tracked out." The idea is that these blessings in Christ are too deep to be measured.

This information is breathtaking to me. I want to understand what we have in Christ fully and immediately. But even though we cannot yet fully unearth the depths of the wonderful riches we have been given, one day we will grasp it. Until then, we *can* gain more knowledge, wisdom, and insight from the Holy Spirit and God's Word, and hope will arise.



Day Two // Knowing Your Hope

“Most of us know about God, but that is quite different from knowing God.” —Billy Graham

SEEK GOD

Begin your study time with prayer. Focus your heart on knowing your Heavenly Father intimately. Seek to know Him as a friend and king. Tell Him your desire to know Him more.

OBTAIN TRUTH

There’s one problem with hope. It doesn’t come naturally. It’s natural for us to cross our fingers and hope for the best. It’s harder to expect confidently in God. But here’s the deal: to have hope, we must know God. Why? Because God is our hope! So for us to live a life of hope, we must know the object of our hope.

It isn’t enough to know about God. We must know Him and His Word *intimately*. Scripture shows us who God is and what He offers us. It reveals there is nothing that compares to Him. Jeremiah, the prophet, called God “The Hope of Israel.” The Apostle Paul calls God “The God of Hope” and “Our Hope.” Knowing our hope changes our lives. It changes our perspective, our desires, our focus, and who we listen to. It changes everything.

Today, we’ll look at two situations that exhibit two contrasting depths of intimacy with God and see how this affects our hope.

The first is found in Matthew 8:23-27 NIV: *Then he [Jesus] got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man*

is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

The disciples had a real problem. High waves were filling their boat with water and their hearts with fear. Their real problem had a real solution. Jesus was on the boat. But—what was Jesus doing?

How did the disciples respond? They freaked out. *Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?*

What was Jesus' response to their insulting question?

Jesus questioned His friends' lack of courage and faith, then calmed the storm. Let me just say that Jesus is so much nicer than I am! I would have said, "Hey people, what's your problem? Don't you get it? Don't you know me? Don't you trust me?"

Jesus' disciples—the ones who saw, first-hand, a continuous stream of awesome miracles—didn't get it. They only vaguely knew who they were with. "Who is this man?" they asked. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"

They put their hope in what they trusted, and they trusted what they knew.

These guys knew storms. They knew boats. And I bet they knew true stories about people dying in boats hit by big, scary storms. They trusted what they knew about the real world more than trusting the God who made it.

Can you relate to this at all? I sure can. Proverbs 3:5-6 instantly comes to my mind. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV

Too often, I rely on my own understanding. I trust in what I think I know instead of seeking direction from the Holy Spirit.

The best way for us to overcome the temptation of self-trust is to know our wonderful God of Hope. Knowing God is trusting God—even when our storms are prolonged and even when our circumstances go from bad to worse.

Now, let's consider a close friend of God, Abraham, and see where he placed his hope.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

Romans 4:18-21 NIV

Did Abraham have any logical reason to hope?

Did Abraham deny his reality?

What did Abraham do? Write this answer(s) down and let it encourage you.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Have you been waiting for the chapter of personal pain to end for you or a loved one? Maybe these challenging days have turned into an ongoing struggle of weeks, months, or even years. I want to encourage you today. Though this battle seems to have no victory in sight, do not lose hope. Our God is forever faithful to us. You can expect, with all hope, His faithfulness with complete confidence. I know because I *know* my good Father.

Remember, knowing God is trusting God, so even when our circumstances seem hopeless, we need to hold onto our hope in God. Hebrews 6:15 NIV reminds us of Abraham's ongoing faith and hope in God: "And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised."

Abraham waited 25 years for the fulfillment of the promise. He was 75 when God promised him a son. What do you think Abraham knew about God that kept him holding on with great hope?

Circle all likely possibilities:

God is trustworthy. God is able. God is God. God is faithful.
God is all-powerful. God is a friend. God provides.

In what area of your life do you need to renew your hope in God's ability to work?

Our God is forever faithful. Keep asking and believing with patient expectation for God's good plans to unfold.

REACH OUT

Someone you care about needs to be encouraged. They need the hope that is only found through Christ. Would you reach out to them now?



Day Three // Hope Unlimited

“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.” —Corrie ten Boom

SEEK GOD

Jesus, I sit here today asking you to quiet my life. May the everyday stuff not distract me as I focus on you. Fill my heart and mind with a confident and patient hope. You are the richness I seek. May I know you in a deeper way by the end of today! Amen.

OBTAIN TRUTH

Yesterday, we learned the first step in our hope journey is to know God intimately. Today, let’s start unpacking how knowing Him intimately increases our hope and changes us from the inside out.

As you read the following Pauline prayer—these are prayers the Apostle Paul wrote—circle the words “love” and “power.”

... And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:17-19 NIV

This prayer by the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus is crammed with descriptive expressions. It is as if Paul were searching for a vocabulary beyond his human ability to explain our great need and God’s exceeding love.

What was Paul’s basic prayer request?

Why did Paul want us to understand God’s love?

You Have the Unlimited Love of God

God wants us filled to the fullest possible measure—with Him! With love!

So, let me ask you this: do you have or lack God’s love?

If you have it—and yes, you do—can you comprehend its great volume?

Maybe my next question could test your understanding of God’s love: are you ever fearful?

1 John 4:18 NIV says, *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

God can help you wholly know His love. And when you know that you have all His love, you can truly grasp His grace, His forgiveness, His mercy, His friendship, His peace, His comfort, His holiness, His goodness, His provision, and His very presence—at work in you and all around you.

Understanding that God loves you completely and immensely fills you with unlimited love and unlimited hope.

You Have Unlimited Power from God

Paul concludes his prayer with a declaration of praise filled with hope. *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.* Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV

Read the verse one more time and circle the words “ask” and “imagine.”

I love the Amplified version of the verse:

...far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]— ... —Ephesians 3:20 AMPC

Understanding of God’s unlimited love and power will grow as you walk with Jesus day by day and year by year. That’s one reason to look forward to growing older!

You Have Unlimited Access to God

The following Scriptures show another unlimited benefit Christ Jesus has provided us:

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16 NIV

For through him [Jesus] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Ephesians 2:18 NIV

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Ephesians 3:12 NIV

Because of Jesus, you and I can freely and confidently approach God through the gift of prayer. We are encouraged to seek Him out for help, mercy, and, most wonderful of all, for relationship.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

When you first enter into a relationship with Jesus, your knowledge of God and His promises is usually limited, but as you grow in your understanding of who God is and what He has provided you, your faith, hope, and love through the gift of prayer should flourish.

If God’s love and ability are boundless and absolute, what should your prayers be like?

God is able! In fact, there isn't anything too difficult for God. Read Matthew 19:26 and Luke 1:37.

You may think you can handle things on your own, but it's actually God's ability that enables every capability you've been given!

Are your prayers in agreement with who your Father is? Name something big you are specifically asking God to do.

Because you know God is able to do immeasurably more, what are you expecting or imagining you might see Him do? (Write out three ideas.)

REACH OUT

Bless someone today by sharing what you're asking and believing God to do in your life.



Day Four // Living with Hope

“I don’t think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains.” —Anne Frank

SEEK GOD

Lord, I long to know you intimately. Take me on a journey that allows me to know you as a father, friend, and king. I need you! Reveal yourself to me today. Amen!

Draw near to God in prayer with your heart filled with confident and patient hope. Enjoy the richness of His presence.

OBTAIN TRUTH

When I was about 9 years old, the kid neighbors down the street invited my brother, cousin, and me to their homemade carnival. Very cool idea, right? I was so excited and could hardly wait! They promised fun party games with prizes and sweet munchies, like cupcakes. My expectations were pretty high.

When carnival day arrived, I was the first on the scene. I didn’t want to miss a thing! But disappointment slowly seeped into my heart. Things weren’t as I had imagined. As the carnival proceeded from one boring game to another with lame prizes and food I was sure came from their trash bin, I held on to one last hope—the grand finale game. My brother and I were the only ones who stuck around to experience the finale.

“Follow us,” they said.

We were taken down the dark and narrow steps of their cellar and told to wait for them because they had forgotten something. Lie. It was a set-up! They locked us in that pitch-black, musky, spider-infested dungeon for three years! Well, maybe 10 minutes, but as a kid, it felt like forever.

We screamed our little heads off. We were terrified. They thought it was all hilarious, but I’ve yet to laugh about it. We left devastated and disappointed. The truth is, we didn’t really know these neighbor kids. And, to no surprise, we never trusted them again.

Life can be like that carnival. You start out hopeful, but after one disappointment after another, living with overwhelming situations, you end up being pulled down into dark pits of hopelessness.

We have an enemy, Satan, who convinces us to numb our ache and run after things that only make us temporarily happy. My goodness, how we get our hearts broken over trusting in things that don’t deliver! The truth is, Jesus is our only hope. In 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul tells us “not to put hope in wealth, which is so uncertain” but to put “hope in God, who richly provides us with everything.” We don’t want to fall for the lies the enemy uses to try to destroy us. We want to live our lives based on who God is and what He has given us.

Only Jesus can completely satisfy us. He explains this to a Samaritan woman, “... Anyone who drinks this water will soon

become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. ...” (John 4:13-14 NLT) Notice Jesus goes beyond supplying our temporary needs. He is interested in moving us to a place where we find joy in all circumstances, even if we lose all our earthly possessions, because we have found our hope and freedom in Him alone.

Ready to discover what you can expect from your great Father? The prophet Isaiah gives a meaningful perspective of the greatness of God amidst the frailty of man.

Please underline each description and name of God.

Isaiah 40:25-31 NIV

*“To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.*

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:

Who created all these?

*He who brings out the starry host
one by one
and calls forth each of them by name.
Because of his great power and
mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.*

*Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say,
Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord; my
cause is disregarded by my God”?*

*Do you not know?
Have you not heard?*

*The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of
the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or
weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.*

*He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.*

*Even youths grow tired and weary, and young
men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the
Lord will renew their strength.*

*They will soar on wings like eagles; they will
run and not grow weary, they will walk and not
be faint.*

Now, using what you’ve just underlined, go back over this passage of Scripture and create a list below of what you can expect from God because of who He is.

Because God is:

I Can Expect:

Great job! Look through your list and prayerfully circle any specific traits about God you need to put your hope in.

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Maybe you're feeling down right now because you have a chronic illness or are living in survival mode with no light appearing at the end of your tunnel. Maybe you're experiencing financial or relational bankruptcy that keeps you up at night. Know this— your concerns matter to God. He is with you. Therefore, you can always have a real-time, living, and active hope.

In that dark cellar, I never even thought of God. No wonder I was void of any inner peace.

Precious sister, it's time to stop being emotionally tossed around by life's unknown circumstances and place all your hope in God. Allow the truth of who God is to change any fearful and anxious thinking.

Write down anything, no matter how big or small, that is disturbing your heart and mind right now.

Align any defeated attitudes with renewed, faith-filled hope by reviewing your "God is" list from today's Obtain Truth section.

I love this powerful truth: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* 1 Peter 1:3 NIV

This living hope we have was fully realized through Christ's resurrection! It is not empty speculation; it is a hope that is alive and active through the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

It's time to honestly consider the following questions:

- Is your hope fully in God alone?
- What or whom do you rely and depend on?

Circle all that apply:

my abilities money my job my experience doctors medicine/supplements
experts my spouse food a diet a friend fitness a chemical substance
my appearance a hobby other: _____

If you had to give everything you circled away, how would you feel?
How would you cope?

Allow your answers to guide you to the real source of our hope.

Here's the reality to remember—you put your hope in what you trust in.

Lovely sister, would you spend a few minutes in prayer? Confess the areas where you've placed your hope in something or someone other than your amazing Father. Fully give Him your fears, disappointments, and problems. And with renewed hope, expect His faithfulness to provide.

REACH OUT

How was your heart stirred in today's lesson? Did God show you anything about yourself? Was there a Scripture you loved? Anytime you learn something new or that ministers to you, bless someone else and share it! Who needs to be encouraged by your faith journey, right now?



Day Five // When Hope Seems Lost

“Let God’s promises shine on your problems.” —Corrie ten Boom

SEEK GOD

I cry out to You, God! You are my hope. Thank you for being my all, my hope. I thank You that You are in control of my today and my tomorrows. You are good all the time, and all the time You are good. Amen!

Don’t miss out on spending even more time talking with God today.

OBTAIN TRUTH

Everyone you meet is carrying some sort of burden. Maybe it’s a lost love, a lost child, or a broken home. Big or small, we all face challenges as we go about our daily lives, and sometimes the pain is so deep we can hardly bear to stand up. Our stories may be different, but we all have one thing in common—when we cling to Christ, we have hope. We have hope that the pain will not remain and that God is working in all things for our good. When we cling to God, we can face all things and even give thanks in all things.

Today, we’re going to examine our hope during trials and suffering.

As you read through each portion of Scripture in James 1:2-4 and Romans 5:2-5, record a list completing the statement, “My struggles gain me...”

My Struggles Gain Me...

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4 NIV

... *And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.* Romans 5:2-5 NIV

How does enduring suffering develop our character, and why does a stronger character produce hope?

1 Thessalonians 5:18 encourages us to give thanks in *all* circumstances. It's God's desire for us. *All* circumstances? This is mind-blowing. How can we actually do this? It may not be normal or natural to thank God in the middle of a mess, but one thing I know is God wouldn't ask us to do something that's wrong or impossible. This means that we *can* give thanks in every situation. We can, and we should.

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 NIV

Now, I wonder if any of you are thinking, "why is this God's will for us?" Hang with me as we consider some more counterintuitive statements:

"*Rejoice in our sufferings*" and "*consider it pure joy*" when we're in various trials? Does this sound a little crazy to you?

Sometimes we misinterpret God, thinking He's asking us to have joy because of the pain. He never said that! It may seem unusual, but giving joyful thanks is one of God's prescribed ways to develop spiritual maturity in us. And, get this—rejoicing is only possible through our *hope* in Christ Jesus.

I wouldn't be as strong in my faith today if it weren't for my painful trials. Every battle with my sin, fear, sickness, rejection, loss, or any other daily problem allows me to become more like Christ Jesus. He's not going to allow a single cry for help to be in vain.

Does this mean we should go around laughing and dancing while in a crisis? No way. But in the unseen place of the soul, we can have a deep comfort, peace, and yes—even joy. All this happens through hoping in God.

In the middle of a fiery or even minor trial, remember to give God continual thanks. Hardships can actually cause our hope to soar because we see the truth of His faithfulness at work in and around us as we live out what Romans 12:12 (NIV) teaches: "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT

Are you facing problems with joyful hope, patience, and diligent prayer? Or, are you having a hard time remaining hopeful in Christ?

If you aren't walking in peace and joy, it's time to reset your thinking and kick unbelief in the tail! Whisper Jesus' name. Whisper it, yell it, proclaim it out loud, whatever you do, just hold onto Jesus. God doesn't need you to have a mountain of hope. He just needs a seed to grow it into something to sustain you in the good times and in the devastating times. I know your battle may seem to have no victory in sight, but all hope is not lost!

Allow me to share a personal example to explain what I mean.

A few years ago, I was terribly disappointed. No. I was fed-up. Done. I'd had enough of waiting. I had held on patiently, expecting God to answer my prayer to heal my recurring bladder inflammation. When I say waiting, I mean I had been waiting for the past 12 or so years. Well, one particular day, there was no "rejoicing in all circumstances" going on in my heart. I wanted an end to the problem right then!

I had done *everything* the Bible said to receive healing, as well as prayerfully gone to doctors, taken their meds, used heaps of natural remedies, and listened to and applied advice, seemingly all to no avail.

But as I paused in my pain, I chose to thank God for His generous patience and grace over my life. This simple and sincere choice boosted me over the moon with renewed hope!

Why? Did I receive my healing? Not yet, but maybe someday soon. I'm not sure about my tomorrows, but I know God will be with me in them. My healing may come. If so, praise God! If not, I truly expect all things are working out for my good and His glory. His grace has *always* been enough for me—and you, too—and that's a great reason to give thanks!

My joy left that day because I became impatient. Whatever your need is, I want to encourage you to continue to ask and wait in full expectation. God is everything you need. Wait patiently on Him. Choose to walk in His goodness and strength.

Your loving Father longs to reveal His faithfulness. I pray you will have eyes to see His goodness in your life.

Remember and write a little about how God has been with you in your past.

Now, write about who you know God is. This is why you can rely on who He is today!

Expect Him to be your source for tomorrow. Write out a prayer of hope.

You *can* give thanks in all circumstances! You can confidently expect God is working all things for your good as His beloved child. Read Romans 8:28.

REACH OUT

Everyone has bad days. Someone you know is likely going through a challenging season right now. Would you give them your time and encourage them today?