

## BIG IDEA

**Faith grows when our hope is tested.**

## WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO KNOW?

How does our culture define hope? How do you define it?

Many people, even Christians, think about hope as a kind of wishing or positive thinking. Hope is trusting that God is capable of doing what he says that he can do. It is reliance on him and his promises.

**Read 1 Peter 1:3-4.** What words or phrases stand out to you? How do these key words impact your understanding of hope?

Do you really believe that “God is bigger than the problems presented to us?” What evidence in your life supports your answer?

We may say that we believe God is bigger than our problems, but the way we live in hard times shines a light on what is going on in our hearts. When we know that God is bigger than our circumstances, we can have peace in extremely difficult situations. We can respond with love to those who want to hurt us. If not, we will act out of self-protection and self-promotion.

**Read Psalm 42:1-5.** What do you think this passage is saying about reliance on God? Have there been times when your hope increased in hard times? Times when it failed? Explain.

Clearly David is in anguish and vacillating between trust, hope, doubt and discouragement. Still he maintains his attitude of hope. Notice that having hope doesn't mean that we ignore the feelings of fear and doubt that come up. Hopeful people confess these things to God while holding on to his promises.

## WHAT IS MY INITIAL REACTION?

What areas in your life are you relying on yourself (or other people) to give you hope or assurance?

**Read 1 Peter 1:3-9.** Do you tend toward hope or despair when you encounter hard times? What does God want you to know about this?

This question will present an opportunity to practice listening prayer together. Many people on your group may struggle with negative thoughts when it comes to trials. God wants our reliance to be on him. When we drift toward despair, we often can miss the message and even the light that he is bringing to the situation.



**Read the following quote.** *“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.” - Viktor Frankl*

Viktor Frankl was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor. His past gives weight to this quote.

When faced with a situation of difficulty or despair, how does your attitude impact your reliance on God?

**This might be a strong place to spend some time with a more mature group. It can be easily overlooked, but our attitudes can dramatically change how we respond to God.**

## WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

Is there something that is robbing you of hope? What steps can you take to grow in faith and live with hope?

**Read 2 Timothy 3:12 & 13.** How does this verse impact your view of persecution of the church today? Do you think that you face persecution? Why or Why not?

If “everyone who wants to live a godly life will be persecuted,” then this may be an indictment on most Western Christians. Maybe resisting persecution isn’t the best way. Discuss how engaging persecution may help the church to grow.

What can you do in a time of testing to increase your faith? How can hope help with this?

