

Study Series: Mere Hope

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Lesson Title: “Look Our: Mere Hope’s Flourishing”

(pp. 144-156)

Session 12

August 21, 2022

The main point of this lesson is: Hope flourishes as believers spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Focus on this goal: To help adults look beyond themselves to foster the flourishing of hope in dispelling darkness

Key Bible Passage: Romans 15:12-29

Before the Session

Be prepared to reference and add to the drawing on the large sheet of paper you began in Session 11 (p. 143). (Steps 1 and 7)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Briefly review the first two main ideas of Mere Hope (we look down to Christ’s propitiation and we look inward to Christ’s regeneration) by using the stick man drawing begun last week. Say: We’ve got a third foundation this week, and it uses the word flourishing. What images come to mind when you hear that word?

After a few people offer mental images of something flourishing, ask: Does anyone have a photo you are willing to share of you or someone you love flourishing? Challenge learners to scroll through the photos on their phone and encourage them to show the photos to the group.

Step 2. Cities of Refuge, Part 1

Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 4:41-42 from his or her Bible. Briefly describe the cities of refuge, explaining they were simply a safe place to go if you had unintentionally been responsible for someone’s death.

Summarize the author’s experiences (pp. 144-145) in two major global cities in which the light of Christ is shining and saving. Say: Today we’re going to look at what it takes to transform a city, a town, or even a small home from a place of darkness into a light for Christ.

Step 3. Cities of Refuge, Part 2

Invite a volunteer (perhaps someone who has a flair for poetry) to read Psalm 73. Use the content of the first two paragraphs of Day Two (p. 146) to draw the parallel between the cynicism of the psalmist and that of many Christians in our world today: we are jaded to the success of the wicked. However, when we see God clearly, we realize that God will act and judge that wickedness.

Say: Just as the psalmist saw that God was his refuge, we know that Jesus is the refuge—the hope—for every person in the world. Read Romans 15:12 and stress that Jesus is the hope of nations. Point out that Paul spent much time in this chapter speaking of the joy of spreading the hope of Christ to many people.

Step 4. Ambitious Hope for Those Who Have Heard

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 15:17-19. Use the content for Day Three (pp. 148-149) to help learners understand that Paul was briefly describing his circle of travels—from Jerusalem to Illyricum—and that every place in that area has been presented with the gospel.

Read the paragraph (p. 149) that begins with the phrase, “The idea here . . . .” Say: Paul wasn’t bragging, but he was excited about what God had done.

Group learners into small groups and provide time for them to brag on things God has done through them to spread the gospel.

Step 5. Ambitious Hope for Those Who Haven’t Heard

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 15:20-21. Use the content from Day Four (pp. 149-150) to discuss the word ambition and identify Paul’s ambition: to take the gospel to unreached people.

Say: Don’t raise your hands, but how many of us, honestly, would say that our number one ambition is to reach people with the gospel? As a group, discuss the reasons why that does not seem to be many Christians’ ambition when we know it’s Christ’s command and our responsibility.

Retell the content of the paragraph from Day Four (p. 151) that begins with “Second, even with advancements . . . .” Point out that since something like soft drinks has touched nearly every people group, Christianity has no excuse.

Step 6. The Flourishing of Hope

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 67. Stress verses 3-5. Retell or read the story from Day Five (pp. 152-153) telling of the missionary in China.

Once more read Psalm 67:3-5. Invite a couple of volunteers to read Ephesians 6:14-15 and Isaiah 52:7. Point out that these verses portray the image of the person who looks out and sees the flourishing of our hope in and among the world, near and far.

Say: Not all of us have the means, call, or ability to travel by bicycle through the mountains of China. But each of us is called to spread the light of hope in the midst of the part of this dark world where we live.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Add to the stick man drawing you began last week by drawing eyes on it. Draw dotted lines going out from the eyes to the surroundings, which may include simple drawings such as a house, a mountain, and a church. Say: We’ve talked about looking down at our foundation, looking inside at our fountain, and today we emphasized the flourishing of our hope as the gospel spreads.

Label the surroundings missions, explaining how the hope beneath us and inside us is not complete until we obediently do our part to help that hope flourish in the world around us.

Close in prayer, asking God to help each person look out from themselves to see where God would have them take hope.

