

while we wait

Dealing with Loss & Finding Hope

Part 2: Finding Hope

A lot of us may have found it relatively easy to skirt by on adrenaline for the first few weeks of this international health crisis, but amidst so much suffering and economic uncertainty it now feels tougher to keep trucking. The foggy nature of the future has many people feeling a lack of motivation, and the various forms of loss that are affecting people across our communities can make it difficult to focus on daily tasks and hold on to any sort of hope. The good news is that hope can still be found, even in the midst of what feel like inescapable problems. But hope in hope itself is not enough. Perhaps the most important decision anyone can make right now is what to place their hope in.

Start Talking

1. Think back to the “good old days” of eating out. What was the longest you were willing to wait for a table? Did it depend upon the restaurant?
2. When you hear the term, “waiting,” what comes to mind?
3. What are you missing most about how your life used to be right now?

Looking Back

1. How did you fare when it came to avoiding the temptation to “clean up” your prayers last week? What did you do to remind yourself that God welcomes you to engage Him with your deepest, most honest expressions of self?
2. When did you deal with loss this past week? How did it affect you? How did you pray about it?
3. When did you “pivot to trust” in God’s love over the past few days? What were some small steps you took, intellectually, practically, or in prayer to begin that process?

What About You?

1. Do you find yourself dealing with these tough times by putting pressure on yourself to achieve, allowing yourself space to relax, or some mixture between the two?
2. Where do you draw the line between using this strange season to “get more done,” and putting an unhealthy amount of pressure on yourself during a crisis? What about discerning between when you’re practicing mental health by, “allowing yourself to relax during a stressful time,” versus, “enabling bad habits?”
3. Do you find yourself more tempted to place your hope in vague, unrealistic positivity, or to be beaten down by the barrage of bad news? Or does it simply depend upon the day?

4. What statements have you encountered recently that may have been intended as encouragement, but actually made you feel worse? Why do you think they affected you that way?

5. Have you ever observed people who were placing hope in promises God never made? What form did it take?

Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: Romans 5:1-5

1. According to Paul, how does the idea of faith play into salvation?

2. What does Paul seem to believe faith has the power to produce in our lives? What does the process look like?

3. How do you think Paul is defining the term, “peace,” here?

4. Likewise, what do you think Paul means when he talks about, “grace?” How can that idea transform our outlook on life?

5. Why do you think Paul was willing to “boast in hope” and “glory in suffering?”

6. What are the benefits of perseverance during seasons of suffering outlined in this passage?

7. What is the relationship between character and hope?

Putting It All Together

1. Clay said his goal was that we would “have a theology of hope that can withstand the worst storm.” Where can you refocus your faith on the work of Jesus this week? What would that cliché look like in practice for you?

2. When you imagine the “peace” that Paul and other biblical writers speak of, what comes to mind? Does it seem realistic for everyday life? What would be the first step to finding that kind of peace?

3. What will you do in the days to come to remind yourself that every breath we take in this life is contingent upon the grace of God? How can you turn situations of uncertainty this week into opportunities to worship God by surrendering any illusions of control?

4. What would a healthy willingness to “boast in hope” and “glory in suffering” look like right now? (Keeping in mind that God has not promised us any particular Earthly outcomes.)

5. How can you be conscious of opportunities to grow your character when hard things happen this week?