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A STUDY OF

HOPE

WAITING, NOT WISHING

A Study of Hope: Waiting, not Wishing

by David Arthur

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Every human being needs hope. Without hope we are lifeless, merely existing. Hope looks to the future and brings expectancy of brighter things to come. Hope propels us into the day ahead waiting for us!

Where do we find hope? The Bible.

It was written for you and me that we might have hope. Paul promises that if we study and practice what God tells us in His Word—we can expect hope.

ROMANS 15:4

⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

How is your hope? Do you desire to see it grow? Do you want to be confident in it? What is hope? Join us as we study what God says about hope.

For each of the next three lessons let's spend about 20-30 minutes studying some specific texts. After you complete each lesson, listen to recorded discussion with David Arthur and friends to help deepen your understanding on the topic of hope.

LESSON 1

With at least twelve different Hebrew words and a few in the Greek translated in English Bibles as “hope,” you can imagine the challenge of doing a word study on hope!

So let's look at the word simply from two different perspectives: *Wishing* and *Waiting*.

Wishing hope is a desire you would like to see fulfilled. For example, “I **hope** it doesn't rain out the game on Saturday,” can be described as a wish. This kind of hope is something that you wish would come true. In the Bible, however, the main use of hope is in the second perspective: *Waiting*.

The idea of *waiting* as hope is usually pointed directly at God. Someone is waiting, depending on God for something in the future. In our next lesson we will explore this further as we study the *objects* of our hope. But for now, let's see if we can further define the *waiting* perspective of biblical hope.

Read the following text, from Paul's letter to the church in Rome. Then read it again and circle every reference to creation and underline every reference to waiting.

ROMANS 8:18-25

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Who is waiting? And what are they waiting for?

Read through the text again and this time mark *hope*. Come up with a unique marking for hope that you can use throughout this study.

What does Paul teach us about hope? Who hopes? What do they hope for?

Did you see any synonyms for *hope*? If so, list them here and describe how they help you define *hope*.

What is the relationship between seeing and hoping?

Read the following passages and mark *seen* and *hope*.

HEBREWS 11:1-3

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

What do you learn about hope? Is it possible to see what you hope for?

What are we hoping for? Looking for?

Describe the difference between what is seen and what is unseen.

Take some time to apply these texts to your current situation. What are you hoping for in life? What are you waiting for? Are there expectations that you currently have that need to be exchanged for something better?

Before we call it a day, let's examine what Paul taught in his letter to Titus about hope. Read the text below and mark *hope* as you marked it previously.

TITUS 1:1-3

¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ³ and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;

What hope is described here?

When was it promised? And what does that tell you about it?

How was it manifested according to verse 3? How does this help us if we want to know more about *hope*? Where can we look?

In writing about the grace of God, Paul mentions *hope*. Read the text below and mark *hope*.

TITUS 2:11-14

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

What are Christians waiting for?

How are we to be waiting? What has God provided and how are we to use it?

Review your answers in this lesson and summarize what you have learned about *hope*. If you could say one thing about *hope* that captures this lesson, what would that be? Explain your answer.

Spend some time in prayer now asking God if you have biblical hope. Ask your Heavenly Father to deepen your grasp on His *hope* for your future. Are your expectations in line with what He promises, or do you need to realign your desires to meet His? If so, how? Be as specific as you can below in writing out your prayer and response to the Lord.

PSALM 71:5

5 For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.

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LESSON 2

In the last lesson we focused on the *waiting* aspect of biblical hope. We studied a few scriptures that pointed us to an unseen reality. We saw that true faith is an assurance of things hoped for—but things that we cannot see today. Hoping is waiting. Hoping is looking to the future with expectation founded on God’s promise and His Word.

In this lesson we want to explore biblical hope and its *objects*. In other words, what are we to hope *in*?

A good place to start is to discover where we should not place our hope. Read the following text marking *hope* and note the objects of false hope.

PSALM 33:16-22

¹⁶ The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. ¹⁷ The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue. ¹⁸ Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, ¹⁹ that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. ²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. ²¹ For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. ²² Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

How are the two different *hopes* described in this passage? What and who is being contrasted?

JEREMIAH 23:16-17

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. ¹⁷ They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’”

What is the source of the false messaging described above? Who are the prophets listening to? And what does this tell us about their offer of *hope*?

Can you imagine the bravery required of an Old Testament prophet? Often, they were given messages of warning and judgment to deliver. What would they expect to happen when delivering such harsh messages from God? Ezekiel 3 and 33 describe the role of a prophet as one who is a watchman on the wall of a city. His responsibility is to cry out if he sees danger coming. To not give the warning meant the blood of the people would be on his own hands. He would be considered guilty!

Who are you listening to for hope? How can you be sure they are telling you the truth?

In Proverbs King Solomon described one who has no hope. Read the two passages below, marking hope.

PROVERBS 26:12

¹² Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

PROVERBS 29:20

²⁰ Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

How does he describe misplaced *hope* in these verses?

What do people believe about themselves if they are *wise in their own eyes*?
What do they believe about God? About Scripture?

If people are *hasty* in their words what do they lack? What could be the explanation?

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19 to see another place we can wrongly place our hope:

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

What reasons does Paul give for not setting our hope on riches? What is the contrast? How does it compare it to your own perspective on wealth?

What alternatives does he suggest?

Take some time and talk with the Lord, asking Him if you need to seek forgiveness for seeking hope in the wrong places. Ask Him to enable you to swap out false objects of hope for true ones. Write below what He shows you, being as specific as you can.

If you have identified some problem areas with your hope, make a plan now of how you will avoid returning to these counterfeit hopes. Maybe it's adding the issue to your daily prayer times for the next few weeks or months. Maybe it's seeking out a friend to help hold you accountable. Whatever plan you make, you can be sure the Lord will honor your intentional efforts to avoid false hopes.

PSALM 119:11

¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

A thorough search for the phrase “hope in” or “hope on” in Scripture will reveal mostly God, Himself, as the object. With each of the following texts, mark *hope* and mark every reference to *God*. Include all three persons of the Godhead – *the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. At the end of these texts summarize what you learn about God as the object of our hope.

PSALM 42:5

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

PSALM 42:11

¹¹ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

PSALM 43:5

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

PSALM 62:5-8

⁵ For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. ⁶ He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. ⁷ On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. ⁸ Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah

PSALM 130:7-8

⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. ⁸ And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-11

⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹ You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

1 TIMOTHY 1:1

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

1 TIMOTHY 4:10

¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Paul describes the mystery that was held back until he wrote Ephesians. What is the mystery?

COLOSSIANS 1:27

²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

GALATIANS 5:5

⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

Record your observations:

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LESSON 3

Last lesson we saw that there are true and false objects of hope. In this lesson we want to see practical steps of applying biblical hope to our lives.

Where do we begin?

As we learned, God is the one true *source* of biblical hope. Waiting for the Lord is where Christians find *true* hope. But how do we go about waiting for the Lord and looking to Him alone for our hope? What are the steps we must consider?

Read the texts below marking every reference to *hope* and every reference to *God's Word*. Watch closely for synonyms.

PSALM 119:43

⁴³ And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules.

PSALM 119:49

⁴⁹ Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.

PSALM 119:81

⁸¹ My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word.

PSALM 119:114

¹¹⁴ You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word.

PSALM 119:116

¹¹⁶ Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope!

PSALM 119:147

¹⁴⁷ I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words.

Where does the Psalmist find hope?

Remember the promise Paul made in Romans 15:4?

ROMANS 15:4

⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

In Acts 26, Paul makes his defense in court before King Agrippa. Read and mark *hope*.

ACTS 26:4-7, 22-23

⁴ “My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. ⁵ They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. ⁶ And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! . . . ²²To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

Where does Paul get his hope?

Read the text below, marking *hope*.

COLOSSIANS 1:21-23

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Where does this passage teach us to find our *hope*?

What condition were we in before this *hope*? And what opportunity do we have with it?

To develop a biblical hope—in waiting with trust for God to perform—where do we start according to the passages we just read? Or to ask it in another way, how do you as a believer develop and grow your hope in God? What practical steps can you take?

As we grow in our understanding of biblical hope, how are we to use it? Read the following texts, marking *hope*. At the end of all these passages list the instructions given regarding *hope*, or simply underline them in the texts.

ROMANS 12:12

¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

HEBREWS 3:6

⁶ but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

HEBREWS 6:11

¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end,

HEBREWS 6:18

¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

HEBREWS 10:23

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

List instructions here:

We have seen that understanding hope comes from our efforts in studying Scripture. But how else can we develop biblical hope in our lives?

Read what Paul teaches in Romans 5. Continue to mark *hope* as you have been doing.

ROMANS 5:1-5

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

What do you learn about *hope*? What produces *hope*?

What else are we to do with our hope? Read 1 Peter 3:13-17, marking *hope*.

1 PETER 3:13-17

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

The context of this passage is about suffering as a believer. In this light, what is our responsibility toward those who are involved in our suffering for Christ?

Using the texts from this course, how would you give a defense for your hope? Take some time to review the texts, and then outline your defense of your hope below.

Having your outline and plan in place, seek the Lord's guidance for when and with whom you should share your reason for having hope. May God bless you richly as you seek to be filled with hope and help others discover true biblical hope!

ROMANS 15:13

May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in **hope**.

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