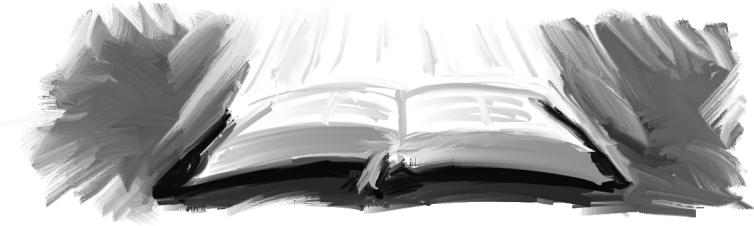


Revelation of Hope



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for this Week's Study: *Pss. 34:7, 91:4, Rom. 3:26, 1 Cor. 15:51-58, Col. 1:14, 2:13, 1 Thess. 4:13-18, 1 Pet. 3:18, 1 John 1:9, 2:12.*

Memory Text: “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (*Romans 15:4, NIV*).

Key Thought: The Bible reveals to us a world of hope and promise.

Four World War II fliers, shot down, floated for 21 days on a small life raft in the middle of the Pacific. They had no water or food. However, when their thirst got so bad, it rained, and they caught the rain and drank it; when their hunger became unbearable, seagulls landed on the rafts, and they caught the birds and ate them.

When finally rescued, they were interviewed, separately, and each was asked the same question: “To whom do you attribute your survival?” All the men gave basically the same answer: There was a New Testament in the raft, which they read every day. And that book gave them the hope to press on, even when things looked hopeless.

In the Bible, *hope* isn't used in the popular sense of the word, a wish with little basis in fact. In the Word, *hope* is presented as the truth about a loving, omnipotent God who cares about us, who will provide for us, and who offers us the promise of new existence in a new world.

This week we'll look at the revelation of hope given to us in the Word of God.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 26.*

The “Comfort of the Scriptures”

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (*Rom. 15:4*).

Paul, in the above verse, talked about the “comfort of the scriptures” that would lead to hope. What particular things have you found in the Bible that give you, personally, hope?

The Bible speaks about the condition of humanity, that we all are sinners (*Rom. 3:10*) and that the wages of sin is death (*Rom. 6:23*). The struggle for humanity’s salvation is expressed by Paul when he said, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (*Rom. 7:24, NIV*). The answer is found in Jesus Christ our Lord (*Rom. 6:23*). Because of His love, Christ was willing to come to this world, live as a human being, and die the death that we should die. The Bible points us to the hope of salvation that we can have in Jesus because of His sacrifice in our behalf.

What hope is presented to us in these texts?

Rom. 3:26, 1 Pet. 3:18

John 16:13, 2 Tim. 3:16

Luke 18:29, 30; 1 John 5:13

At the cross, Jesus, the One through whom all things were made (*Col. 1:16*), bore in Himself the penalty for our sins. Jesus died in our place, suffered in our stead, all for us. Why would Christ have gone through so much, for us, if there wasn’t something incredibly worthwhile at the end of it for us? What is at the end, and what hope does it offer to us?

I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

► **Key Text:** *Romans 15:4*

► **Teach the Class to:**

Know: That we can be assured of salvation in Christ.

Feel: Experience confidence in the power of God to keep us from sin and temptation.

Do: Pray for the indwelling Spirit so that others may see the power of God in our lives.

► **Lesson Outline:**

I. Our Hope in Christ (*Rom. 3:26*)

A Does justification come at the moment we accept Christ, or is it developed over time? Explain your answer.

B What does the Bible mean when it says we were sealed by the Spirit (*2 Cor. 1:22, Eph. 4:30*)?

II. Christ Our Atonement (*1 John 1:9*)

A Jesus died to make atonement for the sins of the whole world. What does this mean to an individual sinner?

B In Christ we have forgiveness, victory over temptation, and freedom from guilt. What can this mean to our daily lives?

III. Hope for the Future (*Pss. 91:4*)

A What can it mean to the twenty-first century Christian that God has promised to be with us always?

B What does the promise of God's protection and provision mean to your class members?

► **Summary:** Christ our hope gives us the assurance of salvation and the promise of His presence in this life and for eternity.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate!**

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the

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Hope of Forgiveness

A woman had been brutally murdered. Police psychologists, after examining the case, devised a plan to catch the killer. They placed a hidden microphone and video camera in the ground at her grave. And they waited. One night a man came to the grave, got on his knees, and begged the woman for forgiveness. The police got it all on tape.

What drove the man back to his victim? There's only one answer: guilt.

As fallen beings, as sinners, we all have done wrong. Even people who don't believe in the Bible, who don't understand the concept of sin as we do, have a sense of right and wrong, and often feel guilty when they do wrong. For some people the sense of guilt is overwhelming. It's the foundational emotion that drives all that they do. For many it has led to incredible despair, not only for themselves but for those who often suffer because of the guilty one's aberrant behavior.

But there's hope, and it's revealed to us in the Scriptures, because in the Scriptures we are given the story of Jesus and His death on our behalf.

What do Acts 26:18, Ephesians 1:7, 4:32, Colossians 1:14, 2:13, and 1 John 1:9, 2:12 tell us about the forgiveness offered to everyone through Jesus?

Yes, the Bible is clear that through Jesus we have forgiveness. As to the extent of forgiveness, Scripture represents God as saying that He has removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west (*Ps. 103:12*); that He has cast them into the depths of the sea (*Mic. 7:19*) or behind His back (*Isa. 38:17*); that He has blotted them out or swept them away (*Ps. 51:1, 9; Isa. 43:25; 44:22*) and that He will remember them no more (*Jer. 31:34*). Indeed, it was for the sins of the whole world that Christ died as an atoning sacrifice, efficacious through faith (*Rom. 3:25, NIV*). No matter who you are or what you have done, your sins can be forgiven by God if you just claim His promises of forgiveness for yourself.

Are you still struggling with guilt? If so, go back over some of the texts presented today. Read them, pray over them, and pour out your heart to God, asking Him to give you the assurance that these promises are for you, regardless of whatever you might have done.

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

learners' experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

In Psalm 91:4, 14, the psalmist portrays God as ready to shelter and deliver those who call on Him. If you are, or have ever been, in a difficult situation without apparent avenues of escape, how might these verses keep you from despair?

When you look in the Bible for stories of God's deliverance, how do you see hope becoming a reality?

►STEP 2—Explore!

Just for Teachers: This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God's Word?


Bible Commentary

I. Communication of Hope: God's Word

Arrange to have someone who has experienced a miraculous rescue share that experience as an introduction to your class time.

Consider This: Read Genesis 1 together in class. Count the times the words *good* or *very good* appear. After God created the world, He said it was "very good!" Discuss what perfect harmony with God is like. Then contrast that harmony with rebellion and its consequences.

Compare and Contrast: Review what God has done throughout history to provide hope and assurance. Contrast this with the results of human efforts. What keeps us from choosing what God offers? Since our situation is beyond human repair, what do you think it will take for us to learn to rely on the hope God offers?

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Hope to Overcome Sin

Read Proverbs 24:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:57. What hope is found in those verses?

Although we may fall, there is hope—hope that we can rise again and again if need be, hope that we are not cast away by God. And though we might sin, Jesus will defend us as our Mediator (*Heb. 7:25, 1 John 2:1*). Moreover, the Bible also says that through the power of Jesus we can have victory over sin.

It's one thing to claim God's promises of forgiveness. And there are many. But what about His promises of victory over sin? Are they not just as real? Are they not just as important? How crucial, then, that we make these promises our own and experience their reality in our own walk with Jesus.

Some members may be struggling to overcome their weaknesses, whatever they are. The following Scripture-based steps can lead us to victory:

1. Recognize your weaknesses and that you can't overcome them in your own strength (*see John 15:5*).
2. Claim God's promises of victory; make them your own (*see Phil. 4:13*).
3. Believe that the Lord has given you the victory to overcome those weaknesses and thank Him for the victory (*see 1 Cor. 10:13*).
4. Claim the promise of "death" to self in Christ (*see Rom. 6:11*).
5. Take concrete and practical steps to avoid the things that lead you into sin (*see Rom. 13:14*).
6. Live your life in an attitude of praise and prayer to the Lord, who gives you the power to overcome your weaknesses (*see 1 Cor. 15:57*).

What about you? You have claimed the Bible promises of forgiveness, but now are you struggling to get victory? Are you failing despite all the promises of victory found in the Bible? What changes do you need to make in order to better apply these above steps in your own walk with the Lord?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED**II. The Hope in Which We Live**

Consider This: Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (*John 16:33, NKJV*). How can you reconcile the Savior’s words with the reality of the world in which we live? Wars, plots for destruction, super viruses and ineffective antibiotics, child abductions, and murders might be some of the things you would include on a list to describe the condition of our society. How does Christ’s dialogue with His disciples in Matthew 24 give us hope?

III. The Conclusion of Hope—Here and Now

Consider This: The disciples walked and talked with Jesus. Although they did not believe He would die on the cross, they found out His words were true and trustworthy. His commission for them was very specific: “you shall be witnesses to Me” (*Acts 1:8, NKJV*). They saw Him go into heaven in the same manner He will return. Then they followed the angels’ instruction to go and tell the world about their anticipation of that return (*Acts 1:11*). How can we reclaim this same perspective of hope?

■ *Paul’s admonition to the early Christian believers was, “Be steadfast, immovable . . . knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58, NASB). What about his personal experience led him to have such confidence in Jesus Christ and the hope He offered?*

■ *Why does Paul call it “the blessed hope” in Titus 2:13? How does this hope move from being a corporate expectation to a personal anticipation?*

IV. Hope Acted Out as a Life Priority

Consider This: What are false hopes based on? Have someone who is willing share a personal experience with the class. What is the difference between false hope and hope soon to be realized? How certain is the hope of Jesus’ second coming? How would you explain the reality of that hope with someone who is skeptical? What personal experience could you share that might help him or her find faith?

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Provision and Protection

“I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread” (*Ps. 37:25, NIV*).

Read Matthew 6:25-34. What hope does Jesus offer us in these verses? What is He saying to each of us?

As Creator of the universe, the Lord certainly has filled the earth with His wonderful bounties. The ravages of sin, however, have taken their loathsome toll, and so not everyone has access to these bounties. Yet, even amid rampant wealth or abject poverty, we have the promises of God that He will provide what we need.

At the same time, God also gives us the hope of protection. We are not under what has been called “the tyranny of chance,” meaning that our life is ruled by unconscious forces that have no purpose in mind. Though bad things do happen, those who love God have wonderful promises that can give us great hope despite calamity.

Read Psalms 46:1-3, 34:7, 91:4, 125:2, and Matthew 28:20. What hope do you find in these texts?

The Lord has given us wonderful promises regarding His loving care and protection. We can find many examples in the Bible of just how wonderfully, even miraculously, the Lord protected His people. Yet, we can also find examples of God’s people suffering, even dying, while faithful (*see Matt. 14:10, Acts 7:59, Heb. 11:35-39*). Did the promise of God fail in those examples? Or, instead, can we—because of these promises—know that when bad things happen we can trust that the Lord is still in control and can have hope for the future despite trials and suffering?

How have you experienced the reality of these promises in your own life? What have you learned from your own trials and suffering that could help someone going through a hard situation right now?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

Compare and Contrast: The very purpose of our existence as Adventists rests in the knowledge of the imminent return of Christ. See Revelation 14:7-12. He has made a way of escape for us through His perfect work of redemption. This hope is unlike any other hope we could possibly have. It is the culmination of all we believe. In the hope of the Second Advent, our faith is vindicated. All humanity needs to share in the hope of the Second Coming. Its foundation rests in a totally reliable God. This hope is a life-or-death matter. Keeping hope in the Second Coming alive despite the cares and needs of this life demands our constant attention. Expressing this hope is the goal and motivation of our faith. As a class, list activities that would help keep the hope of Jesus' return a priority of daily life.

Consider This: Read John 14:3. How do you react to the personal nature of Jesus' plan to return and take you home? If you knew that He was coming next week, who would you tell and how would you tell them?

►STEP 3—Practice!

Just for Teachers: This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, **How can I practice the information I just learned?**

Thought Questions:

What does it mean to be reliable? Many people live exemplary lives without having a personal relationship with Jesus. (*Read Rom. 8:32, Col. 2:13, and 1 John 1:9.*) Why is it important to have a reliable Savior when our human efforts can look so good?

Application Questions:

In John 10:10, Jesus says, "I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly" (*NASB*). How does accepting God's forgiveness make abundant, hopeful life possible? Put your name in this text in place of "they." How has God given you a life of anticipation and purpose? If you are struggling with doubts about your acceptance with God, share this with a trusted friend. Invite that person to study the Bible with you, looking for

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Hope of Everlasting Life

No matter who we are, how rich, how powerful, how beautiful, how famous, we all face death. Medicine, diet, and exercise only can delay the inevitable. No matter our backgrounds, our education, our race, creed, or color, death always gets us. Life here, in and of itself, is always a losing proposition. Kind of tough, if you think about it: going through life, struggling with trials, tragedy, sickness, disappointment, only to have the one thing we fear the most, death, be the only sure way to end those trials.

Fortunately, the Bible shows us what nature, science, history, and philosophy never can: that death does not have the final word. On the contrary, thanks to Jesus, life, eternal life, is how the story ends for those who accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In your own words, write down what promise and hope are found for us in these verses.

In this world, itself offering no answer to death, it's nice to know that there is an answer, and it's found in Jesus. It's nice to know that death is not the end; it's not a long dreaded night that never comes to a morning. The grave is not a prison from which there's no deliverance. Jesus Christ went into the grave and came out triumphant; and, thanks to His triumph over death, we will triumph over it too. That's how powerful Christ's ministry was, that's how efficacious it is for us; even death can't beat it.

This is the hope that we find in the Bible, where the story of Jesus and what He has done for us, and what He will do for us, is found. In the Bible we find the answer to life's hardest question, and that is death. Even more so, in the Bible we find the hope that death doesn't have to be the last stop.

Imagine what life would be like if you believed that everything ended, forever, at death. How differently would your life be now? How differently would you act? What reasons could you give for going on living if, in the end, you knew it would all come to nothing? How should the hope of eternal life influence how you live now?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

texts about God's gift of salvation. Also ask that person to pray that you will develop assurance in God.

Witnessing

Chances are, you know at least one neighbor, friend, or work associate who is struggling with hopelessness and despair. Ask God to tune your hearing to recognize the Holy Spirit's direction in guiding you to that person. Covenant with Him to be ready to share your testimony of hope with that person as He provides the setting and opportunity.

► STEP 4—Apply!

Just for Teachers: In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: **With God's help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?**

Consider This: How would you paint a picture of hope? What kind of musical piece could you compose or structure could you build that would depict hope to the world? (*Read these texts together: Gen. 12:1-3, Ps. 130:7, and John 14:9.*) How can we live these texts in such a way that makes hope a reality in the community where our church buildings exist and in the neighborhoods where we live and work? As a class decide on one activity or project that you will do together in the next month to be living, visible agents of hope.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “God’s People Delivered,” pp. 635–652; “The Controversy Ended,” pp. 662–678, in *The Great Controversy*.

“In the word of God there are gracious promises, from which those who are suffering, whether in body or in mind, may receive comfort and hope and encouragement.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 213.

“We need to appreciate more fully the meaning of the words, ‘I sat down under His shadow with great delight.’ Song of Solomon 2:3. These words do not bring to our minds the picture of hasty transit, but of quiet rest. There are many professing Christians who are anxious and depressed, many who are so full of busy activity that they cannot find time to rest quietly in the promises of God, who act as if they could not afford to have peace and quietness. To all such Christ’s invitation is, ‘Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28.”—Page 251.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** Why, despite the promises in the Bible, are there still so many suffering people? Why does the Lord allow all these things to happen? How can we use the Bible to give comfort and hope to those who are suffering?
- 2** As a class, discuss the role of the church and how the Lord uses it to help bring to people the hope found in the promises of God. How can your local church be better used by the Lord to bring some of these promises to pass in the lives of those who claim them in the name of Jesus?
- 3** Despite so many clear and unambiguous promises about victory over sin, why do church members often have so much trouble overcoming? As a class, talk about what steps can be taken to help each other find the victories that can be so elusive.
- 4** Have people go around the class and share a Bible text that gives them hope and let each one explain why that text means so much to him or her.