

MESSAGE BIG IDEA

Even when things don't go our way, we can remain hopeful because of the hope Christ brings.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:5-25, Luke 1:57-80

ICEBREAKER AND OPENING THOUGHT

1. Where is the farthest place you've traveled from your home and with whom?
2. Sometimes hope doesn't lead to the exact thing we are longing for. It may lead us in a completely different direction or far more than we could have ever hoped. What are some things you are hoping for in your life?

BIBLE DISCUSSION

3. Read Luke 1:5-25. Zechariah and Elizabeth had hoped and prayed for a very long time to have a child. So long that, though they were good and faithful servants of God, they had all but given up. Little wonder that Zechariah doubted Gabriel's announcement. Are there longings in your heart you sometimes feel God isn't hearing or answering?
4. Read Luke 1:57-80. "His name is John". Zechariah was struck dumb with disbelief, but his tongue was loosed at his faithfulness as God's promise was fulfilled. Have you had experiences of crippling doubt where you couldn't see a way? Have you had any experience where that doubt was overcome, and if so, in what way?

LIFE APPLICATION

5. Someone once said, "There is gold to be found even in our disappointments." Do we believe that? We can become so fixated on what hasn't happened or what we don't have that we miss out on all the goodness God has for us along the way. HOPE reminds us to trust in God's goodness. When facing our disappointments, perhaps we need to step back and ask ourselves some important questions. Think about a current disappointment, and with that in mind, how would you answer the following questions?
 - What can I be learning from this?
 - How can I enjoy life even though I don't currently have what I want?
 - Where do I see God's goodness even in the middle of my disappointment?
6. Regardless of whether God gives us exactly what we want, we believe God will provide us with what we need. Sometimes that will be answering our prayers just the way we asked, sometimes it will be far more than we could imagine, and even when the answer isn't what we wanted or expected, we can trust that God has good things for us to experience and enjoy in the process. HOPE says TRUST. Trust in the goodness of God. How can we help each other trust in God during this season?

CHALLENGE: DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

What is it that keeps us going from one day to the next? What gives us the ability to fight our way through periods of discouragement or depression? It is a four-letter word with enormous power to turn failure into success and weakness into a strength. The word is HOPE. Even in our biggest disappointments, there is HOPE. When we come face to face with our struggles, unfulfilled longings, and deepest pain, hope says wait. It's never too late for hope to enter the story. Hope says to remember. God has not forgotten you. Think of all the ways He's been faithful to you in the past. Hope says to trust God and recognize there is goodness to be found even when our paths look different than we imagined they would. WAIT. REMEMBER. TRUST. In the middle of whatever you are facing today, know there is HOPE.