

life group study guide

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Hope That Gives Us Courage to Be Bold

What gives me the most hope every day is God's grace; knowing that his grace is going to give me the strength for whatever I face, knowing that nothing is a surprise to God.

Rick Warren

Let's Get the Conversation Started

- How would you define hope?
- What gives you hope?
- What do others place their hope in?
- Do you live with a future outlook steeped in hope or a day-to-day striving to just get by?

Hope is an interesting concept that finds itself being sought after and grasped for by most everybody, regardless of gender, race, position, education, geography, or wealth. Hope, I believe, is this intrinsic belief that things will be better in the future. Honestly, I believe it is God-given and prevents us from becoming overwhelmed with the brokenness of this world. But I will add that how one goes about pursuing hope will make an eternal difference.

When I look around, I see people placing their hope in education, medication, acts of kindness, the next generation, the next president, their next promotion, a new house or car, marriage, their next marriage, and on and on, for a better future. The problem with these is that they all are temporal. How long they last and/or impact our future is questionable, and a “crap shoot” at best. (I used to be a casino dealer. Don't put your hope there either. The house always wins.)

I think there is not only a better hope, but a best hope.

Let's Get to the Heart

Read: Mark 12:41-42 - The Widow's Offering

41 Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. 42 Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.

43 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. 44 For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.”

Background

From the court of the Gentiles where Jesus conducted His public teaching, He entered the court of the women. Against the wall of this court were 13 trumpet-shaped collection receptacles for receiving worshipers' freewill offerings and contributions. From a vantage point opposite one of these receptacles Jesus was observing how the Passover crowd was putting their money into the temple treasury.

In contrast with many wealthy people who gave large amounts (lit., “many coins” of all kinds—gold, silver, copper, and bronze), one unnamed poor widow gave two lepta. A lepton was the smallest bronze Jewish coin

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in circulation in Palestine. Two lepta were worth 1/64 of a Roman denarius, a day's wage for a laborer. For his Roman readers Mark stated their value in terms of Roman coinage, namely, a fraction of a penny.

A Deep Hope

Jesus says about the poor widow that she had given more ... than all the others. The reason was the others gave out of their material wealth at little cost to them, but the widow out of her poverty gave everything. Proportionally she had given the most—all she had to live on. In giving to God sacrificially she completely entrusted herself to Him to provide her needs.

This poor widow could have kept back one coin for herself, but Rabbinic rule states that an offering of less than two lepta was not acceptable.

- Which character(s) in the story, do you see yourself most like?
- The poor widow gives all she has. What does this one act of worship convey about her hope? What has she trusted in? Who was her provision?
- What is the connection between our hope, our offerings, our trust, and our surrender?

This is so convicting to me. This dear tiny, near poverty-stricken woman is a saint. All her hope lies in God. She courageously places all her hope in Him in a beautiful picture of surrender, trust and worship, pictured in all she has in two lepta. This picture is so bold that Jesus uses it as a teachable moment.

Read Psalm 147:1

11 The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love

Read Romans 5:2-7

2 Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.

- Could Jesus use your life as a teachable moment for hope? Why or why not?
- So where is your hope placed? In God, or the temporal things of this world?
- If in God, does your hope display the same courage and boldness of the widow's offering?
- For Christians, our hope is placed in whom and what? Is this sufficient?
- What do you need to do?

Background Information Source:

Grassmick, J. D. (1985). Mark. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 165–166). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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