

Unshakable Hope

Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What is one thing you really hoped for as a child?
2. What's your favorite candy?

Read the following passage: Ezekiel 37:1-14.

Ezekiel lived in the darkest generation in the history of Israel. For centuries, Assyria, a military juggernaut, had dominated the ancient near east. But in 627 BC, right around the time Ezekiel was born, the balance of power began to shift. A new dynasty arose in Babylon, and it wasn't long before Israel was caught in the middle of a massive regional conflict. In 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, laid siege to Jerusalem. A few years later, while in exile, Ezekiel saw a vision of God's Presence leaving the Temple. Finally, in 586 BC, the city of Jerusalem was burned to the ground. The Temple was destroyed. Everything was lost. It was in these circumstances that Ezekiel had his vision.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Why is hope so important? Can you think of times in your life in which you have felt hope start to slip away in one area or another? Explain. Why do you think you started to lose hope in these circumstances?
2. What is one area in your life in which you would like to have greater hope? Explain.
3. Sometimes challenging circumstances affect how we view ourselves. Perhaps this is why Jesus asked the man by the pool, "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:1-6). How can we recognize when we are beginning to internalize our challenges or failures? Why is it important to recognize when this is happening?
4. What is the difference between wishful thinking and genuine biblical hope? How should Jesus' resurrection impact our hope?
5. How does honesty concerning our own failures and flaws connect with building a strong foundation for hope? What role should the cross play in our thinking?
6. First Peter 3:15 says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." What reason would you give for the hope that you have?
7. On a scale of one to ten, how hopeful are you right now? How do you think you could become even more hopeful?

Pray