

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



**PRINCE
OF PEACE**
Called to Connect



Longing for Hope

November 29, 2020

Over and over again throughout history God's people have been challenged to cling to hope in seemingly hopeless situations, like children cowering in the dark holding to a parent's promise that soon the sun will rise. Hope is waiting in the dark and trusting that something good is coming, even when we cannot see it. That's what God's people have done throughout the ages.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: ISAIAH 40:1-5, 28-31

Read the scripture text together as a group.

BACKGROUND INFO

In the year 586BC the mighty armies of Babylon set their sights on Jerusalem and did what the Israelites thought impossible. They broke through the city wall, leveled Solomon's Temple, slaughtered hundreds of citizens, and took the rest as captives back to Babylon to be assimilated into Babylonian culture. Jerusalem was King David's city. The temple was God's dwelling place, the God who created the heavens and the earth, the God who said to the Israelites, "You will be my people, and I will be your God." How could a foreign nation, who didn't even believe in God, pillage God's city, destroy God's home and take captive God's people? For decades the Israelites languished in their Babylonian captivity and most of them gave up hope of ever returning to their homeland. They bitterly accepted their plight. We hear that bitterness in Psalm 137, a song written during their captivity. It was into the darkness of those days that the words of the prophet Isaiah flickered like a tiny flame. Remarkable words of hope, spoken to a hopeless people.

Hope isn't mere wish or whim. It is rooted in the promises of God and in the soil of God's faithfulness throughout the ages. The promise that we are never alone, never forgotten, never unloved. Hope is the belief that, no matter how bleak our circumstances, something good is on the way. We don't know what. We don't know when. And so we wait. We wait on God. Hope requires patient waiting in the dark.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share about a time when you felt hopeless. What was happening?
- How did you get through that season of darkness? How did God reveal His light during that time?
- What has kept you hopeful in 2020, a year in which many of us have experienced darkness?
- How are you leaning into Advent, a season of anticipation, this year?

APPLICATION: This week, practice dwelling in God's Word through *Lectio Divina*. What is God speaking to you during this sacred reading time? How is He revealing His light in the darkness?