

1

Hear Hope

ISAIAH 40:28-31



GOAL

Children explore the meaning of hope as a gift from God—the promises we know God has kept and will keep through Jesus Christ, God-with-us—and practice identifying this hope in their own lives.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Holy God, you are where our hope rests. Your faithfulness endures forever. Grant me your peace as I journey through this session with children, another expression of our hope for the future. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This session, Hear Hope, introduces this unit on hope as a spiritual practice. The Bible is full of searching people yearning for home, looking for comfort from God's presence and protection. Children will be introduced to the definition of *hope*, waiting in faith for the promises we know God will keep through Jesus Christ.

THE BIBLE STORY

This passage in Isaiah was written for a community of God's people who were in exile. These people needed to understand God as the source of their hope: their hope for a home, for a future, for strength. Today, this passage of Scripture continues to be a reminder of the steadfast hope we can have in God because of God's faithfulness.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Hope and waiting go hand-in-hand, and children are aware (sometimes painfully) of what it means to wait. To shift the mindset of hope into a faith practice, children will focus their understanding of waiting and trusting toward God.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Hope Is the Rope" (p. 8): Obtain rope long enough that everyone in the group can hold onto it. Save for sessions 2–4.
- "Waiting and Hope" (p. 8): Purchase refrigerated cookie dough and make preparations to use an oven to bake cookies. Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Song of Hope" (p. 10): Invite a guest musician to talk about singing hymns as a way to practice hope. Share the prompts provided to prepare their conversation with the children. Ask them to choose and lead one of their favorite songs of hope with the children.
- "Art of Hope Stained Glass" (p. 10): Obtain permission to paint one or more windows (with washable paint markers for glass) in your space or elsewhere in the church.
- "Hope Walk" (p. 11): Plan a route for a walk outdoors around your church and/or neighborhood. Get extra adult helpers for the walk.



GETTING STARTED

HOPE THROUGH ANTICIPATION

C

Invite the children to think about something they are looking forward to. Wonder if it might be an experience, a gift, a holiday, or something else. Invite the children to take turns sharing what they are excited about. Ask:

- ✦ What makes it exciting?
- ✦ Is it easy or difficult to wait? Why might it be easy? Why might it be difficult?

Rope

HOPE IS THE ROPE

Explain to the children that, over the next several sessions, you will be talking together about hope. Hold up the rope and explain that, in the Bible, people try to explain who God is and what God does by comparing God to everyday items. Suggest that hope in God could be compared to a rope. Invite the children to grab hold of the rope and wonder together about why people would compare hope to a rope. Introduce the opening ritual below and invite the children to respond with the bold lines.

When we feel lost,
hope is the rope
helping us find our way home.

When things are beyond our control,
hope is the rope
keeping us secure.

In the darkness of the night,
hope is the rope
giving us something to hold on to.

When we feel alone,
hope is the rope,
with strands that bind us together,
helping us comfort and strengthen one another.
Thank God for the gift of hope.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

-
- Refrigerated cookie dough
 Oven, baking sheets, oven mitt, spatula, dinner knives

WAITING AND HOPE

F X

Tell the children that waiting and hope often go hand-in-hand because hope is based on the promises and experiences of the past while waiting for what is to come in the future. Invite the children to bake cookies using refrigerated cookie dough. Have them slice the cookie dough and place it on the baking sheet. Bake according to directions on the package.

While preparing the cookies for baking, talk together about waiting and hope. Ask the children what they expect will happen and how they know

that. Make the connection between their expectation (future) and their experience (past). Comment that Christian hope is like that. Explain that we have hope for God's presence in our future because we have the past experience of God's presence with us. We can look to examples in our own lives, the lives of those around us or through history, and the stories of the Bible.

Continue with the session and enjoy the cookies when they are ready or when it is convenient in the session.



Be aware of any food allergies or dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or have alternative options available.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

HOPE: WHERE IS IT IN THE BIBLE? C

Explain to the children that the Bible is full of stories when God's people rely on God and God's promises to give them hope. Ask the children if they can think of stories of hope and promise in the Bible. Invite them to share with the group. Wonder together about the similarities and differences between these stories.



Biblical literacy can vary widely in children, so be prepared to brainstorm with the children about stories, such as: God with Noah through the flood and the promise of the rainbow, God's promise to Abraham for descendants more numerous than the stars, God with Moses and leading the people out of Egypt, God's promise to send Jesus, and so forth.

REFLECTING AND CONNECTING C

Set the scene for today's Bible story. Tell the children that, often when we read Bible stories together, these stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end, but not everything in the Bible is like that. There are also pieces of advice, poems, prophecy, letters, and so forth. Explain that today's passage was written for God's people when they had been *exiled* (removed) from their homes and their cities. Wonder with the children what they would want or need if they were in exile.

Provide Bibles and help the children find Isaiah 40 or hand out copies of Resource Page 1. Invite the children to follow along as you read Isaiah 40:28–31 from the Bible or invite volunteers to take turns reading a line of the adapted passage. Discuss any unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases.

Reflect on the passage with the children. Use the following questions to help spur conversation about the story. Give time for the children to respond to the open-ended questions. Encourage them to wonder by wondering with them.

- What does this passage say God can do?
- Why do you think the writer said these things to the exiled community?
- How do you think reading this would make the exiled community feel?
- How does reading this make you feel?
- What do these Bible verses tell us about hope?

-
- Bibles
 - Copies of Resource Page 1



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

-
- Guest musician or internet-connected device

SONG OF HOPE



One of the ways that we can experience and practice hope is through singing. The Christian faith is full of songs of hope that we sing together in worship. Introduce your guest musician and invite them to talk about singing hymns as a way to practice hope. Use the following questions as prompts:

- ✿ What is your favorite song of hope to sing?
- ✿ How does singing this song help you feel?
- ✿ How have you seen music give other people hope?

Have your guest musician lead one of their favorite songs of hope with the children. Together, learn a chorus or refrain of this song of hope. Encourage the children to sing this song of hope by themselves or with their families this week.

If you do not have a guest musician, show one or more of the following YouTube videos, inviting the children to sing along as they become familiar with the words:

- “Hymn of Promise with Lyrics” (bit.ly/FMInTheBulb, 2:53)
- “#699 Live into Hope, Voice United (Instrumental)” (bit.ly/FMLiveIntoHope, 1:57)
- “May the God of Hope Go with Us” (bit.ly/FMGodOfHope, 0:38)



Invite the children to move their bodies to the music. Encourage them to make their bodies show how this song of hope makes them feel.

-
- Resource Pages 2 and 3
 - Paper, pencils
 - Paint markers for glass windows
 - Window(s) to paint

ART OF HOPE STAINED GLASS



Plan a visit to the sanctuary or worship space. Suggest that art that adorns the worship space is used to honor God or faithful people of the past, to educate people, and to say something about our beliefs. Ask the children to quietly look through the space, making a mental note of any visual representations of hope they see.

Gather back in your space and wonder with the children about what they saw. Notice together any visual items and colors used to show hope. If you have stained-glass windows, representational or abstract, talk about how they may share hope. Point out that stained-glass windows with Bible scenes were often used as education, telling Bible stories in picture form when many people could not read the Bible. If you do not have stained-glass windows, show the pictures on Resource Pages 2 and 3.

Invite the children to work in groups of four or work as one group to design a picture that will be “stained glass” and represent, or tell a story of, hope for them. Have them draw a sketch of their design. Using paint markers for windows, have each group paint a designated window. Have them first draw the outline in black to be the leaded lines of stained glass. Then, using colors, have them color in the spaces in the picture to look like stained glass.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

HOPE WALK

AM NS

Tell the children that, since hope is waiting and trusting God to keep God's promises, one way to practice hope is to do things that make us feel connected to God. Lead the children on a simple walk around your church. Ask the children to quietly notice the sounds and smells around them, as well as what they see. Encourage them to focus on God's presence around them, whether that is from nature or humans.

Come back to your space and talk about what they noticed. Wonder together how focusing on God's presence around us can be a way to experience hope.

EXPLAINING HOPE TO A FRIEND

AM C D

Tell the children that, since hope is a feeling—something that is held inside of ourselves—hope can be difficult to explain to other people. *Metaphors* or *similes*—word pictures—are often used to describe hope. Remind the children that you compared hope to a rope in your opening ritual. Explain that a famous poet, Emily Dickinson, once explained hope to be something with feathers that perches in one's soul, singing and never stopping.

Form pairs or groups of three and invite the children to brainstorm about how they would explain hope to someone who did not know what it was. Encourage them to include different senses in their explanation, using some of their responses to the following questions, if that is helpful:

- If you could hold hope, how would it feel?
- What does hope feel like in your body?
- If hope was a smell, what would it smell like?
- What does hope sound or taste like?

After some time to imagine hope, invite the groups to share their thoughts. Reflect together on the different expressions of hope.

- What was similar among the explanations?
- What was different?
- What surprised you?
- What do you want to remember?

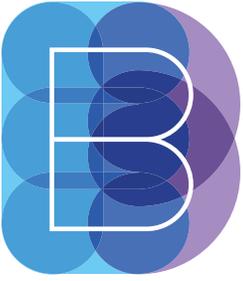


FOLLOWING JESUS

Review this understanding of hope: waiting in faith for the promises we know God will keep through Jesus Christ. Share your hope that the children will notice ways and places to experience hope in the coming week.

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God, thank you for giving us hope. /
Jesus, thank you for being our hope. /
Holy Spirit, thank you for reminding us to have hope. /
Amen. /



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON ISAIAH 40:28-31

Have you heard the good news?
The Lord is God, and God made us and all of creation.
God knows everything about us and everything about the world.
God never gets tired. God is amazing and powerful.
God loves us. When we remember God’s power, it can give us hope.
God can give us hope even when we are tired or sick or worried.
God can give us hope when we are sad, when hard things happen.
When we have hope in God, we can feel strong, even when we are weak.
We can do what we need to do, even if we are sad and tired.
God gives us hope.





Photo credit: Photoprof30 / Shutterstock.com



Photo credit: Nancy Bauer / Shutterstock.com



Photo credit: Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com



Photo credit: periphoto / Shutterstock.com

