



# *Homecoming*

**WEEK 5**

STUDY GUIDE



**CENTRAL**  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



# MONDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2021

**Read:** Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

**Scripture Verse:** *"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."*

- Ecclesiastes 3:11

## Today's Thought:

"Someone has said that if you could convince a man there was no hope, he would curse the day he was born. Hope is an indispensable quality of life.

Years ago, the S-4 submarine was rammed by another ship and quickly sank. The entire crew was trapped in its prison-house of death. Ships rushed to the scene of disaster off the coast of Massachusetts. We don't know what took place down in the sunken submarine, but we can be sure that the men clung bravely to life as the oxygen slowly gave out.

A diver placed his helmeted ear to the side of the vessel and listened. He heard a tapping noise. Someone, he learned, was tapping out a question in the dots and dashes of the Morse Code. The question came slowly: "Is ... there ... any ... hope?" This seems to be the cry of humanity: "Is there any hope?" Hope, indeed, is the basis of all human existence in Christ!"

We don't have to be scientific geniuses to know that "times and seasons" constantly change, regardless of where we live. The only thing that brings peace to these times is our hope in the dependability of God's natural laws. We know that God rules over the times and seasons in this world and has an overruling providence in our lives as well. From before birth to the moment of our death, God is accomplishing His divine purposes, even though we may not always understand what He is doing.

Through the proofs of these first eight verses, which are all divine appointments of God and His control of this world, we find hope. Our hope for a life filled with success comes from learning and cooperating with God's principles. We find further hope in knowing that God is sovereignly in control and has set aside a time and purpose for everything. *"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him. He appointed them to be saved in keeping with his purpose."* In God's

wise providence, he does all things well and works for our benefit, giving us hope.

May Solomon's wisdom teach us never to complain, keep an ever-bright outlook on life, always count our blessings, and work to turn those blessings into a gain for God's glory. But Solomon is not saying to us, "Don't worry--Be Happy!" He is promoting faith and hope in a sovereign God, not faith in faith. Our faith is only as good as the object of that faith. And our hope is only as good as the One in whom we place our hope. The most significant object of our faith and hope is the Lord, who is always trustworthy. Place your hope in Him!

- What "time" is it for you, as you read verses 1-8?
- When have you doubted that God's in control?
- How do you define faith? Hope? Is there a difference?
- Does belief in God's sovereignty free you to enjoy life? Have hope?

**Further Reading:** I Corinthians 13:11-13

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2021

**Read:** 1 Peter 2:4-12

**Scripture Verse:** *“People who don’t believe might say you are doing wrong. But lead good lives among them. Then they will see your good works. And they will give glory to God on the day he comes to judge.”* – 1 Peter 2:12

### Today’s Thought:

"On the third day of February 1970, Secretary of the Treasury David M. Kennedy made a speech in New York in which he said that the rate of interest, which had been rising for years, might soon drop. Immediately the stock market, which had been drifting downward for many months, jumped upward eleven points. But soon afterward, the market dropped to its lowest point in seven years. A few days after Mr. Kennedy's speech, the New York Times ran this headline: "STOCK RISE ON HOPE ALONE FAILS TO LAST." When we place our hope in the things of this world, we can rest assured they will not last.

In today's text, Peter is pointing us in the direction of how to find true hope. So far, in his first letter, Peter has already drawn our attention to the plan of God, the work of Christ, a call to holiness, and the enduring nature of God's Word. Now he takes up the issue of our spiritual growth to strengthen our hope in Christ. Through living out our hope in Christ, he is encouraging us to share that hope with others.

We gather from the text that we are God's chosen people because we were grafted in through Jesus, the cornerstone and foundation of our hope. We are now royal priests and part of a holy nation that belongs to God. This truth is what solidifies our hope in the promises of Christ, the living stone. But Peter warns those of us who place our faith and hope in Jesus and take the side of God versus the world, it will mean human opposition.

Why is our hope in Christ, the cornerstone, so important? Because our eternal fate is determined by our relationship to Jesus, the living stone. We either build our lives on this precious cornerstone, or we trip over him and reject him, refusing to belong to the people of God. Our relationship to Christ is determined by our faith response to Jesus when we place our complete trust and hope in him. And we share that hope with others by living out our hope before them.

- What process is God undertaking in the lives of believers?
- What does it mean to you to be a part of this “spiritual house?”
- In what ways is Jesus “a stone that makes men stumble?”
- According to verses 11-12, how is our new status with God to influence the way we live?
- How are you living out your hope so that others can see?

**Further Reading:** Isaiah 28:16

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2021

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:8-15

**Scripture Verse:** *“But make sure in your hearts that Christ is Lord. Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the hope you have. Be ready to give the reason for it. But do it gently and with respect.”* – 1 Peter 3:15

### Today's Thought:

Peter introduces us to a critical principle for having a sure hope. The foundation of our hope comes in practicing the Lordship of Christ in our lives. His warning to us is to have a spiritual fear of the Lord, holy respect, which then conquers every other fear we have, and what remains is hope. Peter backs that warning by quoting Isaiah 8:13-14, *“I am the Lord who rules over all. You must think about me as holy. You must have respect for me. You must fear me. Then I will be a holy place of safety for you. But for many people in Israel and Judah, I will be a stone that causes them to trip. I will be a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem, I will be a trap and a snare.”*

This quote from Isaiah concerning the historical setting is significant. King Ahaz of Judah was facing a crisis of an impending invasion from the Assyrians. The kings of Israel and Syria wanted Ahaz to join them in an alliance, but Ahaz said no, so Israel and Syria threatened to invade Judah! But behind the scenes, Ahaz had allied himself with Assyria! Isaiah had warned him against ungodly alliances and urged him to trust God for deliverance. *“I am the Lord who rules over all. You must think about me as holy. You must have respect for me. You must fear me.”*

As Christ-followers, we face many crises in life, and we become tempted to give in to our fears causing us to make wrong decisions. But when we set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts, we find hope. We never need to fear men or circumstances. Our enemies may inflict some pain, but they cannot cause us harm. We only harm ourselves when we fail to place our hope and trust in God alone. When Jesus is the center of our lives, each crisis we face becomes our opportunity to witness about him. Those opportunities are created when we behave with faith and hope because it causes the unbelievers around us to sit up and take notice. Peter challenges us to be always ready for these moments. We are to be prepared continually with the answer and reason for our hope; it is Jesus Christ!

- Why can a Christian be confident even during suffering according to our text?
- How are we blessed even when we suffer for doing what is right?
- What is the reason for the hope you have?
- How does following Jesus free you from your fears?
- How does hope change your behavior and cause people to ask about it?
- When was the last time you had an opportunity to share your faith with an unbeliever? How did you feel about it?

**Further Reading:**

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2021

**Read:** Proverbs 12:25–26, 28

**Scripture Verse:** *“Godly people are careful about the friends they choose. But the way of sinners leads them down the wrong path.”* – Proverbs 12:26

### Today’s Thought:

THANK GOD FOR YOU, Good friend of mine.

Seldom is friendship such as thine;

How very much I wish to be

As helpful as you’ve been to me—

THANK GOD FOR YOU.

Of many prayer guests, one thou art

On whom I ask God to impart

Rich blessings from His storeroom rare,

And grant to you His gracious care.

THANK GOD FOR YOU.

When I recall, from time to time,

How you inspired this heart of mine:

I find myself inclined to pray.

God bless my friend this very day—

THANK GOD FOR YOU.

So often, at the throne of grace,

There comes a picture of your face:

And then, instinctively, I pray

That God may guide you all the way—

THANK GOD FOR YOU.

Someday, I hope with you to stand

Before the throne, at God’s right hand;

And to say to you—at journey’s end:

“Praise God, you’ve been to me a friend—

THANK GOD FOR YOU.” —Joseph Clark

In Proverbs 12:26, I can hear the echo of my parents’ words back when I was preparing to enter high school. I must believe this adage was passed down from their parents to them before me. And yes, I passed it on to my girls and now my grandkids because there is truth in this little Proverb. Their words of wisdom were, “Son, be careful who you hang out with because if you get in with the wrong crowd, it will lead to trouble.” Those who choose to follow God should be careful about the friends they choose. They will lead you down paths you do not want to travel.

The question we ponder then is this, "does the righteous man choose his friends carefully, does he provide guidance, make wise decisions, survive the misfortunes of life, or turn away from evil? The wise man of God does them all. Because if we don't and we follow the way of sinners, they will guide us in the wrong direction and down the wrong path. However, when the roles are reversed, we can make an impression on the right kinds of friends; and they will seek the hope we have in following Christ. As we read in the poem above, our walk before others matters. We must be careful how we walk because we don't know who may be watching and its influence on their eternity. Through Christ and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can be a guide of hope to our friends.

- What advice did your parents give you regarding friends while growing up?
- How do you choose yours friends as an adult? How is it different from when you were a child?
- What might be some guidelines to use in choosing friends today?
- What is the clear message from the text when we don't choose our friends wisely?
- What are some of the consequences of choosing poorly?
- If we don't guide our friends to Jesus by the way we live, what could be the end result for them?

**Further Reading:** Proverbs 14:22; Psalm 95:10

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2021

**Read:** Luke 14:15-24

**Scripture Verse:** *"Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads. Go out to the country lanes. Make the people come in. I want my house to be full.'" - Luke 14:23*

### Today's Thought:

In today's text, Jesus takes the opportunity to tell a story that would teach the people the realities of His kingdom. He led into the lesson with the story of a man who hosted a great dinner party. We need to keep in mind the Jews, who Jesus was speaking to, believed that someday when their Messiah appeared, He would bring a new age of peace and prosperity into the world and would host a sumptuous feast at the establishment of His kingdom. They also believed they would be the only ones invited to this great party.

As Jesus started to share his story, he announced that participation in Heaven is like a man who prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. This thought was directly opposite to the exclusive thinking of the Jews since the invitation went out to many guests, not just a specific group. The indication was that there would be people on the dinner list that the Jews would have considered unworthy of the invite. Jesus was speaking of the Gentiles who also were invited.

When it came time for the party, a servant went out to remind those who had been invited, "come, everything is ready for the feast." Jesus is the one who has made all things ready, and He is also the servant who is personally delivering the invitations. Receiving an invitation to such a dinner, you can bet I would have it on the calendar to avoid missing it; how exciting to have been invited to such a lavish banquet. Who would want to miss the privilege of sitting at the Father's table qualified to be there, having been forgiven and adopted into the family of God?

Unfortunately, many turned the invitation down. We need to be aware as Jesus told the story that he was offering an invitation, not a summons; all are free to choose to ignore or reject His invitation. It is the same for us as we share our hope with friends by inviting them to God's house. When we invite our friends to church, we are asking them to a seat at the Father's table, hoping they will hear and accept it and not reject it.

- What is represented by the “great banquet?”
- What were the excuses of those who decided not to attend?
- Who are the poor, crippled, blind, and lame you could invite?

**Further Reading:** Matthew 22:1-14

# NOTES







[centralwired.com](http://centralwired.com)