HOPE WHEN THE FLOODWATERS RISE

WATER. ALL NOAH CAN SEE IS WATER. The evening sun sinks into it. The clouds are reflected in it. His boat is surrounded by it. Water. Water to the north. Water to the south. Water to the east. Water to the west. Water. All Noah can see is water.

He can’t remember when he’s seen anything but. He and the boys had barely pushed the last hippo up the ramp when heaven opened a thousand fire hydrants. Within moments the boat was rocking, and for days the rain was pouring, and for weeks Noah has been wondering, How long is this going to last? For forty days it rained. For months they have floated. For months they have eaten the same food, smelled the same smell, and looked at the same faces. After a certain point you run out of things to say to each other.

Finally the boat bumped, and the rocking stopped. Mrs. Noah gave Mr. Noah a look, and Noah gave the hatch a shove and poked his head through. The hull of the ark was resting on ground, but the ground was still surrounded by water. “Noah,” she yelled up at him, “what do you see?” “Water.”

He sent a raven on a scouting mission; it never returned. He sent a dove. It came back shivering and spent, having found no place to roost. Then, just this morning, he tried again. He pulled a dove out of the bowels of the ark and ascended the ladder. The morning sun caused them both to squint. As he kissed the breast of the bird, he felt a pounding heart. Had he put a hand on his chest, he would have felt another. With a prayer he let it go and watched until the bird was no bigger than a speck on a window.

All day he looked for the dove’s return. In between chores he opened the hatch and searched. The boys wanted him to play a little pin the tail on the donkey, but he passed. He chose instead to climb into the crow’s nest and look. The wind lifted his gray hair. The sun warmed his weather-beaten face. But nothing lifted his heavy heart. He had seen nothing. Not in the morning. Not after lunch. Not later.

God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence . . . So make yourself an ark of cypress wood” (Genesis 6:13–14).

For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth (7:17).

After forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth (8:6–7).

Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground (v. 8).
Now the sun is setting, and the sky is darkening, and he has come to look one final time, but all he sees is water. Water to the north. Water to the south. Water to the east. Water to the . . .

You know the feeling. You have stood where Noah stood. You’ve known your share of floods. Flooded by sorrow at the cemetery, stress at the office, anger at the disability in your body or the inability of your spouse. You’ve seen the floodwater rise, and you’ve likely seen the sun set on your hopes as well. You’ve been on Noah’s boat.

And you’ve needed what Noah needed; you’ve needed some hope. You’re not asking for a helicopter rescue, but the sound of one would be nice. Hope doesn’t promise an instant solution but rather the possibility of an eventual one. Sometimes all we need is a little hope.

That’s all Noah needed. And that’s all Noah received.

1. Think of your life as an ark. What conditions are you facing right now? Are you docked in a port, feeling safe, secure, and full of hope? Are you drifting a little? Are you feeling the water level around you start to rise? Or are you, like Noah, riding out a massive flood with no dry ground—and very little hope—in sight?

2. What affects the “water level” in your life? What things can make you lose sight of hope? List them in the order they affect you.

Noah faced a literal extinction-level threat. The world as he knew it was gone, yet his hope could not be destroyed. He sent out the raven and the doves to get a sense of when—not if—God would ease the flood. In the first study, we’ll see how God rewarded Noah’s hope in a small but profound way.

**PRAYER FOR THE WEEK**

Heavenly Father, thank you for making yourself known to us through your Word. Thank you for filling its pages with stories of hope. Thank you for keeping the spark of hope alive in us, no matter how dark our world becomes. Bless our efforts to understand better the incredible hope you offer. In Jesus’ name, amen.
Day One: Olive Leaves

THE PROMISE

The old sailor stares at the sun bisected by the horizon. Could hardly imagine a more beautiful sight. But he’d give this one and a hundred more for an acre of dry ground and a grove of grapes. Mrs. Noah’s voice reminds him that dinner is on the table and he should lock the hatch, and he’s just about to call it a day when he hears the cooing of the dove. Here is how the Bible describes the moment: “When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf!” (Genesis 8:11 NIV).

An olive leaf. Noah would have been happy to have the bird but to have the leaf! This leaf was more than foliage; this was promise. The bird brought more than a piece of a tree; it brought hope. For isn’t that what hope is? Hope is an olive leaf—evidence of dry land after a flood. Proof to the dreamer that dreaming is worth the risk.

1. When the dove delivered the olive leaf, it brought hope to Noah of a new world to come. Read Genesis 6:9–21. What was the problem with the old world of Noah’s day? How would you summarize the events that led up to the Flood?

2. How would you summarize Noah’s role in those events? Why did God choose him and his family to be rescued from the Flood?

3. Read Genesis 7:17–24. What emotions do you imagine Noah experienced when he saw the waters rise? What thoughts were running through his mind?
4. Notice the waters “flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days” (verse 24). How would that have affected Noah’s hope? How do you think his attitude toward God helped him as he waited for the waters to recede?

GIVING AN OLIVE LEAF

Don’t we love the olive leaves of life?
“IT appears the cancer may be in remission.” “I can help you with those finances.” “We’ll get through this together.”

What’s more, don’t we love the doves that bring them? When the father walks his son through his first broken heart, he gives him an olive leaf. When the wife of many years consoles the wife of a few months, when she tells her that conflicts come and all husbands are moody and these storms pass, you know what she is doing? She is giving an olive leaf.

5. To be able to give an olive leaf is a hard-earned privilege. Hope doesn’t always come easily. In Noah’s story, we know his first attempt at avian exploration ended in disappointment when the raven didn’t come back. Read Genesis 8:1–12. Based on what does—or doesn’t—happen with each bird release, what can we learn about the way God chooses to work in certain situations?

6. The olive leaf was good news, but not necessarily miraculously good news. God hadn’t caused the floodwaters to vanish overnight, even though that’s probably what more than one person in the ark had been hoping. What does that tell us about hope and expectations?
7. Noah and his family knew the conditions outside were improving, but they had no idea how much longer they would have to stay in the ark. Read Jeremiah 29:11. What’s the secret to maintaining hope for an indefinite period of time?

8. What are some “olive leaves of life” that you would like receive right now? What are some leaves you could give to others?

The thread of hope—regardless of circumstances—that runs through the story of Noah weaves its way throughout the rest of Scripture. That hope found its personification in Jesus. As we’ll see in the next study, no one brought hope like Christ.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- During trying times, God sends an olive leaf of hope to assure us there is dry land after a flood.
- The olive leaves of life—and those who bring them—prove to the dreamer that the dream is work the risk.
- We make a tremendous impact on another person’s life when we offer them an olive leaf of hope.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Father, we praise you for making all things happen in your perfect, perfect time. We thank you for your loving concern. Even in the midst of your judgment of the world, you kept Noah and his family safe. You gave them reason to hope, just as you give us reason to hope. May we never forget that. In Jesus’ name, amen.
At dawn [Jesus] appeared again in the temple courts. . . .
The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group (John 8:2–3).

[Jesus] straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (v. 7).
At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time (v. 9).
“Go now and leave your life of sin” (v. 11).

THE DOVE OF HEAVEN

We love olive leaves. And we love those who give them. Perhaps that’s the reason so many loved Jesus.

He stands near a woman who was yanked from a bed of promiscuity. She’s still dizzy from the raid. A door slammed open, covers were pulled back, and the fraternity of moral police barged in. And now here she stands. Noah could see nothing but water. She can see nothing but anger. She has no hope.

But then Jesus speaks, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7 NIV). Silence. Both the eyes and the rocks of the accusers hit the ground. Within moments they have left, and Jesus is alone with the woman. The dove of heaven offers her a leaf.

“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”
“No one, sir,” she said.
“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin” (verses 10–11 NIV).

Into her shame-flooded world he brings a leaf of hope.

1. Hope can be given and hope can be taken. Read John 8:1–11. In this story, the “moral police” put the woman in a seemingly hopeless position. In what other ways do people tend to rob other people of hope?

2. Who in the past has robbed—or attempted to rob—you of hope? How did they do it? How successful were they?
3. What did you learn from those experiences?

4. Based on what you read in John 8, what do you think Jesus would say to the people who attempted to rob you? What do you think he would say to you about those encounters?

THE HOPE JESUS GIVES

Jesus also brings a leaf of hope to Martha. She is bobbing in a sea of sorrow. Her brother is dead. His body has been buried. And Jesus, well, Jesus is late. “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Then I think she might have paused. “But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask” (John 11:21–22 NIV). As Noah opened his hatch, so Martha opens her heart. As the dove brought a leaf, so Christ brings the same.

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world” (verses 25–27 NIV).

How could he get by with such words? Who was he to make such a claim? What qualified him to offer grace to one woman and a promise of resurrection to another? Simple. He had done what the dove did. He’d crossed the shoreline of the future land and journeyed among the trees. And from the grove of grace he plucked a leaf for the woman. And from the tree of life he pulled a sprig for Martha.

And from both he brings leaves to you. Grace and life. Forgiveness of sin. The defeat of death. This is the hope he gives. This is the hope we need.

5. Martha essentially told Jesus, “If you had been here when my brother was sick, we would have had reason to hope.” In light of what Jesus did minutes later—raise her brother from the dead—her words seem shortsighted. In what other ways do people tend to be shortsighted when it comes to hope?
6. Earlier in the story, it’s revealed Jesus could have arrived in Bethany while Martha’s brother, Lazarus, was still alive. Instead, he delayed his visit. Why do you suppose Jesus allowed Mary and Martha to endure such a seemingly hopeless situation?

7. Has Jesus ever done something similar in your life? In what ways has he allowed you to endure seemingly hopeless situations to cause you to rethink your definition of hopeless?

8. Jesus’ defeat of death and forgiveness of sins gives us hope for eternal life, but what about in the meantime? What present hope does his salvation give us?

Jesus’ raising of Lazarus opens the door for all kinds of hope for those who believe in him. In many instances, holding on to hope may not seem logical. However, as the next study will make clear, the Lord has a perspective—a vision of the here and now as well as of what’s to come—that we do not. And that perspective makes all the difference in the world.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

❖ Jesus enters our shame-flooded world when everything seems the most hopeless and offers us a leaf from the grove of grace.
❖ Jesus comforts us in our sorrow and assures us he is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6 NIV).
❖ Jesus promises all who believe in him will one day have the ultimate hope of eternal life.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Father, thank you for sending your Son. Thank you for sacrificing that which was most precious to you in order to give us hope. May that hope burn so brightly in us that it inspires others to hope—and to claim the gift of salvation that you offer. In Jesus’ name, amen.
Is There Any Hope?

In his book *The Grand Essentials*, Ben Patterson tells of an S–4 submarine that sank off the coast of Massachusetts. The entire crew was trapped. Every effort was made to rescue the sailors, but every effort failed. Near the end of the ordeal, a deep-sea diver heard tapping on the steel wall of the sunken sub. As he placed his helmet against the vessel, he realized he was hearing a sailor tap out this question in Morse code: “Is there any hope?”

To the guilty who ask that question, Jesus says, “Yes!”
To the death-struck who ask that question, Jesus answers, “Yes!”
To all the Noahs of the world, to all who search the horizon for a fleck of hope, he proclaims, “Yes!” And he comes. He comes as a dove. He comes bearing fruit from a distant land, from our future home. He comes with a leaf of hope.

Have you received yours? Don’t think your ark is too isolated. Don’t think your flood is too wide. Your toughest challenge is nothing more than bobby pins and rubber bands to God.

1. The question the submarine crew posed was desperate and simple: “Is there hope?” How many people in your circle of acquaintances do you suppose are asking the same question—if not aloud, then alone in a quiet, desperate panic? How can you spot those who need an answer?

2. What makes people assume their “ark is too isolated” or their “flood is too wide” to allow for any hope?

3. How can we counter that way of thinking without sounding delusional?

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).
4. Whatever hope the crew of the sunken S–4 submarine may have had, it ended with their deaths. But death is not the only cause of hopes being left unfulfilled. What would you say to someone who’s been scarred by hopes that never came to fruition?

A BETTER PERSPECTIVE

Bobby pins and rubber bands? My older sister used to give them to me when I was a child. I would ride my tricycle up and down the sidewalk, pretending that the bobby pins were keys and my trike was a truck. But one day I lost the “keys.” Crisis! What was I going to do? My search yielded nothing but tears and fear. But when I confessed my mistake to my sister, she just smiled. Being a decade older, she had a better perspective.

God has a better perspective as well. With all due respect, our severest struggles are, in his view, nothing worse than lost bobby pins and rubber bands. He is not confounded, confused, or discouraged.

Receive his hope, won’t you? Receive it because you need it. Receive it so you can share it.

What do you suppose Noah did with his? What do you think he did with the leaf? Did he throw it overboard and forget about it? Do you suppose he stuck it in his pocket and saved it for a scrapbook? Or do you think he let out a whoop and assembled the troops and passed it around like the Hope Diamond it was?

Certainly he whooped. That’s what you do with hope. What do you do with olive leaves? You pass them around. You don’t stick them in your pocket. You give them to the ones you love. Love always hopes. “Love... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:4–7 NKJV, emphasis added).

Love has hope in you.

5. Noah wasn’t the only one to receive an olive leaf the day the dove came back bearing the twig in its talons. His whole family was fervently hoping for something to happen. From your own perspective, why is it easier to maintain hope when you are not going through tough times alone?
6. What happens when a community of people experience hope? How does that shape their lives and the lives of generations to come?

7. As believers in Christ, we have hope because we know God has a greater perspective on our troubles than we do. What do the following verses say about why we can always trust in God’s plans for our lives?

Proverbs 3:5–6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (NIV).

Jeremiah 1:5: “Before I made you in your mother’s womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (NCV).

Matthew 6:25–27: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” (NIV).

Romans 8:28: “We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him. They are the people he called, because that was his plan” (NCV).
8. Hope is meant to be shared and given out to the ones you love. What is the most memorable “olive leaf” you’ve ever offered to someone?

Perspective is the key to maintaining hope. We can’t see things from God’s perspective, but we can trust that his vision will see us through any circumstance and bring ultimate good from any situation.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Jesus offers the promise to those caught in the floodwaters and storms of life that there is hope.
- Even our severest struggles and most difficult trials are nothing that God, in his infinite power and grace, cannot handle.
- When we receive olive leaves of hope, we are not to keep them to ourselves but share them with others who are also in need.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Father, we humbly acknowledge that you are all-powerful. No situation and no circumstance in this world are beyond your ability to change. Because of that, we know that hope always exists—even when we can’t see it. Open our eyes to the potential for good in everything that happens.

In Jesus’ name, amen.

Day Four: Dry Land

THE GIFT OF HOPE

The aspiring young author was in need of hope. More than one person had told him to give up. “Getting published is impossible,” one mentor said. “Unless you are a national celebrity, publishers won’t talk to you.” Another warned, “Writing takes too much time. Besides, you don’t want all your thoughts on paper.”

Initially he listened. He agreed that writing was a waste of effort and turned his attention to other projects. But somehow the pen and pad
were bourbon and Coke to the wordaholic. He’d rather write than read. So he wrote. How many nights did he pass on that couch in the corner of the apartment reshuffling his deck of verbs and nouns? And how many hours did his wife sit with him? He wordsmithing. She cross-stitching. Finally a manuscript was finished. Crude and laden with mistakes but finished.

She gave him the shove. “Send it out. What’s the harm?”

So out it went. Mailed to fifteen different publishers. While the couple waited, he wrote. While he wrote, she stitched. Neither expecting much, both hoping everything. Responses began to fill the mailbox. “I’m sorry, but we don’t accept unsolicited manuscripts.” “We must return your work. Best of luck.” “Our catalog doesn’t have room for unpublished authors.”

I still have those letters. Somewhere in a file. Finding them would take some time. Finding Denalyn’s cross-stitch, however, would take none. To see it, all I do is lift my eyes from this monitor and look on the wall. “Of all those arts in which the wise excel, nature’s chief masterpiece is writing well.”

She gave it to me about the time the fifteenth letter arrived. A publisher had said yes. That letter is also framed. Which of the two is more meaningful? The gift from my wife or the letter from the publisher? The gift, hands down. For in giving the gift, Denalyn gave hope.

Love does that. Love extends an olive leaf to the loved one and says, “I have hope in you.”

1. Think about a seemingly hopeless situation that you faced in the past. Put yourself back in that situation and back in that mindset. How did you feel? What emotions were you experiencing? What kinds of thoughts were going through your head? Why did the situation seem so hopeless to you?

2. What gifts of hope did you receive during that time? Who or what did God use to give you hope?

3. What did that hope do for you? How did it affect your outlook?

4. How have the gifts of hope you have received affected your ability to dream?

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12).
Hope to the Arkbound

Love is just as quick to say, “I have hope for you.”

You can say those words. You are a flood survivor. By God’s grace you have found your way to dry land. You know what it’s like to see the waters subside. And since you do, since you passed through a flood and lived to tell about it, you are qualified to give hope to someone else.

What? Can’t think of any floods in your past? Let me jog your memory.

How about adolescence? Remember the torrent of the teenage years? Remember the hormones and hemlines? The puberty and pimples? Those were tough times. Yeah, you’re thinking, but you get through them. That’s exactly what teenagers need to hear you say. They need an olive leaf from a survivor.

So do young couples. It happens in every marriage. The honeymoon ends, and the river of romance becomes the river of reality, and they wonder if they will survive. You can tell them they will. You’ve been through it. Wasn’t easy, but you survived. You and your spouse found dry land. Why don’t you pluck an olive leaf and take it to an ark?

Are you a cancer survivor? Someone in the cancer ward needs to hear from you. Have you buried a spouse and lived to smile again? Then find the recently widowed and walk with them. Your experiences have deputized you into the dove brigade. You have an opportunity—yea, verily, an obligation—to give hope to the arkbound.

5. How can you tell if someone is “arkbound” and in need of hope? What clues would you look for in the way he or she talks and acts?

6. What role does empathy play in giving people hope?

7. How can you develop or sharpen your empathy skills?

8. Why is it vital that with every olive leaf you distribute, you also deflect all credit and glory to the One who made the leaf?
Each of us has a powerful story of hope to tell. We may not recognize just how powerful our story is, however, until we see it resonate in the life of someone else. Noah’s story still resonates thousands of years after it happened. In fact, as we’ll see in the next study, Jesus himself used Noah’s story to give hope to people concerning his own return.

**Points to Remember**

- Love extends encouragement to our loved ones and communicates that we have hope in them.
- We are all survivors who have been through the floods of life and seen the waters subside, and this qualifies us to offer hope to others.
- We have an incredible opportunity—even an obligation—to bring hope to those who are in need of it.

**Prayer for the Day**

*Father, thank you for creating in us an interconnectedness—common ground, similar experiences, and shared emotions that we can draw on to give hope to one another. Help us to be mindful of the hope we have been given. Bless our efforts to share that hope with others. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

Day Five: Just One Leaf

*Hidden in Christ*

As Jesus sought for a way to explain his return, he hearkened back to the flood of Noah. “In those days before the flood,” he said, “people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving their children to be married, until the day Noah entered the boat. They knew nothing about what was happening until the flood came and destroyed them. It will be the same when the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 24:38–39 NCV).

The parallels are obvious. A message of judgment was proclaimed then. It is proclaimed still. People didn’t listen then. They refuse to listen today. Noah was sent to save the faithful. Christ was sent to do the same. A flood of water came then. A flood of fire will come next. Noah built a safe place out of wood. Jesus made a safe place with the cross. Those who believed hid in the ark. Those who believe are hidden in Christ.

“But about that day or hour no one knows . . . only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:36–37).

“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (v. 44).
1. To the grief-stricken, God says, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5 NIV). Do you know anyone who has recently lost a loved one, gone through a divorce, or experienced an estrangement from a family member? If so, how can you explain God’s assurance to that person in a hope-giving way?

2. To the guilt-ridden, Paul writes, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1 NIV). Do you know anyone with an unquiet conscience? If so, how can you translate the words of the apostle Paul into hope for that person?

3. To the jobless, the Bible says, “In all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28 NIV). Do you know anyone who’s struggling with job security at the moment? If so, how can you use the promise of this verse to offer hope to that person?

4. To those who feel beyond God’s grace, John writes, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 NIV). Do you know anyone who feels too far gone to receive God’s grace? If so, how can you use Jesus’ words to bring hope into that person’s life?

A Basket of Leaves

God sends a safe place for the faithful today: his Son. So encourage those who are lost and struggling. Don’t know what to say? Open your Bible. The olive leaf for the Christian is a verse of Scripture. “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4 NIV).

Do you have a Bible? Then start passing out the leaves.
Your Bible is a basket of leaves. Won’t you share one? They have amazing impact. After receiving his, Noah was a changed man. “Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth” (Genesis 8:11 NIV). He went up the ladder with questions and came down the ladder with confidence. What a difference one leaf makes.

5. What do the following passages—your “olive leaves”—say about hope?

Zephaniah 3:17: “For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs” (NLT).

Psalm 3:2–6: “Many are saying about me, ‘God won’t rescue him.’ But, LORD, you are my shield, my wonderful God who gives me courage. I will pray to the LORD, and he will answer me from his holy mountain. I can lie down and go to sleep, and I will wake up again, because the LORD gives me strength. Thousands of troops may surround me, but I am not afraid” (NCV).

John 14:1–3: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (NIV).

1 Peter 1:4–6: “Now we hope for the blessings God has for his children. These blessings, which cannot be destroyed or be spoiled or lose their beauty, are kept in heaven for you. God’s power protects you through your faith until salvation is shown to you at the end of time. This makes you very happy, even though now for a short time different kinds of troubles may make you sad” (NCV).
6. In 1 Peter 3:15 we read, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (NIV). What is the hope that you have? How would you summarize it in one sentence?

7. How prepared are you to follow Peter’s instructions? What reasons would you give for your hope?

8. Of all the people you know, who would benefit most from hearing about the hope you have?

At the end of the story of the Flood, God says to Noah, “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you” (Genesis 9:8–9).

“This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth” (v. 17).

At the end of the story of the Flood, God says to Noah, “I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth . . . This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth” (Genesis 9:11–13 NIV).

The Hebrew word for covenant, beriyth, means a solemn agreement with binding force. God makes and never breaks his promises. His irrevocable covenant runs like a scarlet thread through the tapestry of Scripture. Every rainbow reminds us of God’s covenant. Curiously, astronauts who’ve seen rainbows from outer space tell us they form a complete circle. God’s promises are equally unbroken and unending.
POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Jesus made a safe place for us with the cross, but we must accept his gift of hope and get on board the ark of salvation.
- Whenever we are struggling and need encouragement, we can open the pages of the Bible—our olive leaves of hope.
- God’s promises, like the rainbow at the end of the Flood, are eternally unbroken and unending.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, help us to not be stubborn or set in our ways. Help us to listen for your voice and follow your call as we extend the hope you have given us to others. Thank you, Lord, for making a safe place for each of us through your ark of salvation. In your name, amen.

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13 (NIV)

For Further Reading

Selections throughout this lesson were taken from A Love Worth Giving (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002); When Christ Comes (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999); and Facing Your Giants (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

Note