

“Echoes of Hope”

Easter 2020

- *Romans 8:39 NLT - 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below--indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- *1 John 1:9 NLT - 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*

Let God's word wash over you and flood you with hope. You are radically loved by God; you are His child; He sees you as His masterpiece; God is with you; You are forgiven.

The resurrection is true. Dare to encounter the living God and be a witness to the echo of hope that He brings. Help others to hear the echo of Hope.

What is one way you can echo the hope of Jesus this week?

WRAP-UP

This week we have an opportunity to remember once again the echo of hope that reverberates from the empty tomb. So, let's roll down the windows and bear witness to the world that Jesus is alive and there is hope of eternal life in Him.

Memory Verse

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere--in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- Acts 1:8 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge-

This week you may find yourself in confinement, or you may be working overtime in the fight against the pandemic we face. But whatever situation you find yourself in, come away to a quiet place for an encounter with the living God. Remember His words, and reengage with Him once again.

INTRODUCTION

Easter Sunday 2020 will be remembered as a watershed moment in believers' lives– the Easter there were no church gatherings. The circumstances challenge us to reflect anew on our faith. What do we base our belief on? In what do we have hope? But the promise of Easter is not based on our programs and services, no matter how inspiring they may be. The hope of Easter is found in the echo from an empty tomb. It began over 2000 years ago and continues to bring us hope today. Jesus conquered death. He rose from the grave and the reverberation of that hope will not be stopped by anything in heaven or earth. We have the promise and the hope of eternal life because of what happened on Easter morning, and nothing can take that away.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Do you sing in the car with your windows rolled up or down?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Expecting Silence

Luke 24:1-5 NLT - 1 But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. 2 They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. 3 So they went in, but they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes. 5 The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, "Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive?"

The women went to the tomb Sunday morning to prepare Jesus's body for burial. They expected to find Him dead and the tomb silent.

What was their immediate response when they found the tomb empty? What are some of the explanations they might have considered when they saw Jesus' body was gone?

Most of us look for a logical, plausible explanation when we find things don't line up with our expectations. These are safer and more acceptable than hoping in the miraculous.

But what had Jesus plainly told His disciples would happen earlier in Matt 16:21?

Matthew 16:21 NLT - 21 From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.

Not only could the disciples expect to see Jesus suffer and die, He told them it was necessary.

Why do you think Jesus couldn't bypass the suffering and death that lay ahead of Him?

The women viewed the empty tomb through their lens of loss, hurt and grief. Those things clouded their vision. They were focused on what *they* knew to be possible rather than what God can make possible.

Jesus had also told them what would happen on the third day. But even when His body was missing, they failed to see it as the fulfillment of this promise.

When have you had strong influences in your past that kept you from feeling hopeful or trusting in God's ability to act on your behalf? Does it feel like the current crisis makes it difficult to be hopeful?

2. Make Room for New Things

It can be a scary thing to risk having hope. But the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead is directly tied to the hope we have in God. Look at what Peter said in 1Peter 1:21.

1 Peter 1:21 NLT - 21 Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.

Is there anything in your life that seems too risky for you to hope that God would handle, and because of that, you have "lowered the bar" on

your expectations? What would be the worst thing that might happen if you did trust in God for it?

The angel asked why the women were looking among the dead for someone who was alive. Maybe there is something you need to let go of so that you can embrace what God wants to do for you. Maybe you had a dream, but it wasn't God's plan. Maybe it is a toxic relationship you asked God to heal, and God is telling you to let it go. Sometimes we aren't putting our hope in what God wants for us, but in what we want from Him.

Spend a few moments reflecting on those things that you are holding on to, but God is urging you to let go of so that there is room for Him to do His work in your life.

3. Pivotal moments

Luke 24:6-9 NLT - 6 He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day." 8 Then they remembered that he had said this. 9 So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples--and everyone else--what had happened.

Eventually, with the help of the angels, the women did remember Jesus promises. Sometimes it takes an extreme event to trigger our reengagement with God.

Think about the moments when you have drawn near to God. Were there any situations that triggered it, either crisis or celebrations?

Triggers of reengagement with God – crisis or celebration

A good first step to reconnecting with God is to remember what He has said. Remember what God says about you.

- *1 John 3:1 NLT - 1 See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him.*
- *Ephesians 2:10 NLT - 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*