



Sermon-Based Group Discussion Guide

The Hope of Heaven Family Worship Service

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Slavery in the United States is one of the ugliest parts of our nation's history. For many who endured it, in a place of darkness and despair, the hope of heaven was their anchor. Like a candle that flickered at night, biblical truth gave solace to people in bondage. Negro spirituals arose and imagery in songs like "Let My People Go!" and "Free at Last!" expressed solidarity with the people of Israel as they left Egypt for the promised land. In our own 21st century context, we too can find genuine peace and freedom in Christ when our deepest longings for the eternal hope of Heaven outweighs our anxiety about the uncertainty of today and tomorrow.

Opening question: If you were in charge of the world's clock, would you slow it down or speed it up? Why?

In the book of 2 Peter, the apostle Peter warns believers against false teachers. The coming "Day of the Lord" is unknown and will be a surprise to all. However, we can rest secure in the eternal hope we have in Christ today. Every day, we can become a little more like Jesus, walking in freedom. Moreover, when we share our freedom in Christ with others, we work with God to become Kingdom builders.

Read 2 Peter chapter 3 aloud.

I. The Just Judge

2 Peter 3:8-13(NIV) "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells."

- 1. What does this passage tell us about God's view of time and His power? How does God's view of time and his power over creation affect our perspective on life and the future?**
- 2. Give an example of a time that God has been patient with you. OR share a story of a time when you were patient with someone when it was challenging.**

3. Think about something you have had to wait for in the past or the present. In that situation, what makes it easier or harder to have hope while you wait?

II. The Hope of a Free Man (vv.11-12)

- Become like Christ (v.11)
- Become a Kingdom Builder (v.12)

Hebrews 6:19 “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.”

2 Peter 1:3-8 “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Galatians 5:1 “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

1. According to 2 Peter 3:11-18, what are some things we need to pay attention to and be motivated by today?
2. Pastor Jeremy talked about the freedom that Christ offers and encouraged us to live daily in that freedom.
 - a. What is an area of life where you need to experience God’s freedom? What might that look like for you?
 - b. What is one concrete small step can you take this week to move toward freedom this week?
 - c. How can this group be praying for you specifically in that area of life?
3. Read Revelations 21:1-8 and consider the future that awaits us as children of God. What aspect of heaven do you most look forward to? How can this future hope fuel our current actions?
4. Go online and listen to No Longer Slaves (radio version) by Bethel while praying for one another silently. Then close in prayer together affirming your identities as children of God and thanking God for the freedom He offers.