

Week Six – Redefining Hope

“He set off for a far country.”

“I want to go home!” Even Dorothy felt that way when she landed *somewhere over the rainbow*, in the magical Land of Oz.

Do you ever feel as if you live in a type of Oz—never sure what might be around the next corner, how you’ll handle all the people and circumstances along your path, and if it will all turn out okay? Do you ever hope that *somewhere over the rainbow* things will be better—that relationships will be healed, finances turned around, or health restored? Yet tomorrow comes, and there is another challenge. That sense of being settled, of being content, of being *back in Kansas* is elusive.

Yet what happens if we acknowledge that we are spiritual exiles? What happens when we realize that hoping for things or people to change sets us up for disappointment? What happens when we redefine “hope” and look to our heavenly Father rather than our circumstances to meet the deepest longings of our hearts?

It’s time to put on our red shoes and click our heels together three times. It’s time to go home. Our heavenly Father is waiting for us and His arms are open wide.

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

Definitions and Translations from the Greek

On a journey (*apodēmeō*) -- to go away into foreign parts; to go abroad

Exiled –

- 1) banished
- 2) the state of being expelled from one’s native country or place or residence by authority and forbidden to return, either for a limited time or for eternity.

Received him back (*apolamban*) -- to take again or back or to recover; to receive any one hospitably

Home (Greek--a house, a close place, or place of rest)

- 1) A dwelling house; the house or place in which one resides
- 2) *Home is the sacred refuge of our life.*
- 3) *Then the disciples went away again to their own homes . . .* (John 20:10).
- 4) In one’s own country. Home is opposed to abroad, or to a foreign country.

Hope (*elpis*) –

- 1) expectation of good
- 2) in the Christian sense, a joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation
- 3) differs from wish and desire in this: that it implies some expectation of obtaining the good desired or the possibility of possessing it. Hope, therefore, always gives pleasure or joy, whereas wish and desire may produce or be accompanied with pain and anxiety.

4) confidence in a future event; the highest degree of well-founded expectation of good, as a hope founded on God’s gracious promises; a scriptural sense.

Read Chapter Six of *The Prodigal God*.
Highlight thoughts that stand out to you and ideas you'd like to discuss.

From your reading:

1. “If we read (*The Parable of the Lost Sons*) in light of the Bible’s sweeping theme of exile and homecoming we will understand that Jesus has given us more than a moving account of individual redemption. He has retold the story of the whole human race and promises nothing less than hope for the world (PG page 90).”

All this in one parable? Do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Why or why not?

2. While reading this chapter, could you identify a longing for a place that “absolutely fits and suits” you (PG pages 91-92)—a longing for a *true home*?

a) What would that look like for you?

b) Ask the Lord to show you His concept of “home”. Write it down.

3. a) What are the two reasons given for the “mini-exoduses and mini-homecomings” in the Old Testament failing to deliver the “full homecoming” everyone longed for (PG pages 99-100)?

1.

2.

b) What radical changes needed to happen for a *real and final homecoming*?

4. On PG page 101, Keller says that Jesus “came to bring the human race Home.”

a) How did He do this?

b) Have you found a “home” in Jesus? If so, what difference does it make for you? If not, what are you waiting for?

5. How does Keller say Jesus, the “founder of Christianity,” differs from founders of other major faiths both today and eternally (see PG pages 102-104)?

Ask the Holy Spirit to renew places where hope has been lost or where discouragement and disillusionment have crept in. Ask Him to impart truth into your spirit. Wait. Listen. Write down what you hear or sense.

Read the Parable of the Lost Sons, Luke 15:1-3,11-32, on SG page 4 or in your Bible.

Digging into the Scriptures:

6. a) On SG page 4, put a double-lined box around “set off for a distant country.” Look at the definition of “on a journey” on SG page 25.

b) How have we, like the younger brother, gone away into foreign parts, distancing ourselves from our *true home*?

7. Skim Genesis 2 and 3.

a) Where was Adam and Eve’s *true home*?

b) What made it a *true home*? What was absent in that place that is now on earth, and what was present?

c) Why were Adam and Eve exiled from their home (see definition of “exile” on SG page 25 and the word “banished” in Genesis 3:23)?

d) **DIG DEEPER**: Can you think of other Biblical examples of God’s people being exiled? Give Scripture references and explain why it happened.

8. Look at the definitions of “hope” and “home” on SG page 25 and re-read Luke 15:17-20.

a) What do you think the younger son remembered about *home*?

b) What did he know about his father that gave him hope?

c) **Read John 14:1-3**. Ask God to remind you what you know about your *true home* and your heavenly Father that gives you hope. Write it as a prayer of thanksgiving. Then try singing it to the Lord (*For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise* (Psalm 47:7)).

9. a) Put a “C” by anything you were encouraged to put your hope in as a child. If you are a parent, put a “P” by anything in which you have encouraged your children to put their hope.

_____ good grades _____ talent or skill _____ Jesus Christ
_____ athletic ability _____ right friends or spouse _____ the economy

b) Write out what stands out to you in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 and review Matthew 6:33.
DIG DEEPER with Psalm 146.

If you had a child who wanted to be an astronaut and you were concerned about where the resources would come from for this goal, using truth from these Scriptures, how would you encourage him/her?

Jesus, our true elder brother, laid down His life for us. After being beaten, crucified, and descending to hell with the weight of our sins, He was resurrected and returned to the Father.

“I’ve come back home,” He said, “and I’m bringing the others—the ones we love.” His Father brought the best robe, the ring, and sandals and prepared a feast. His Son had NOT been lost, but His earthly sons and daughters had been. .

The Father said, “Well done good and faithful One. Let’s celebrate. For those who were lost now have a way home.”

10. Write out John 14:6.

a) How does Jesus’ revelation of who He is help us find our way home? How does it answer our cry of spiritual homesickness?

11. Prayer Exercise:

a) Ask: *Lord, what have I hoped in that has kept me living as an exile?*

b) Ask God for forgiveness. Hand these false hopes or idols over to Him.

c) Ask: *Lord, what does it look like for me to hope in You alone?*

d) Read Isaiah 35. Ask God to highlight a promise or truth just for you for today. Write it down and respond to Him.