

WEEK 4

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

WITH YOU

THE BIG IDEA

Be with people when they need hope.

THE BIBLE

I Samuel 1:1-20; Romans 15:13;
John 8:12

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Strike a Pose

- Welcome to our final week of *With You!* The goal of this series has been pretty simple: when a friend is having a hard time, we want to figure out how to show them God's love by being there for them.
 - We started this series with a conversation about our emotions because being able to recognize and empathize with other people's feelings is an important step in figuring out how to be there for other people.
 - Today let's talk about our emotions again. Sometimes we think about our feelings as something that only happen in our minds or on our faces, but the truth is, we feel our emotions with our whole bodies.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Bring a student or volunteer to the front to lead this activity, or do it yourself! Have your students stand and have your leader strike each pose with your students following along. For some background reading, check out this [article](#) and use [this image](#) as a reference.*
- Sometimes the posture of your body shows how you're feeling inside. The funny thing is, the opposite is sometimes true as well. If your body is communicating an emotion, then your mind might actually start to believe it too.
 - **HAPPY:** Let's start with something happy. Smile as wide as you can. Keep smiling while you try to think of something sad. It's hard to do both, right?
 - **SAD:** Now look sad. Slump your shoulders. Put your head down. Keep doing that while you think of something that makes you laugh. Not easy, is it?
 - **ANGRY:** Make the angriest face you can and look at the person next to you. Now give them a sincere compliment.

- **NERVOUS:** Think about something that makes you nervous, like a test you're not ready for or a person you're afraid to talk to. What does your body want to do? You might want to cross your arms, raise your shoulders, or tense your muscles.
- **CONFIDENT:** Now let's try a "power pose." Put your chin up. Stand up straight. Smile. Stand with a wider stance than usual. Put your hands on your hips or stretch them out in a "V" shape over your head. Do you feel a little more confident or hopeful than you did a moment ago? It's hard to feel powerless or defeated when you're in this pose, right?

QUESTION | "When makes us feel hopeful? Hopeless?"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond to each question.*
 - It's always great to feel confident, in control, and full of hope. **What are some situations that could make someone feel hopeful?**
 - It's not such a great experience to feel weak, powerless, and without hope. **What are some situations that could make someone feel hopeless?**
- Even if you're usually a happy or optimistic person, it's okay to have moments when you feel a little less-than-hopeful. But what do we do when we, or someone we care about, seems stuck in a place of hopelessness?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- What's something you're really hoping will happen?
- ❖ What does "hope" mean to you?
- ❖ What makes you feel hopeful?
- What are some reasons a person might feel hopeless?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

STORY | Talk about a time you or a friend felt hopeless.

- Has a friend ever come to you for encouragement or help, but you found yourself at a total loss for words? It's sometimes hard to know how to give our friends guidance, but it's even more challenging when we know our friends are in a really dark place.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you or a loved one felt hopeless and why they felt that way. If you're talking about yourself, talk about someone who showed up and helped you feel hopeful again. If you're talking about a friend, share what you did to help them find hope again. **NOTE: If your story involves clinical anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns, be sure to share how help was found from professionals and not just friends.***
- There are so many reasons we find ourselves feeling hopeless, like when . . .

- Things aren't going our way.
 - We keep facing one disappointment after another.
 - Something is wrong in our lives or in the world.
 - We're hurting and can't find relief.
 - A prayer we've been praying still hasn't been answered.
- Some reasons are tiny molehills that are easy to move past with a little time. Others can be huge mountains that take time to work through. Either way, a few things are true.
 - **WE NEED SOMEONE.** Whether you're helping someone find hope or you're searching for hope for yourself, you weren't meant to do it alone. When we're feeling hopeless, disappointed, or lost, we need each other.
 - **WE NEED A LIGHT.** When you're walking through a dark room at night, there's one thing you need to help you not bump into anymore furniture: light! In the same way, when someone is feeling lost in hopelessness, they need someone to turn on a light and help them find their way.
- It's normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes — but when someone we love gets stuck in a dark or hopeless place, they might need some extra help finding their way back to the light again.

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 1:1-16

- There's a story in the Bible about a woman named Hannah, who knows what it's like to feel hopeless. As we read this story, keep in mind this takes place in a very different time and culture, where women and marriage were not viewed the same way they are today.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize I Samuel 1:1-16.*
- We don't exactly know which Jewish holiday Hannah's family was celebrating when this encounter at the temple took place, but we know it would have been a time of singing, dancing praise, worship, and feasting. It would have been a celebration — that is, for everyone except Hannah.
- Hannah had a lot of reasons to feel hopeless.
 - Hannah desperately wanted to have children, but couldn't. Although her husband loved her, having children was seen as a very important function for women. If a woman couldn't have children, she wasn't seen as valuable.
 - Hannah and her husband's other wife were rivals, which doesn't sound like a very easy or peaceful way to live. Because Peninnah was jealous of their husband's love for Hannah, she was cruel and bullied her.
 - After years and years, Hannah couldn't take it anymore. She wept. She couldn't eat. She felt desperate, anxious, grieved, and worthless.
 - Even Eli, a prophet of God, added to Hannah's pain when he accused her of being drunk in one of her most vulnerable and hopeless moments.

SCRIPTURE | I Samuel 1:17-18

- Now watch what happened when the prophet Eli realized his mistake.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Samuel 1:17-18.*

- Eli saw Hannah needed hope and gave her the hope she desperately needed. Eli joined Hannah and made her prayer his prayer too.
 - Shortly afterward, God did answer that prayer. After years of hoping for a child, being mercilessly mocked, and dealing with unending frustration, disappointment, and hopelessness, *bam!* Hannah became pregnant.
 - If we keep reading, we see Hannah's hopelessness turn into hope as she praises God for answering her prayers.
 - When her baby was born, Hannah didn't forget the hope God gave her during a very dark time. Remembering how she once poured out her heart to God, she named her son Samuel — a name that means "heard by God."
 - Samuel eventually grew up and became a prophet who was mentored by Eli. But that's a story for another day. Today, we're concentrating on the faith of Samuel's mom and Eli's role in her story.
- Eli couldn't fix Hannah's situation, but he did what he could do.
 - He saw her hopelessness and had compassion for her.
 - He spoke with God on her behalf.
 - He encouraged her and told her to have peace.
- It's almost like Eli was saying, "Hannah, let me be hopeful for you until you're ready to be hopeful again."

SCRIPTURE | Romans 15:13

- You hear a lot about hope in the Bible. In the New Testament (the part of the Bible written after Jesus came to earth), the apostle Paul writes about it in one of his letters to the Jesus-followers in Rome, Italy.
 - When Paul wrote this letter, the followers of Jesus were being persecuted by the Roman empire. They were thrown in prison, thrown out of the country in exile, and sometimes even killed.
 - With so many reasons for Jesus-followers to feel hopeless, take a look at one of Paul's prayers for them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Romans 15:13.*
- The Christians in Rome were having a difficult time, but Paul knew there was still a reason to hope. With God, there always is. So Paul went to God on their behalf (like Eli did for Hannah) in order to give them hope.
 - Sometimes you'll be like Hannah, feeling desperate and alone.
 - Sometimes you'll feel like the believers in Rome — not alone, but still up against a seemingly hopeless situation.
 - Sometimes when you're feeling lost in the dark, you'll need someone to hold up a light to point you back toward hope.
 - And sometimes, like Eli and Paul, you'll have the privilege of holding up a light for others.
- This is the beauty of God's community. Sometimes we give and sometimes we receive, but we always have the privilege of **being with people when they need hope.**

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
- ❖ Is having hope the same as believing God will say “yes” to your prayers? Why or why not?
- ❖ When a friend is really hoping for something specific, what should we say? What should we pray for?

HOW TO BE WITH PEOPLE IN HOPELESSNESS

- Although this story of a woman getting exactly what she wanted is in the Bible, sometimes it's hard to believe. After all, not every prayer gets answered the way we want it to, and we all have plenty of . . .
 - Things we hope for, but haven't received.
 - Situations we hope will happen, but have yet to see.
 - Problems we hope will be solved, but are still waiting to see resolved.
- So when a friend is feeling hopeless, how do we give them hope? Do we promise God's going to make all their dreams come true? Uh, no. But here's what we can do. If you think a friend might be feeling hopeless . . .
 - **PAY ATTENTION:** Is your friend acting differently than they usually do? Are they quieter or more distant? Are they hanging out with friends or returning your messages less than usual? Do they seem angrier or even meaner than usual? Sometimes these can be signs that a friend isn't doing well.
 - **ASK AND LISTEN:** Ask how they're doing and really listen to their response. What's going on? Are they experiencing something difficult right now? How are they feeling? What do they need? Practice offering a safe space free of judgment. If they speak negatively about themselves, others, or even God, show them patience and grace.
 - **FEEL WITH THEM:** Whether they're feeling angry, sad, frustrated, or desperate, try to feel those things with them. Don't minimize their feelings by saying things like, "It'll be fine," or "It's not that bad." Instead, let them know it's okay to feel however they're feeling, and that you'll do your best to understand.
 - **BE CONSISTENT:** If they are having a hard time, check-in with them at least once a week so they know you care. Show them with your words, actions, and presence you're there for them.
 - **PRAY FOR THEM:** Pray with your friend so they're not alone, and pray for them even when they're not around.
 - **GET HELP WHEN THEY NEED IT:** Sometimes hopelessness is more than just passing feelings of disappointment or frustration. If you're worried your friend is dealing with anxiety, depression, or another mental health crisis, talk to an adult you trust right away.

- **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:** Share with a trusted adult how it feels to care for your friend. Just like your friend needs hope, you need people to help you stay hopeful too.
- You'll never be able to fix everyone's problems for them, and there are some times when a friend will need help you're not qualified to give them. But here's one thing you can always do: when you think someone might be feeling hopeless, you can let the hope you've found in Jesus overflow from you to them.

PRAYER | "With You" Prayers

- Just like Eli did for Hannah, you have the ability to help others find hope when they're feeling hopeless through your presence and your prayers.
 - Through your presence, your friend will be reminded that hope can still exist, even when they can't see it. By being with them in their hopelessness, you can hold onto hope when they're unable to.
 - Through your prayers, you have the privilege of helping your friend hold the weight of their hopelessness. You get to ask God to hear their prayer and give them hope again.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Spend a few moments in prayer. Invite students to pray for anyone they worry might be losing hope, and provide at least one adult leader who is willing to pray for anyone who needs hope.*
- There are a lot of reasons to think the world is dark or scary, but we have the opportunity to be light in the darkness.
 - Because of our hope in Jesus, we can shine for others when they've lost their way.
 - And when our lights go a little dim, we can look to each other so our collective lights can continue shining bright.
- In big ways and small ways, there are a lot of hurting people around us all the time. But don't let that be a reason for you to lose hope. Instead, let it be an invitation to show people how much God loves them by showing them how much you love them. You can be a light in the darkness when you choose to **be with people . . .**
 - When they're grieving.
 - When they're lonely.
 - When they're in need.
 - And when they need hope.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
- **When someone feels hopeless, what does God do? What does God invite us to do?**
- **Read Matthew 5:14-16. How can Jesus-followers be a light for people who are feeling hopeless?**
- **When and how should you get help for a friend who is feeling hopeless?**

- **Who do you know who might need some hope right now? What's one thing you can do to be "with" them?**