



Small Group Guide | **Week 1**

Hope for the World

Welcome to “Surprised by Hope!” This six-week RightNow Media series is based on N.T. Wright’s 2008 book, *Surprised by Hope*. (You are not asked to read the book, but quotations and chapter references are provided should you want to read it.) Wright asserts confusion concerning our ultimate Christian hope: What is Resurrection? Salvation? The Church? Heaven? How does this affect our day-to-day living? This study challenges us to align our thoughts about heaven, resurrection, and the mission of the church with Scripture. May we do so to God’s glory!

Watch

Week 1 Video | Hope for the World

[Session Video](#) (16 minutes)

Read these two Scripture passages aloud:

Psalm 96:11–13 NIV

- ¹¹ Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
let the sea resound, and all that is in it.
- ¹² Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.
- ¹³ Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes,
he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Revelation 21:1–2 NIV

21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

Head

What is the Hope for the World? (5–10 minutes)

Summarize 3–5 points of the message of this video.

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Heart

Reacting to the Hope for the World (10–15 minutes)

1. Were you familiar with the “secret code” approach or “escape the world approach” to ultimate Christian hope? How have you seen these approaches lived out by people in the church?
2. Do you agree with Wright’s statement that “things are horribly wrong in the world” (politically, economically, ecologically, otherwise)? Give examples. What has stripped away your hope? What has increased your hope?
3. Wright suggests a definition of the church as “people who gather to share hope and be people of hope in the world.” What do you think of this definition? How is FPC doing as a community of hope?

Hands

Living the Hope for the World (10–15 minutes)

Consider how we can live by hope and bring hope to others; practical implications for our world, our community, and our lives; and how Jesus is our model.

Wright says that Christians are to live as “people of the hope” by doing kingdom things now, making things better, making things work as signs of hope. He gives the example of an old school restored by individuals with disabilities as they repair the function and beauty of broken furniture.

1. In what ways has the Church served the world and brought healing, grace, and hope?
2. In what ways has the Church brought pain or heartbreak?
3. Brainstorm as a group ways to live as kingdom people, bringing hope in our lives, our communities (family, work, neighborhood, church), and/or the world.
4. How might next week look different if we adopt a “God’s kingdom come” approach to living?

Conclusion

For Those Reading the Book During this Study

Chapters 1–2 correspond to this week’s video.

“Our task in the present...is to live as resurrection people in between Easter and the final day, and with our Christian life, corporate and individual, in both worship and mission, as a sign of the first [Easter] and a foretaste of the second [final day].”

Take Away

What are you going to take away from this study today?

Closing Prayer

Holy God, help us to live confidently as people of hope. Give us a fresh understanding of “Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” Holy Spirit, soften our hearts to those who are hurting and needy. Move us to actions of hope and love. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Spend the next six weeks memorizing and meditating on one verse, Romans 15:13. Even if your time is limited, this is possible! Consider doing this with your spouse, children, or friend.

Romans 15:13 NIV

13 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.

Memory Tip: Memorize one phrase at a time before adding the next. For example, start with, “May the God of hope.” Once that phrase is committed to memory, add, “fill you with all joy and peace.” Think about the meaning of each phrase as you memorize it. Continue adding phrases until you have memorized the whole verse.