



# JOURNEY OF FAITH

WALKING BY FAITH, NOT SIGHT

*Small Group Discussion Guide*



## PREPARATION

### ❏ STUDY

Spend the week studying Genesis 21:1-7 and Romans 4:17-20. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

### ❏ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

### ❏ LANDING POINT

All God's promises are fulfilled in Christ.



## GROUP DISCUSSION

❏ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

❏ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

❏ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

❏ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



## INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

# THE NEED FOR HOPE

The Bible tells us that a “hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life” (Proverbs 13:12b, NIV). We have experienced both the disappointment of broken promises and the exhilaration of a promise being fulfilled. Life is a mixed bag of heart sickness of people letting us down and others, including God, showing us the life-giving joy of a promise fulfilled.

Hope is something essential for the human spirit to persevere in a world filled with broken promises. A life of faith needs hope. A life of faith, as Brennan Manning once wrote, requires trust to be convinced in the reliability of God.<sup>1</sup> That is, we need to believe that God *will* be true to His promises. He is trustworthy and, as your group will discuss, He shows us His reliability ultimately in His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Q:** *How does hope change the way you see your circumstances?*



## DEEPER DIVE

*Select 2–3 questions to discuss as a group.*

# A PROMISE FULFILLED

For years Abraham and Sarah have held on to hope that God would be true to His word. Finally, we see God’s promise being fulfilled in the birth of Isaac. As your group discusses the fulfillment of this promise in Genesis and Paul’s commentary on it in Romans, consider the ways God infuses your life with the hope that He is always true to His word.

**Q:** *Have someone read Genesis 21:1-7. What are some practical ways to remember God in your day-to-day life and thank Him for His provision?*

Q: Share about a time when you hoped for something and God provided it.

Q: Have someone read Romans 4:17-20. How does giving God glory increase your faith?



## REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

# ONE STORY, ONE HERO

The Bible isn't a series of stories. It isn't a catalog of interesting characters. It isn't a manual of theology. It isn't a book of interesting wisdom principles. One story, with one hero, forms the cord that holds the whole Bible together. The Bible is essentially the story of redemption. This grand redemptive story, with God's essential explanatory notes, is the main content of the Word of God.

The Bible displays for us the extent to which God has gone in order to provide salvation for us. He really controlled every event in human history, and he really harnessed the forces of nature so that at a certain time his Son would come and live, suffer, die, and rise again to provide salvation for us. It is a stunning story that should provide the interpretive grid for everything you face in your life in this broken world.<sup>2</sup>

Paul Tripp

We need hope and we need heroes. That's why the author of Hebrews catalogs the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11—to encourage his readers to run the race of faith with endurance (Hebrews 12:1-2). But, in reality, the Bible gives us one, true hero—Jesus Christ. He is the One who ultimately fulfills all of God's promises, from Abraham onward. He is the One that lets us “hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise” (Hebrews 10:23, NLT).

The gospel is the story we are called to live by. It's the story of Jesus and it has the power to give us hope in a broken world and to help us persevere against all difficulties and disappointments. So, according to the gospel, what does it look like to live by faith? Let's look at two important applications:

1. *Remember the past.* God's faithfulness in all generations gives you hope to believe that He will do the same for you. When we remember the past, we see what God has done and that gives us a glimpse into the future. He will continue to show up and work in our lives in unexpected ways that increase our faith.
2. *Look to Jesus, the true Hero.* A life of faith is a race and we can only make progress as long as our eyes are fixed on Jesus. He is the one true hero the Bible speaks of from Genesis to Revelation. To be like Him and run the race as He did in His life is our goal. So, let us model Him and the way He loved the Father, shared God's truth, and gave Himself for the sake of others.

🙏: Spend time in prayer thanking God for what He has done in the past. Remember His faithfulness. If possible, observe the Lord's Supper together.

🙏: What's one thing right now that has made it difficult for you to look to Jesus?

🙏: What practices or rhythms could your group do to follow these applications more regularly?

🙏: How can the group be praying for you this week?



## COMMENTARY

**ISAAC'S NAME** “Sarah’s comments about laughter in v. 6 provide a further wordplay on the name Isaac, which means ‘he laughs’ ([Gen.] 17:17–19; 18:12–15). Laughter of disbelief now becomes laughter of joy as God provides the elderly couple with a son.”<sup>3</sup>

**THE PLACE OF CIRCUMCISION** “Some ancient Near Eastern cultures circumcised their children at puberty as a rite of passage from childhood to manhood. God employed the sign for infants to show that the children of believing parents are ‘holy’ (i.e., separated from the profane world and members of the covenant community (Rom. 11:16, 1 Cor. 7:14). God continues to use the family institution (Acts 16:31). The initiation rite into the covenant community today is baptism. In Christ there is no longer male or female, Jew or Gentile, so all may come (Gal. 3:26–29; Col. 2:11, 12).”<sup>4</sup>

### ENDNOTES:

1. Brennan Manning, *Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffin's Path to God* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 9.
2. Paul Tripp, *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), December 9th entry.
3. D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 56.
4. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition)* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015), 40.