

HOPE

LIVING WITH CONFIDENT EXPECTATION

FAMILY CONNECTION GUIDE

WEEK 4



READ

HEBREWS 13:16, CEB

Don't forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-7, 10-11, CEB

What I mean is this: the one who sows a small number of seeds will also reap a small crop, and the one who sows a generous amount of seeds will also reap a generous crop. Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver.

The one who supplies seed for planting and bread for eating will supply and multiply your seed and will increase your crop, which is righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous in every way. Such generosity produces thanksgiving to God through us.



REFLECT

"God loves a cheerful giver."

This is a powerful way to imagine how God wants us to share God's hope. Being a giver is not just about how we share our time, talents and treasures. Giving is a much bigger concept than just our financial resources. We have other types of resources we can offer in addition to money!

Who do you know that is a "cheerful giver" of hope, encouragement, love and sacrifice?

How do you feel when you are around that person?

These scriptures also point out that God cares not only about "what" we share, but also the "how" and "why."



REMEMBER

When children are little, one of the biggest things they need to learn is how to share.

"Billy, share your toys with your sister."

"Julie, share your snacks with our new friends."

Sharing is one of the most important things we learn as humans. The **2 Corinthians verse says**: "Such generosity produces thanksgiving to God through us."

Sharing, offering and giving are things we can learn and be taught at any age, but the 6th-12th grade stages are peak times of faith formation. How can you continue to teach them through your example and through your family life?

♥ RESPOND

Who is someone that has offered hope to you in the past? Reach out to them this week and thank them for bringing you hope. Write them a note or send them a text message. Or better yet, call them on the phone or over FaceTime! Let them know how grateful you are that they offered you hope when you needed it.

Then, think about someone you can offer hope to this week. Because someone offered hope to you in the past, you can now offer that same hope to someone else. Pass along the hope! Send them a note of encouragement or a text message to let them know you are thinking about them and praying for them.

Poem Included in the Message Video:

"THE HOPE SPOT" BY REV. CHELSEY D. HILLYER

We are built for hope.
Tucked somewhere inside us all
Is a space, dark and warm, where hope can grow.
No doctor has found it yet,
But I'm pretty sure that it's just above our hearts,
Cradled within our ribs,
Safe and listening to our lives from the inside –
To the whooshing blood,
To the gurgling stomach,
To the unique rhythms of our inspiration.
There it sits:
The Hope Spot.

When things are going well,
When needs are met and we feel sure of things,
The Hope Spot is full
And thrumming,
Sending every joyful and beautiful thought and feeling
Out all the way to our skin
Until it feels like we could glow in the dark.

But just as hunger sets our stomachs growling,
When our Hope Spot is empty,
It feels like something in us is broken.
And if our Hope Spot is empty for long enough,
We begin to believe that we, ourselves, are broken.

The truth is that I've had my share of hopeless days –
Heavy and slow, with a sense of something missing.
And no matter what emotional acrobatics I perform,
I'm not able to conjure it.

These are the wilderness days,
When all I feel is wanting,
But I cannot name what it is that I want.

I don't have a magic prescription for making hope appear
Its mystery is too deep,
And I'm only human.

But if I listen.
If I get really still.
If I'm able to set aside all the things
I think ought to fill the Hope Spot –

A new car or home or job,
A better body, a better spouse,
Perfect health, enough money,
A really good piece of chocolate cake –
If I'm able to sit on my hands and stop reaching
For hope like it's something so far outside of myself
That I have to be good enough or fast enough or smart enough
To grasp it—
If I can quiet myself long enough
To remember that the Hope Spot has been right there,
In my chest all along,
Listening to my life from the inside,
It helps.

And if I let the Hope Spot lead,
I find myself reaching for things
I didn't even know to hope for,
Little miracles I could never have imagined –
The hem of a cloak that heals,
The conversation that banishes loneliness,
The garden that nourishes the soul and body.

We can't control our Hope Spot
Any more than we can tell our spleens to do whatever it is that spleens do.

But to remember it is there,
And to trust its wild urges above our own,
Foolish as they are,
Ridiculous as they are,
Awkward as they are?
Well, that's our sacred work.