

STAND FIRM

Pt 1: Living Hope

INTRO

As a child, what was something (time of year or event) that got you really excited as you anticipated its approach?

READ

1 Peter 1:1-6; Isaiah 61:3

REFLECT/RESPOND

Peter wrote this general epistle (letter) to be circulated around all the churches in Asia Minor (present day Turkey). The believers were new Christians undergoing much oppression and persecution because of their new-found faith in Jesus Christ.

Peter's letter was not written to address any problems in the churches, but rather to encourage the people to stand firm in the midst of severe trials. He reminded the believers that because of the new life in Jesus, they now had a living hope.

We also are in times of significant trials with the ongoing pandemic, and we are in need of the living hope that Peter describes.

The challenge of the pandemic vs something like a natural disaster is that it's hard for us to acknowledge the deep emotional impact of the things we have lost and the ongoing powerlessness we feel to change what we are facing.

Peter and Isaiah both acknowledged grief as real, not something to be buried or ignored. When we face our need honestly, our hearts are in the place to truly receive from God.

Christian author Randy Alcorn states, "When men know they cannot hope in a country, in a political belief, or in themselves, they become free to hope in God."

- God's hope is a **living** presence in our lives.
- God's hope is a **strengthening** presence in our lives.
- God's hope is a **clarifying** presence in our lives.

Qu: On a continuum from a heavy heart on one end of the spectrum to a very hopeful heart on the other, where would you place yourself at this time?

The living hope that Peter describes is a result of being born-again – which comes from what Jesus did for us. Ideally, we should be drawing on that life, but that's hard to do.

Qu: What things, other than God do you find yourself putting your hope in? In other words, what's your self-talk? E.g., "it's okay, my situation isn't as bad and some people."

Note to Small Group Leaders: Choose **one** of the following questions:

Qu: What part do we play (if any) in cultivating the living hope that Peter describes?

Qu: How and why do you think praise to God can lift our spirits?

Qu: How does growth in an eternal perspective bring hope?

PRAY

That we would grow in drawing on the living hope that God has for us

Pray that we would be strengthened by God's presence in our lives

Pray for any needs that are present in the group.