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**Finding Hope in Hard Times**  
***“Discovering the Foundation for Our Hope”***  
**April 18 & 19, 2009**  
(Part 1)

**Intro:** In light of what is going on in our world today, where do we go to find some hope? Oregon’s unemployment rate hits 12% / We have wars in two countries / We see scenes of severe weather devastating entire towns / We see places like Iran and N. Korea moving towards nuclear weapons / We hear about pirates hijacking ships / All this before we even mention our own discouraging circumstances we face. / No wonder we find ourselves struggling to maintain a positive outlook about it all. It’s easy right now to lose your hope.

- Often, people struggle with finding and keeping their hope today because they have the wrong foundation for their hope. (Finances / Stock Market / Success / Positions and Power / People / Good health / Pleasure / Circumstances ) Every one of these things can crumble in an instant. And we are witnessing this all around us! What is the foundation of our hope in hard times? For the next 7 weeks – explain series
- Today, I want to give you 3 building blocks as the foundation of our hope.

**I. Our Hope Is Built On the Foundation of a Person**

*Ps. 33:20 “We put our hope in the LORD. He is our help and our shield.” (NLT)*

- So how do I put my hope in the Lord?
  - A. A relationship with God is the foundation of our hope  
*Ps. 42:5 “Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again...” (NLT)*  
*Is. 40:31 “...but those who **hope in the LORD** will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (NIV)* What amazing byproducts of the right hope!
    1. Biblical hope has its foundation firmly built upon our relationship with God. Hope is a relational issue not a circumstantial issue. The circumstances of our lives constantly change. BUT, our relationship with God is constant.
    2. So how does my relationship with God provide hope? You may be thinking, “I have a relationship with God and I’m still struggling with hope.” Where’s the benefit?
    3. Hope that results from our relationship with God comes from two relational

elements: What you know about God's character and what you've relationally experienced with God so far. Let me explain...

4. I experience a tremendous amount of hope in my relationship with my wife. WHY? First, because of what I know about her character. She acts consistent with her character. Secondly, because of 22 years of experiencing her character in a variety of situations. For example...

- When my wife goes shopping I never fear she will make a poor financial decision (spend money without talking to me / hiding what she spent / that would be inconsistent...
  - I never worry about my wife's integrity / honesty / her commitment to me / her love for me / I have 22 years of experiencing who she is. This produces tremendous security and hope in our relationship. Circumstances change, but my relationship with her remains constant.
5. Now take this understanding into our relationship with God. The reason so many believers struggle with hope is they don't know much about God's character (who God is) and they have very limited experiences with Him.
6. Therefore, one of the first steps in building your hope is to increase your understanding of who God is. We need to understand His character. It's tough putting your hope in someone you don't know.
- See Handout – explain – (If you're struggling believing God cares / loves / moves
  - What about my experiences?

B. Hope is experienced only as we respond relationally to God

*Rom. 15:13 "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. (NIV)*

*Heb. 6:18-19 "Therefore, we who have **fled to him for refuge** can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls..." (NLT)*

1. Hope is a byproduct of the relational choices we make with God. We have to choose to "trust in Him". We have to "run to Him for refuge". These are conscious choices that result in hope. It's only as we make these choices that we discover how trustworthy God is, which increases your hope. (Discover He is true to His character!)
2. If you want to increase your experiences with God, (and your hope) you're going to have to stop trusting yourself and start trusting God. You're going to have to stop running to other things when life gets hard and run to Him.
3. **Illustrate:** Parasailing in Cabo: We had to let go of control / submit ourselves to others who knew what they were doing / trust that we weren't going to die / and the result was amazing. - We soared like eagles. It was no effort. (picture)
4. If we are willing to trust God like this, submit our lives to Him; get into His harness; we will see how trustworthy He is and our hope will explode with growth! Is. 40 will be an experience instead of just words. That's hope in a person.

## II. Our Hope Is Built On the Foundation of His Principals

*Ps. 119:114 "You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word." (NIV)*

- How is it that God's word can give us hope? It all depends on how we respond to it.

### A. Embracing God's word as absolute gives hope

*Ps. 119:160 "All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal." (NIV)*

*II Tim 3:16-17 "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." (NLT)*

*Rom. 15:4 "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."*

(NIV) God's word is a hope producer!

1. The reason so many people do not find hope in the word of God is due to the fact they do not look at it as absolute / authoritative. God's word is not the final word it is just one of the many options available for us to listen to.
  2. In fact, the belief in absolute moral truth is not a very popular idea in America today. Most people believe in the idea that truth is relative based upon the situation.
- Barna poll showed only **22%** of American adults believe in absolute moral truth.
  - Conservative Christians population **35%** believe that moral truth is absolute –
  - 9% of teenagers who claim to be Christians believe in absolute moral truth.
3. Some of you are thinking; what's the big deal? The big deal is that God Himself says that His word is TRUE / ETERNAL / Doesn't change / is based upon His character / and is ABSOLUTE!
  4. To treat God's word like it is the same as another self-help book is not just insulting to God but it is calling Him a liar!
  5. The only way for God's word to give us hope every time is for us to embrace that it is TRUE every time. How can His word give us hope if we are wondering if it is true and if it works? That's not hope, that's confusion.
- If I'm hiking / hunting in a wilderness area and get lost and I pull out my compass or GPS and take a reading, I don't experience any comfort and hope if I don't believe it's 100% correct!
  - 6. Hope is knowing that God has given us a road map for life and that His directions for life are right EVERY time!
    - How many people feel lost when it comes to life? Being lost is how we experience hopelessness.
    - What is your belief about His word? Absolute truth =absolute hope!

### B. Obeying God's word without reservation gives hope

*Ps. 119:35 "Make me walk along the path of your commands, for that is where my*

*happiness is found.” (NLT)*

*Ps. 119:45 “I will walk in freedom, for I have devoted myself to your commandments.”*  
(NLT) God’s word doesn’t restrict our lives, it liberates them!

*Ps. 119:143” As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands.”*  
(NLT) (Notice the results...Happiness / Freedom / Joy even in stress) That’s HOPE!

1. The only way for us to discover the hope that is found in the word of God is to submit our lives under its authority. We must have a commitment to understand it and follow it.
2. As we discover the benefits of obedience, it builds hope into our lives. Life doesn’t have to be one big mystery based on chance. I can follow God’s word and be blessed.

*James 1:25 “But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.”*  
(NLT) Obedience = Blessing!

3. I am so convinced that God’s word works I have tremendous hope. Illustrate: Someone dropped off this easy button in the office. (remember the commercials) “Wouldn’t it be nice if we could just hit the easy button?” I can’t tell you how many times I have tried to figure life out on my own with great struggle, only to later trust God and follow His word and discover...hit button...”That was Easy!”
4. I’m not saying that God’s word makes everything easy. BUT I am here to tell you it will make many things easier!
5. Following God’s word will always produce more hope in your life than following your own way! Are you building your hope on the foundation of His word?

### **III. Our Hope Is Built On the Foundation of Removing False Hopes**

#### **A. We must identify and remove all false hopes**

*Ps. 33:17 “A horse is a **false hope** for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.” (NASB)*

1. Not that anyone is trusting their horse this morning, the point is placing hope in an object that can’t deliver. Do you have your hope placed in something besides God and His word as your foundation? If so, you are setting yourself up for major disappointment.
2. Please understand this doesn’t mean we don’t have natural human hope such as; we hope our children grow up and do well / marry well / hope that warm weather stays / Hope your favorite team wins the game / Hope I catch more salmon and steelhead than last year / Hope to harvest a 6X6 bull elk.
3. We all have natural hopes / desires / wishes that are just part of being human. Having this natural hope is good and just part of being emotionally healthy. We all need things to look forward to. BUT, we are not basing our lives on them. If they don’t happen, we may have momentary disappointment, but life goes on.
4. It’s when we see these things as foundational for our happiness / our success / our

self-worth / that we probably have a false hope.

5. Sometimes it's in the disappointments of life where God has redirected my hope back on Him. Often it's been in the pain and confusion of disappointment where I have re-discovered God is really the only source I can count on EVERY time. He's really all I need.
6. At times we need to be reminded that everything in this life will fail. The economy fails / governments fails / justice fails / friends will fail / our emotions fail / our health fails / The only thing that will NEVER fail and will last for all eternity is God and His word.
  - If we're going to identify false hopes...

B. We must be able to discern truth from lies

*John 8:44*(Jesus referring to the devil) "... He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies." (NLT)

1. We have a spiritual enemy that is constantly trying to lie to us. We must be discerning if we are going to be a people with our hope fixed where it needs to be. There is no shortage of voices out there promising something false to try to win our trust.

*Jer. 23:16* "This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with **false hopes**. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD." (NIV) Scam artists!

2. This world is just filled with scams. Have you ever fallen prey to a scam? Scams come in a variety packages. **Last year in Mexico**, we were driving in our rental car and needed to get gas. Now, we were prepared for the scams at the Mexican gas stations. Pay attention / watch / don't trust / (explain what happened)
3. The only way to be discerning and not fall prey to all the hope scams that are out there is to evaluate everything by the truth of the word of God. This is how we pay attention. If we don't embrace God's word as the standard, (as absolute) then we have nothing to evaluate false claims.
4. Some of you are struggling with hope today because you have fallen victim to some of these lie...some of these scams. You believed they were going to deliver on their promises only to leave you hopeless. You can see now, it's a false hope!
5. Walking in relationship with God and following His word is the only sure hope we have in this life. Maybe it's time to discard some of those false hopes that have let you down countless times and embrace a foundation for your hope that will never disappoint you. Listen to God's word...

*Rom. 10:11* "Anyone who trusts in the Lord will **NEVER** be disappointed." (NCV)

- How's that for a promise that gives us hope?

Where is the foundation for your hope today? Is it built upon your relationship with God and His unchanging character? Is it built upon His eternal truth of His word? Is it built upon identifying and removing the false hope that always disappoint you? If you will, you're on your way to establishing a foundation for your life that can never be shaken.