



LESSON ONE:

A Second Helping of Hope

SCRIPTURE:

1 Timothy 1

FOCUS VERSE:

I write this to you, Timothy, the son I love so much (2 Timothy 1:2 MESSAGE)

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. What food causes you to want a "second helping?"
What prompts the desire?
2. What do you hope for?
3. What makes you feel hopeless?

Each chapter of Paul's second letter to Timothy presents a focused theme. The theme provides the structure for Paul's "last words" to Timothy. Here are the things that are important to Paul, the things that Paul wants Timothy to remember. The first chapter focuses on hope.

The Christian faith speaks on a practical level of a life well-lived. Within its pages, Christianity teaches ways that an individual can understand the world, sense personal satisfaction, and properly relate to others.

But the heart of Christianity speaks to the future. Our faith sees that Jesus overcame the greatest enemy of all humanity – death – in a victorious manner. Christian doctrine affirms the same thing will happen to those whose belief and trust is in Jesus as the Messiah.

But Paul's situation is hopeless. Emperor Nero is blaming the burning of Rome upon Christians. Paul is now behind bars not for teaching beliefs contrary to accepted Jewish principles, but as the leader of a movement that was being blamed for the loss of countless lives and property.

Understand Paul's circumstance in a modern setting. In the remaining days of September of 2011, imagine if Osama bin Laden and high officials in al-Qaeda had been found in New York City and put in prison. The country and our government would have insisted upon justice and punishment.

Is it possible that Paul has abandoned his faith? Is he being supported in a way to encourage and challenge him to continue? Timothy's own faith might have been shaken depending on the words and tenor of this letter.

Had Paul given up hope? Paul's close companion Timothy must be worried sick about the apostle. Paul's letter is welcome news to the young minister. The words inspire his hope.

Christians define hope differently than its common usage. The word "hope" in English normally connotes a departure from certainty. "I hope we get tickets to the big game." For the Christian, hope is not wishful thinking.

Peter says, "Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). This does not mean that we don't know if it is going to happen, but my wish is for it to happen.

Christian hope occurs when God has promised that something is going to happen. The Christian puts faith and trust in the promise. Christian hope, then, becomes confident assurance that an event will happen because God has promised it. Within it is woven the desire and passion to see the time when the promise comes true.