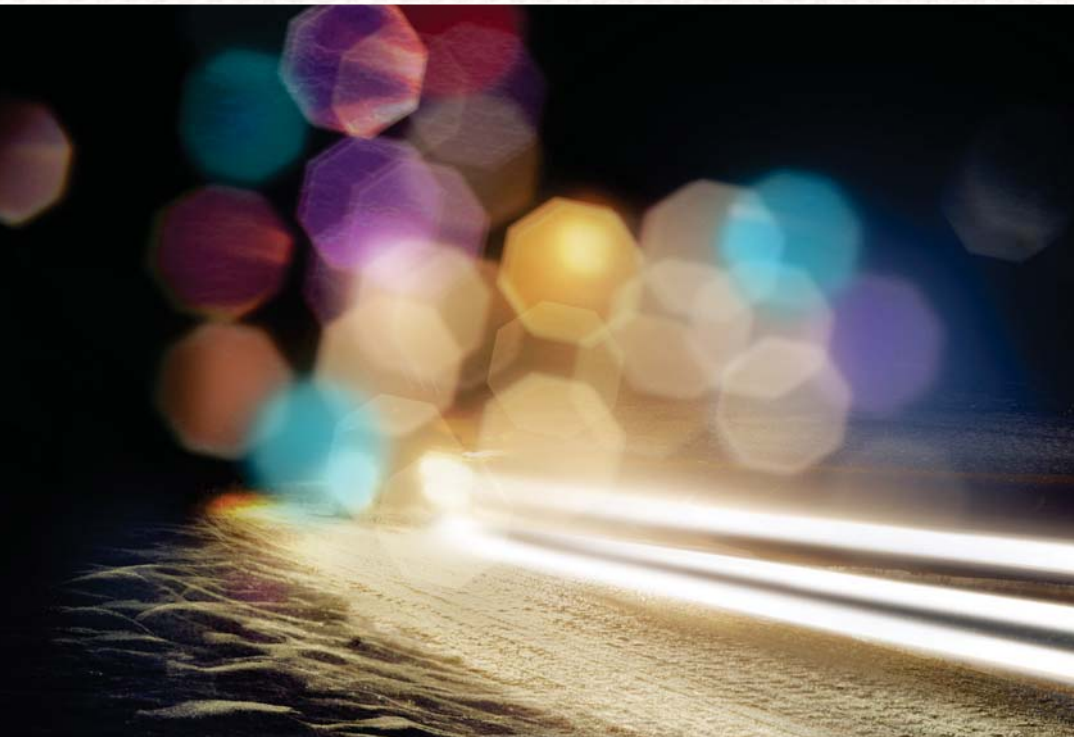


BIBLE  
STUDIES  
FOR LIFE

# LET HOPE IN



PETE WILSON



## Social Media



Connect with a community of *Bible Studies for Life* users. Post responses to questions, share teaching ideas, and link to great blog content.

**Facebook.com/BibleStudiesForLife**



Get instant updates about new articles, giveaways, and more. **@BibleMeetsLife**

## The App

Simple and straightforward, this elegantly designed iPhone app gives you all the content of the Small Group Member Book—plus a whole lot more—right at your fingertips. Available in the iTunes App Store; search “**Bible Studies for Life**.”



## Blog

At **BibleStudiesForLife.com/blog** you will find magazine articles and music downloads from LifeWay Worship. Plus, leaders and group members alike will benefit from the blog posts written for people in every life stage—singles, parents, boomers, and senior adults—as well as media clips, connections between our study topics, current events, and much more.

*Let Hope In*  
*Bible Studies for Life: Small Group Member Book*

© 2013 LifeWay Press®

ISBN: 978-1-4300-2898-7

Item: 005602634

Dewey Decimal Classification Number: 234

Subject Heading: HOPE \ DISAPPOINTMENT \ CHRISTIAN LIFE

**Eric Geiger**  
*Vice President, Church Resources*

**Ronnie Floyd**  
*General Editor*

**David Francis**  
*Managing Editor*

**Gena Rogers**  
**Karen Dockrey**  
*Content Editors*

**Philip Nation**  
*Director, Adult Ministry Publishing*

**Faith Whatley**  
*Director, Adult Ministry*

Send questions/comments to: Content Editor, *Bible Studies for Life: Adults*, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0175; or make comments on the Web at [www.BibleStudiesforLife.com](http://www.BibleStudiesforLife.com).

Printed in the United States of America

For ordering or inquiries, visit [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com); write LifeWay Small Groups; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0152; or call toll free (800) 458-2772.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, copyright 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

*Bible Studies for Life: Adults* often lists websites that may be helpful to our readers. Our staff verifies each site's usefulness and appropriateness prior to publication. However, website content changes quickly so we encourage you to approach all websites with caution. Make sure sites are still appropriate before sharing them with students, friends, and family.

## *Hope changes everything.*

We all need hope.

- ▶ We've made mistakes.
- ▶ We feel shame or regret over something in our present or past.
- ▶ We've tried to fix things in our lives and we've failed.

Even those among us who seem to have it all together have areas of hurt in our lives.

If we're not careful, we can be blinded by an onslaught of mistakes, shame, and regret. Face enough of that and we can lose sight of hope.

*Let Hope In* is a six-week study that acknowledges that we've blown it and we need hope—but it also shows us we are never beyond hope.

We can have a sure hope regardless of our past. When we let hope in, we can move beyond the regrets and shame. A hope-filled life is not a problem-free life. But we are no longer bound or hindered by the past. For the next six weeks, we'll consider how we can know and experience hope. We'll also discover how hope can transform us on a daily basis.



Pete Wilson

*Let Hope In* is a small-group study by Pete Wilson, who authored the book *Let Hope In: 4 Choices That Will Change Your Life Forever* (Thomas Nelson, 2013).

Pete is the founding and senior pastor of Cross Point Church in Nashville, Tennessee, a committed church community that he and his wife, Brandi, planted in 2003. Cross Point has grown to reach more than 5,000 people each weekend through its four campuses located around the Nashville area and online. Follow Pete on Twitter: @pwilson or read his blog at *WithoutWax.tv*.



# contents

- 
- 6    **Session 1: Hope Needed** *2 Samuel 9:6-13*
  - 16    **Session 2: Hope Found** *Matthew 8:1-13*
  - 26    **Session 3: Hope Personified** *Luke 15:11-12,20-24*
  - 36    **Session 4: Hope Expressed** *Psalms 138:1-8*
  - 46    **Session 5: Hope Renewed** *John 18:15-18,25-27; 21:15-19*
  - 56    **Session 6: Hope Shared** *Acts 3:1-10*
  - 66    Conclusion: Christ, Community, Culture
  - 68    Leader Guide

# SESSION 1

# HOPE NEEDED



***What did you want to be  
when you grew up?***

#BSFLneeded

## THE POINT

*You are never beyond hope.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Veterinarians, astronauts, doctors, presidents, and maybe even a superhero or two. These are the future occupations of third graders everywhere. Why? Children have their entire lives ahead of them. At their age the sky is the limit, there's time to dream, and it's always OK to hope for a better tomorrow.

What if your entire life were ahead of you, too? What if your tomorrow could be better than your yesterday? That's what hope is about, being free from your past to create a new future. We look forward to the life ahead of us when we're young. Yet with each passing year, mistakes enter the picture. Bad decisions. Sin. Our past begins to overtake our future and we lose hope. Hope becomes a concept for other people: *It's too late for me.*

We all need hope. That is universal. But there is an even greater universal truth: hope is possible. Hope is reality. In this Bible study we consider the life of one man who saw himself beyond hope but found the opposite to be true.

# WHAT DOES **THE BIBLE** SAY?

## **2 Samuel 9:6-13** (HCSB)

**6** Mephibosheth son of Jonathan son of Saul came to David, bowed down to the ground and paid homage. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "I am your servant," he replied.

**7** "Don't be afraid," David said to him, "since I intend to show you kindness because of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all your grandfather Saul's fields, and you will always eat meals at my table."

**8** Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant that you take an interest in a dead dog like me?"

**9** Then the king summoned Saul's attendant Ziba and said to him, "I have given to your master's grandson all that belonged to Saul and his family.

**10** You, your sons, and your servants are to work the ground for him, and you are to bring in the crops so your master's grandson will have food to eat. But Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, is always to eat at my table." Now Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants.

**11** Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do all my lord the king commands." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table just like one of the king's sons.

**12** Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. All those living in Ziba's house were Mephibosheth's servants.

**13** However, Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king's table. His feet had been injured.

## Key Words

**paid homage** (v. 6)—This phrase described how an individual would prostrate himself before a distinguished person in the sense of paying respect or reverence.

**dead dog** (v. 8)—Calling someone a dog signified absolute contempt. It was parallel to calling someone a mongrel or a scoundrel, comparable to cursing someone. Calling someone a dead dog doubled the insult.

## 2 Samuel 9:6-7

If ever a person had a right to give up on hope, it was Mephibosheth. He was the grandson of the former King Saul, who had tried to kill David and thwart his ascent to the throne. Saul had been David's most powerful enemy. So Mephibosheth was the grandson of David's worst enemy. That's the kind of family heritage you don't want while David is king.

But it gets worse.

First, Mephibosheth couldn't walk. When his grandfather, King Saul, died, his family feared for their lives. They made a hasty escape from what they thought would be the coming wrath of David. It was common in that culture for kings to kill the entire families of their enemies. During their escape, a nanny dropped the young Mephibosheth and his feet were crippled (see 2 Sam. 4:4). It was an accident. And, as the saying goes, accidents happen. Yet we still suffer from them.

Second, Mephibosheth suffered exile as a consequence of having King Saul as his grandfather. Saul chose to be David's enemy. This was something outside of Mephibosheth's control. Saul had made the choice, even before Mephibosheth was born. Mephibosheth inherited suffering from the choices of other people.

Mephibosheth was living in Lo-debar, which can mean "no communication," "no word," or "no pasture." No one forced him to live where he was. He made a choice—perhaps out of fear or shame. Exile may have come from the choices of others, but the choice to live in such an isolated place was his own choice.

We all, in our own way, are like Mephibosheth.

- ▶ 1. We have experienced suffering that was no one's fault, but was due to circumstances.
- ▶ 2. We have experienced suffering that was directly due to the sinful actions of others.
- ▶ 3. We have experienced suffering that was due to our own poor choices.

***What was a circumstance that caused you to feel hopeless?***

**QUESTION #1**



## LOOKING BACK

*How has one of the following tempted you to feel hopeless?*

Circumstances

Someone else's choices

My own choices

## 2 Samuel 9:8

David reached out to Mephibosheth, but Mephibosheth didn't know the nature of David's inquiry. For all he knew, David was coming to kill him. I wonder what Mephibosheth was thinking when he approached David. He bowed down and referred to himself as a "dead dog." He saw himself as unworthy of hope, unworthy of any offering of grace. This pathetic phrase reveals so much about how Mephibosheth saw himself, how his identity had been shaped and solidified by tragedy and pain.

- ▶ The years of being ostracized
- ▶ The years of disability
- ▶ The years of wondering if God had cursed him or hated him

In Mephibosheth's journey, two things kept his hopelessness alive and well: shame and regret.

- ▶ Guilt says, "I did something wrong" while shame says, "I am wrong." Shame deceptively leads me to believe that I deserve to be shackled to it the rest of my life.
- ▶ Regret is what I feel when I've done something I wish I hadn't. When regret is not dealt with directly and redemptively, it leads to more regret.

Shame and regret both have the ability to keep me from seeing the hope right in front of me.

Mephibosheth struggled to see himself as David saw him. He struggled to understand that the goodness of the king was more powerful than the suffering of his past. Mephibosheth could stay trapped by shame and regret ... or he could embrace the hope in front of him. He was not beyond hope.

***Why is it difficult  
for people to let go of  
the past and  
move forward?***

**QUESTION #2**

"Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence."

—AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

*When has God blessed you in an unexpected way?*

### QUESTION #3

## 2 Samuel 9:9-13

Mephibosheth was probably hoping his death would be quick and painless. Then he heard David speak these words: "Don't be afraid" (v. 7). How have you responded to the good gifts God has given you?

- ▶ **Insecurity:** Do I really deserve this?
- ▶ **Excitement:** This is so great!
- ▶ **Skepticism:** What's the catch?
- ▶ **Guilt:** I shouldn't accept this.

Mephibosheth initially may have questioned why David would offer him such hope. Even so, he wisely chose to embrace and live the hope. The king treated Mephibosheth and his son as if they were his own family. Mephibosheth lived out the rest of his days in Jerusalem, eating at the king's table.

Mephibosheth experienced the fulfillment of hope in three different ways:

1. The choices of others no longer were held against him.
2. He was set free from his own poor choices.
3. The king restored him.

This is what God does in our lives. He doesn't hold the choices of others against us. He forgives us for our past. He gives us good gifts we often never see coming.

*How does embracing hope change you and others?*

### QUESTION #4

# LIVE IT OUT

Mephibosheth suffered due to circumstances, sinful actions of others, and his own poor choices. But still he chose to embrace hope.

- ▶ **Appreciate a kindness.** Look around. How is God imparting hope to you through another person?
- ▶ **Forgive yourself.** What hurtful actions have you chosen that have brought you guilt and shame? Repent (turn from old ways), receive God's forgiveness, and start living with His hope.
- ▶ **Be an agent of hope to someone trapped by his or her past.** Offer friendship and encouragement— minus any judgment. Unsure of what to say or do? Share the gospel. Imitate Christ's unconditional love in your speech and behavior.



The past may offer shame and regret, but you can let God's hope shape your future. **Your entire life is ahead of you.**

## Shadow of a Doubt



*I remember waking one night, only a few months after accepting Jesus as Lord, in sheer terror that somehow my salvation wasn't real. Maybe I had said the wrong thing or God didn't hear me.*



To continue reading "Shadow of a Doubt" from *HomeLife* magazine, visit [BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles](http://BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles).



**You will find an *Easter*-related study on pages 134 to 145.**

# HOPE CHANGES EVERYTHING.

We all need hope. Maybe we've made mistakes. Maybe we feel shame or regret over something in our present or past. We've tried to fix things in our lives and we've failed. If we're not careful we can be blinded by an onslaught of mistakes, shame, and regret. And in this blindness we can lose sight of hope.

The Bible tells us that hope helps us through periods of blindness because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The Bible also tells us that we can rejoice when we run into trials because they help us endure. This endurance gives us strength which gives us character which gives us ... hope.

This study will show you the way to hope regardless of your past. You no longer have to be bound or hindered by regrets and shame. You can know and experience hope. And that hope can transform you on a daily basis.



## PETE WILSON

Pete is the senior pastor of Cross Point Church in Nashville, Tennessee, a committed church community that he and his wife, Brandi, planted in 2003. Cross Point has grown to reach more than 5,000 people each weekend through its four campuses located around the Nashville area and online. Pete is the author of *Plan B, Empty Promises*, and his most recent release *Let Hope In*. Pete earned his bachelor's degree in communications from Kentucky Western University and attended seminary at Southern Seminary in Louisville, KY. Follow Pete on Twitter: [@pwilson](#) or read his blog at [WithoutWax.tv](#).

ISBN 978-1-4300-2898-7



9 781430 028987