

Hope That Never Fails Us



SABBATH—AUGUST 6

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Habakkuk 1:1–11; Habakkuk 2:2, 3; Hebrews 10:37; Revelation 18:2; Habakkuk 3:16–19; Job 42:1–6; Job 2:9; Job 38; Job 39; Job 40:4, 5; Isaiah 41:8–14; Jeremiah 29:1–14; Psalm 137:1; Hebrews 11; Hebrews 12:1–13.

MEMORY VERSE: “We will not be disappointed by this hope. God has given us the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit has put God’s love in our hearts” (Romans 5:5, WE).

WHEN WE ARE AROUND SMILING PEOPLE at church, we feel that talking and singing about hope is easy. But when we suffer, then singing and talking aren’t so easy, right? As things get bad, we start to question everything, including God’s wisdom.

In one of his books, C. S. Lewis writes about a make-believe lion. Someone who wants to meet the lion asks another person if the lion is safe. The person says that the lion is not safe, “but he’s good.”

We don’t always understand God. Often, He does things that confuse us or that we don’t expect. But these things don’t mean that God is against us. We just don’t have the full picture yet. Often, we have the false idea that we can’t have peace or hope if we can’t understand God and everything He’s going to do. We want God to be “safe.” This wish causes us to be disappointed or to lose hope.



When we suffer,
then singing and talking
aren’t so easy.

THE BIG PICTURE (Habakkuk 1:1–4)

When we suffer, we often feel that our suffering is the only thing that matters. We must understand that war between God and Satan causes everyone to suffer. So, we must trust God during hard times (read Revelation 12:7; Romans 8:22). Habakkuk's story shows us this Bible truth.

Why is Habakkuk so upset? Read Habakkuk 1:1–4 for the answer.

How do you expect God will answer Habakkuk's prayer? Maybe you think God will say, "That's awful, Habakkuk. Let Me help you right away." But God tells Habakkuk that things will get worse. Read God's answer in Habakkuk 1:5–11.

The Assyrians took the Israelites as prisoners of war. The Israelites had to live in a strange country far from home. God promises that something worse is coming. Soon, the Babylonians will carry away the people of Judah from their land. Habakkuk cries to God in Habakkuk 1:12–17. Then Habakkuk waits for God to answer.

In Habakkuk 2:2, 3, God makes a special promise before He says that Babylon will be destroyed. How does this promise bring hope to Habakkuk?

Habakkuk 2 is God's promise that He will destroy the Babylonians. Hebrews 10:37 uses the quote from Habakkuk 2:3 to show us a future promise about the Savior. This promise shows us that God will destroy "the big and powerful city of Babylon" (Revelation 18:2, NLV), just as He destroyed the kingdom of Babylon in Old Testament times.

Habakkuk lived between two terrible times. He already saw the Assyrians destroy Israel. Now he learns that Babylon will do worse to Judah. Today, we are in the same place as Habakkuk. Terrible evil has happened and is all around us. But the Bible says that worse is going to come. How does Habakkuk live with the knowledge about the awful things that will happen in the future? Habakkuk learns to see the "whole picture" in the Bible. We praise God when we understand the big picture. In chapter 3, Habakkuk can pray a wonderful prayer of praise to God. Habakkuk knows what God will do in the future.

Why does Habakkuk have hope? Read Habakkuk 3:16–19 for the answer.



The Assyrians took the Israelites as prisoners of war and removed them from their land.

A PICTURE OF GOD (Job 42:1–6)

As we know, the book of Job starts with Job’s awful experiences of pain and suffering. Job loses everything, except his life and his wife. His wife tells Job to “ ‘curse God and die!’ ” (Job 2:9, ERV). The rest of the book is a conversation between Job and his friends. Job’s friends spend their time trying to figure out why all these terrible things happened to him. While Job’s friends talk, God stays silent and says nothing.

Finally, in Job 38, God starts talking. First, God shows that He does not approve of the ideas of Job’s friends: “ ‘Who do you think you are to disagree with my plans? You do not know what you are talking about’ ” (Job 38:2, NIV). Second, God asks Job 60 powerful questions. Open your Bible and read about them in Job 38 and Job 39.

After the last question, Job answers, “ ‘I am not worthy to speak! What can I say to you? I cannot answer you! I will put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once [the first time], but I will not speak again. I spoke twice, but I will not say anything more’ ” (Job 40:4, 5, ERV). But God isn’t finished talking. He asks Job another set of “big” questions.



Job answers, “ ‘I am not worthy to speak! What can I say to you?’ ” (Job 40:4, ERV).

Read Job’s final answer in Job 42:1–6. What is God trying to tell Job? How does this answer change Job’s heart?

God doesn’t answer any of the “why” questions that Job’s friends ask. But God does “paint” a picture about His royal power and might. We can see this “picture” about God in nature. Job’s need for an explanation ends when he sees this picture of God’s power and might in nature.

Job’s story shows us a wonderful Bible truth. Hope and encouragement can come from understanding how little we really know. We want to know everything so that we can feel safe. We lose hope when we can’t know. Sometimes God helps us remember we know very little so that we will put our hope in Him. He knows everything.

Are things happening now that you can’t understand? If yes, think about God and His love. How can thinking about these things give you the hope you need to live with the things you can’t understand?

GOD IS WITH US (Isaiah 41:13)

“ I am the LORD your God, who holds your right hand. And I tell you, “Don’t be afraid! I will help you” ’ ” (Isaiah 41:13, ERV).

Someone said, “Maybe you think God is far away. If yes, ask yourself, ‘Who moved away? Did God? Or did I?’” When troubles come, we often think that God has left us alone. The truth is that God hasn’t gone anywhere.

The Jews who were taken as prisoners of war from their land felt that God was very far away from them. But God promises Isaiah that He will free His people in the future. Then they will come back to Jerusalem. Yes, Isaiah tells the people that this promise will happen many years in the future. But God wants His people to know that He hasn’t moved away from them. They can continue to hope.

What reasons for hope do God’s people have in this story? Read Isaiah 41:8–14 for the answer. How does the promise in these verses help us as we wait for Jesus to come back and take us to heaven?

One of the most powerful word pictures in Isaiah 41:8–14 is found in Isaiah 41:13. God controls everything. So, He says His people do not need to fear. He “ ‘holds your right hand’ ” (Isaiah 41:13, ERV). Sure, we can imagine in our minds a picture of God sitting on His big throne while He controls our history many light-years away from our earth. But do you know that God can hold our hands, too?

When we are busy, we may find it hard to remember that God is near us. So, we must remember that God is Immanuel, which means “God with us.” When God is with us, His plans, promises, and life-changing power are with us, too.

Over the next few days, try this test. Every chance you get, tell yourself that the God who made everything is near enough to hold your hand. He promises to help you. Write down how this changes the way you live. Be ready to talk about your experience in class on Sabbath.



Do you know that God is near enough to us to hold our hands, too?

OUR FATHER'S PLANS FOR US (Jeremiah 29:1–10)

Everyone looks for hope. Where do we find it? Some people find hope in the smile of a friend. For other people, hope comes from a thing or another person. Where do you look for hope and courage?

Jeremiah writes to people who lost hope when they were carried away from their land to Babylon. A writer of the Psalms writes about how the people felt during this time of suffering: “We were sitting by the rivers of Babylon. We wept when we remembered what had happened to Zion” (Psalm 137:1, NIV). For sure, the people are sad. But Jeremiah gives them reasons why they shouldn't give up hope.



“ ‘Pray to the LORD for the city you are living in’ ” (Jeremiah 29:7, ERV).

What reasons for hope do we read about in Jeremiah 29:1–10?

These verses give us three important reasons for hope:

(1) God tells His people not to give up hope because their troubles are not caused by bad luck. God announces what He will do for “all those [people] he forced to go from Jerusalem to Babylon” (Jeremiah 29:4, NIV). Evil is around God's people. But God will keep His children safe.

(2) God tells His people that they should not give up hope for another reason. He can work in their lives even when things get difficult. “ ‘Also, do good things for the city I sent you to. Pray to the LORD for the city you are living in, because if there is peace in that city, you will have peace also’ ” (Jeremiah 29:7, ERV).

(3) God tells His people they should not give up hope for a final reason. God is going to bring them home again. “This is what the LORD says: ‘Babylon will be powerful for 70 years. After that time, I will come to you people who are living in Babylon. I will keep my good promise to bring you back to Jerusalem’ ” (Jeremiah 29:10, ERV).

God explains to His people that He was in control of their past. He also tells His people He is in control of their lives now. He will be in control of their future, too. Then God tells His people how much He cares for them (Jeremiah 29:11–14).

Read Jeremiah 29:11–14. Change the word “you” to your name in each verse, as if God made these promises to you. How do these promises give you hope?

OUR FATHER’S TRAINING (Hebrews 12:5–13)

Read Hebrews 12:5–13. What’s the message to us in these verses? How does this message fit in with what we’ve studied this quarter?

In Hebrews 12:5–13, Paul explains why we have tests and difficult experiences. He says that God uses these experiences to discipline us. In Greece during Paul’s time, the word “discipline” was the same as “education.” So, if we want to understand “discipline,” we must understand that God teaches us in the school of faith. Paul talks about this idea in Hebrews 11.

All through Hebrews 11, Paul writes about men and women who have strong faith. Their faith keeps them strong when they have difficult experiences and hard tests in life. In chapter 12, Paul tells us that we also can run and finish the “race” of faith with the same strength as the men and women in Hebrews 11. How do we do that? We keep our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus shows us how to behave when times get difficult (Hebrews 12:3). When we read Hebrews 12, it is the same as wearing a pair of reading glasses. Without these glasses, our eyesight or understanding about suffering will always be fuzzy. But when we look through these glasses, our eyesight is corrected. These “glasses” will correct the fuzzy and confusing explanations about suffering that other people try to give us. When we read Hebrews 12, we will understand why we suffer. Then we will behave as Jesus wants us to behave during hard tests and difficult experiences.

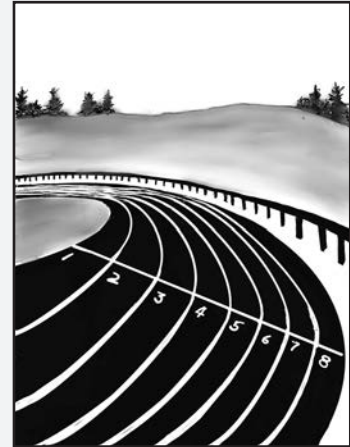
Read Hebrews 12:1–13. Now look at Hebrews 12:5–13 and answer these questions:

Who disciplines us? _____

Why are we disciplined? _____

How do we behave when we are disciplined? _____

Read Hebrews 12:1–13 again. Make a list of all the reasons for hope. How has this hope helped you with your spiritual “education”? What about when God has disciplined you? What did you learn?



Paul tells us that we also can run and finish the “race” of faith.



“We need spiritual eyesight to understand how God leads us. Then we may see angels trying to save us from ourselves.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The School of the Hereafter,” pages 301–309, in *Education*; and “Help in Daily Living,” pages 470, 471, in *The Ministry of Healing*.

“Every one of us will feel hopeless and disappointed sometimes in our lives. We will have days when we feel very sad. Then we will have trouble believing that God loves us and cares for us. We will have days filled with troubles. At these times, we may want to die. Many people stop trusting in God when troubles start. They start to doubt everything. At these times, we need spiritual eyesight to understand how God leads us. Then we may see angels trying to save us from ourselves. The angels help us to have faith that is stronger than any mountain. If God opened our eyes to see these angels, then new faith would grow in our hearts.”
—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 162, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Ellen G. White says that all of us will have experiences that make us feel hopeless. Do you know anyone who is feeling hopeless? How can we help people who suffer to find hope?
- ② As a class, talk about your answers to Tuesday’s final question. You learned about how God is near you always. How did that thought change you?
- ③ In class, read parts of Job 38–41. What do these verses tell us about God? What do you learn that gives you hope and encouragement? How do these verses from Job show us God’s love?
- ④ Hope that changes lives comes from God. Who do you know who needs hope? Spend some time praying for this person. Pray that God will give hope to this person’s life. What more can you do for people who fail to find hope?
- ⑤ If someone is willing, ask this person to talk about a time when troubles caused him or her to lose hope and faith. What helped things to change? What can we share with each other that can help us when we lose hope?

PART 7: FATHER GIVES HIMSELF TO GOD

Four days after Junior's baptism, evil spirits ordered Father to kill Mother and Junior. If Father refused, he was going to be destroyed by his family's prayers for him. "How?" Father asked the spirits. "Aren't our prayers more powerful?"

The spirits didn't answer his questions. They told Father to buy a boat ticket to one of five cities where Candomblé priests, or religious leaders, waited for him. But in the end, Father could only get a ticket to Coari, where his uncle lived.

Uncle Cesario Ferreira and his wife, Tereza, were happy to see Father. They made a special dinner in his honor and invited the whole family to come meet him. Father didn't know his family well. But he told them a big spiritual fight was happening at his home. Aunt Tereza, told him, "Eduardo, you have served evil spirits your whole life. Now it is time to serve God."

Father looked surprised. He asked Aunt Tereza, "Are you a Protestant Christian?" Evil spirits warned him in the past to stay away from Protestants. Aunt Tereza smiled and pointed to the whole family. "Eduardo, we're all Protestant Christians!"

The next day Father called a temple priest for advice. Uncle Cesario listened while he fixed breakfast. After Father got off the phone, Uncle Cesario asked, "Eduardo, did you know that Jesus commanded spirits to leave people alone?"

Father asked, "How did Jesus do that?"

For the next three days, Uncle Cesario read Bible stories to Father about Jesus. Uncle told Father the story in Mark 5:1–20 about the man filled with many evil spirits. Father was surprised that the spirits told Jesus, " 'My name is Legion [this name means very many. A legion was about 6,000 men in the Roman army], because there are many spirits inside me' " (Mark 5:9, ERV). "That's correct!" Father said. "A legion of evil spirits went with me to Junior's baptism."

Soon, a temple priest called Father. The priest wanted Father's help to buy animals to kill and offer to the spirits.

"Let the spirits be the offering!" Father shouted. "Spirits told me to kill my own son. Solve your problems without me!"

Father was upset when he came to dinner. Uncle said, "Eduardo, did you know that the devil killed Job's own son?" Father never heard of Job. When Uncle read about Job, Father cried. Father said, "I've made a decision. I'm leaving Candomblé to get to know God. Please pray. The devil will try to kill me."

The next day, Father went home and announced his decision to Mother. "I'm willing to follow your God," he said.

Your 13th Sabbath Offering will help build eight churches in South America. Four of these churches will be built in Brazil, where Father (Eduardo Ferreira dos Santos) and his family live.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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