

10. How does Isaiah's portrait of God encourage you and give you hope?

11. At this point in your life what help do you need from God in order to run and not grow weary?

Thank God for the strength he gives you to walk, run and even soar like an eagle when you put your hope and trust in him.

Now or Later

In Isaiah 40:26 the Lord tells us:

Lift your eyes and look to the heavens:

Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one,
and calls them each by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.

Spend time this week meditating on some aspect of God's creation, such as the stars and planets. Write about how this experience gives you a greater appreciation of his great power and strength.

3

Investing in the Future

1 Timothy 6:3-19

One of the darkest periods in modern financial history began on October 24, 1929. During a six-day period the value of securities dropped by 26 billion dollars. By the end of November the nationwide loss exceeded 100 billion dollars. According to the Grolier Encyclopedia, by 1933 "over fourteen million Americans were unemployed, industrial production was down to one-third of its 1929 level, and national income had dropped by more than half."

GROUP DISCUSSION. Imagine that your country experienced a Great Depression. How do you think your life would be different? (Or think about winning the lottery or a sweepstakes. How would your life change if you won?)

PERSONAL REFLECTION. In what areas are you tempted to put your trust in circumstances more than in God?

In 1 Peter 1 the apostle describes both a person and a place we've never seen—a place so exciting and a person so wonderful that we should be filled with a childlike sense of joy and anticipation. *Read 1 Peter 1:3-12.*

1. According to Peter, what are some of the reasons we have for praising God (vv. 3-5)?

2. How has Christ's resurrection from the dead given us a "living hope" (v. 3)?

3. How would your life and attitudes change if you were told you had inherited a vast fortune from a long-lost relative?

How can the excitement and joy of an earthly inheritance help us to look forward to the greater inheritance God has promised us in heaven (v. 4)?

4. How do trials of various kinds prove the reality of our faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 6-7)?

5. What kinds of trials have demonstrated that your faith is genuine?

6. Do you find it difficult to believe in and love a Savior you've never seen (vv. 8-9)? Explain.

7. When Peter speaks of the salvation of our souls (v. 9), he is thinking of our whole person—body, mind, spirit and everything else that makes us human. What excites you most about the hope of experiencing a *total* personal renewal?

8. How were the Old Testament prophets serving future generations when they spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (vv. 10-12)?

9. Peter concludes this passage with a brief and somewhat odd remark: "Even angels long to look into these things" (v. 12). Why do you think he felt this was worth mentioning?

How might that help you hold on to hope today?

Take a moment to reflect on the magnitude of what Peter has described in this passage. Spend time thanking and praising God for the incredible hope we have in Jesus Christ.

Now or Later

Get out a photo album that shows pictures of one of your favorite vacations or places to visit. How do such times here on earth increase your desire for the joys of heaven?

5

Longing for Glory

Romans 8:18-27

The Bible tells us that receiving glory is one of our greatest hopes. But for many of us this hope is vague and confusing because we don't have a clue as to what heavenly glory is. Even the brilliant C. S. Lewis wrote (in *The Weight of Glory*): "Glory suggests two ideas to me, of which one seems wicked and the other ridiculous. Either glory means to me fame, or it means luminosity. As for the first, since to be famous means to be better known than other people, the desire for fame appears to me as a competitive passion and therefore of hell rather than heaven. As for the second, who wishes to become a kind of living electric light bulb?"

GROUP DISCUSSION. What images or ideas come to mind when you think of the word *glory*?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. In what ways are you encouraged by the hope of glory in heaven?