

Lesson 13 / November 29, 2009

Hope for the Future

for use as

STEP 1

Lesson 13
Focus:

Live hopefully as you look forward to Jesus' return.

Lesson 13
Bible Basis:

2 Peter 3:1-13

Students will discuss the hope we have in Christ's return and how that hope affects the life we live right now.

OPENING ACTIVITY: *It Seems Hopeless*

You can't listen to the news these days without being bombarded with negative stories about this world we live in. As your class starts, have them talk about the following question: **What are some things you see in our society that could cause someone to feel hopeless?**

Some of the things they may mention might include the soft economy, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the housing market, H1N1 concerns, and the jobless rate. One person who found herself without a job and a home turned to the Internet in an effort to find hope.

OPENING STORY [Read it aloud to your class, or make copies and pass it around]:

HOMELESS WOMAN'S BLOG BRINGS HER A JOB, NATIONAL ATTENTION

Twenty-four-year-old Brianna Karp's story may have a happy ending, but it started as a nightmare. In a rocky economy, Karp was laid off from her Irvine, California, job as an executive assistant in July 2008. She got by for a while on temp jobs and unemployment benefits. But when her savings dried up, she was no longer able to afford her rent.

The only answer she saw then was a trailer she'd inherited from her father—a man she barely knew who had recently committed suicide. Karp ended up camped in a Los Angeles-area Walmart parking lot. As she spent five months looking for jobs and blasting out resumes, often spending hour after hour at a coffee shop to take advantage of its free Wi-Fi connection, she also started blogging. The result was a blog site called "The Girl's Guide to Homelessness," which chronicled the ups and downs of her new life. She recounted details from failed job interviews and offered tips for other homeless women.

"I was trying to stay positive and cheerful," Karp said. "I started writing the blog in a tongue-in-cheek way to kind of laugh about my circumstances, keep them chronicled. I didn't think anyone would actually read it."

Lesson 13
Memory Verse

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

—2 Peter 3:9

But people did, including Matt Barnes, formerly homeless himself and running a website about his own homelessness issues in Scotland. He asked her to write for his site and would eventually become Brianna's boyfriend.

Another big break came through a shot at the weird world of reality television. Karp applied for a show that would offer contestants the chance at a job with Elle magazine advice columnist E. Jean Carroll. She was granted an audition for the show and, by her own account, totally botched it.

"I went back and blogged about bombing the interview and made fun of myself," she said.

On a lark, she then wrote to Carroll via her column:

"Dear E. Jean: I'm currently homeless and living in a Walmart parking lot," her e-mail began. "I'm educated, I have never done drugs and I'm not mentally ill. I have a strong employment history and am a career executive assistant. The instability sucks, but I'm rocking it as best as I can."

She told Carroll about her poor interview for the show and finished the note with the question, "How does one get another shot when one screws up a job interview? —Homeless, but Not Hopeless."

Carroll said she was floored by the note. "[The phrase] 'I'm living in a Walmart parking lot' hooked me," she said. "I thought, she's so ready to work, obviously she can write, she's got some skills." She offered Karp an internship and a chance to write a fashion blog for the magazine.

Not that all of her troubles were instantly over, even though she was interviewed on *The Today Show*, as well as on CNN. This August, Walmart had her trailer/truck towed and impounded, but her blog readers helped her get it back by bombarding Walmart with calls, emails, and letters. She now parks her trailer at a friend's house.

Currently, she has found an executive-assistant job, is working on a book deal, and is trying to get the money together for more conventional housing. She's also still writing her blog, hoping her newfound high profile will help spread the word about homelessness and how it can happen to the most unlikely people. She even has people responding to her blog with job offers and clothing for the homeless people she mentions in her blog.

Karp says on her blog, "Not everyone is so lucky [as me]. Most don't get this kind of media attention, they go unnoticed. And many are in very dire circumstances, much worse than my own. It's a double-edged sword, this good fortune I've had. On the one hand, I'm very woohoo,

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perhaps my ship is finally coming in! On the other hand, I'm just one person. It makes it all the more depressing to read about or even receive emails from hundreds more homeless people, many in far more horrible situations than mine ever has been, who need help. I want to save all of them, and since I clearly can't, perhaps the best I feel I can do is continue to try to make others aware of their plight, add their voices to my own."

[Now form small groups and have your class discuss the following.]

- ▶ Do you know of someone who is in the situation Brianna Karp is in? Would you feel like you should help a person in those circumstances? Why or why not?
- ▶ If you had lost your job and home as Karp did, what would you have done?
- ▶ Karp does not mention anything about whether or not she is a Christian. What would you like to say to her about the hope you have in Christ?
- ▶ Even if she keeps her new job, gets a house, and marries her boyfriend, will those things be enough to fill her life with hope? Explain your answer.
- ▶ How do you personally keep a sense of hopefulness when circumstances seem hopeless?

(When you are finished with the questions, go on to Step 2 in your *Adult Teacher's Guide*, where you read the Scripture and begin to discuss it.)

News Sources:

[<http://www.cnn.com/2009/LIVING/09/11/homeless.blogger/index.html>]
 [<http://girlsguidetohomelessness.com/>]

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STEP 4

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A BEACON OF HOPE

Titus 2:11-14 tells us how we are to live a hope-filled life until Jesus returns: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

All around us we can see reasons why so many people live without hope—they do not see past their circumstances and do not have faith in anything beyond themselves. However, as Christians we are to strive to be beacons of hope, showing the way to eternal life with Christ. Our words and actions can make the most difference with those people who are in our sphere of influence—friends and family, our neighbors, and other acquaintances.

This is the first Sunday of Advent, which celebrates not only Christ’s first coming into the world, but His second coming as well. Let us not be so focused on the events of Bethlehem that we forget that He is alive and coming again!

[Activity] Return to the groups you had in Step 1 and answer the following questions:

- 1 Are words alone the best way to show the hope of Christ and eternal life with others, or does some act of kindness or support mean more? Explain your answer.
- 2 How do you share your sense of hopefulness when circumstances seem hopeless to others—both those who know Christ and those who don’t?
- 3 Read John 14:1-4 and Titus 3:5-7. In what ways do these passages give you hope for the future?
- 4 How can sharing the Christmas story bring hope to this world? Who could you share the Christmas story with this week and so bring hope into that person’s life?

End the class in prayer. Thank God for the hope He has given all believers through His Son’s birth, death, resurrection, and return.

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