

# DR. TONY EVANS

## Keep Hope Alive

**Focus** God brings hope to us when we are going through difficulty or in the midst of a dark season. God promises that we will find Him when we seek Him with all our heart.

**Fun** Would you rather spend a week at the beach or a week in the mountains? Why?

**Review** Key Scriptures: Jeremiah 29:11–13

### 1. God declares hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” This verse is found in a chapter of the Bible that is bleak. And this chapter is in a book from a dark period in Israel’s history. During a dark time, this message of hope stands out as a well-lit verse. In the same way, God brings hope to us when we are in a dark season.

### 2. Hope looks to the future.

Hope is a joyful expectation of the future. Hope is always anticipating where you are going, not where you’ve been or where you are. It is an expectation and an anticipation of a better outcome. Hope is like the front windshield in a car—it provides a big, broad vision for where you are going. Don’t spend your time looking in the rear-view mirror; spend time looking toward the future God has for you.

### 3. The key to hope is seeking God.

Jeremiah 29:12–13 says, “Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” To obtain the hope God has for us, we must seek Him with all our heart. When situations and circumstances are difficult, we can turn to

God in prayer. When we pray and call on Him, He will answer us and bring His presence into our situation.

**\*Group Dynamics Idea\*** Plan something you can all do together this Thanksgiving to be a blessing. It doesn't have to be bringing food to someone (although it can be), you may instead bless a single mom by paying an electric bill or bless a widow by doing some yard work. Think of something your group can do together that gives someone else another reason to give God thanks.

## Discuss

1. Read Jeremiah 29:11. Has this verse brought you encouragement in the past? If so, please share. What about this verse stands out to you or makes it significant?
2. This verse comes at a very dark time in Israel's history. Why does a message of hope carry more weight when times are dark? How does this apply to our present-day circumstances?
3. Think about a time you've gone through a difficult season and God gave you a word that brought you hope. If you're comfortable, please share. What was it about God's word to you that helped get you through?
4. Read Jeremiah 29:12–13 and 2 Chronicles 15:4. What do these verses teach us about a proper response during difficult times?
5. What does it look like for us to seek God with all our hearts? How does this look individually, and how does this look as a congregation?
6. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you? Are you facing some difficult circumstances? Is God calling you to seek Him more? How can you purposefully seek God with all your heart this week?

**Take Home** As we conclude, remember the following:

- When you are going through a difficult season, God declares hope and a good future for you.
- Hope looks to the future with joyful expectation.
- The key to hope is seeking God with all your heart.

**Prayer** Lord, thank You for Your promise of hope. Thank You for shining Your light into difficult circumstances. Thank You for the promise that we will find You when we seek You with all our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**\*New Leader Tip\*** Make sure not to get into a rut with your group. Change things up. Consistency is good, but innovation and change are good too. If you have a traditional group, try adding some new elements or doing something creative. If you have a nontraditional group, try meeting somewhere new or doing something you've never done before.