Lesson 1 / September 7, 2014

Hope and a Future

By Doug Schmidt

**Lesson 1**

**Focus:**
God gives us hope and a future.

**Bible Basis:**
Jeremiah 30:1-3, 18-22

**Memory Verse:**
“‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,’ says the LORD.”
—Jeremiah 30:3

Students will see that God is the one who gives us hope and a future.

**OPENING ACTIVITY:** What is Hope?

Ask your students to define hope. They might define it as the ability to see past the present to something better in the future or to have expectations that good things are to come.

Two people have found hope in the aftermath of the tragic Newtown elementary school shooting on December 14, 2012, as this week’s article explains.

**OPENING STORY:** [read aloud or make copies to give to your students]

**CHOOSING HOPE IN SPITE OF TRAGEDY**

A Newtown teacher who saved the lives of 15 children during the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012 has put together a book about what happened, focusing on how people can find hope in God—even in the midst of inexplicable tragedy.

Kaitlin Roig-DeBellis has written *Choosing Hope: Moving Forward from Your Life’s Darkest Hour*, which will be released in the spring of 2015. Dozens of children were targeted in the shooting rampage of 20-year-old Adam Lanza, who had been reportedly struggling with mental illness for most of his young life. When the horrible incident was over, the gunman had killed 20 children and six school staff members before taking his own life.

While the event was the one of the worst mass shootings to date, this young teacher has chosen to share how she found hope in the midst of such significant and life-changing loss.

Kaitlin was able to get 15 first-graders into one of the school’s bathrooms as soon as she heard gunfire. During the shooting, she quietly led her students in prayer as they hid in the
bathroom. She told the scared children that there were “bad guys” outside, but all they had to do was to wait for the “good guys” to come and help them.

“We started to pray and we started to imagine the very best, and the shooting continued,” she said. But her students survived the shootings, and then had to deal with the aftermath. “I didn’t want this to define me or my kids,” she added.

After the shooting, her class was showered with gifts such as books and teddy bears. “The kids were so happy with their gifts, but I wanted to teach them that you have to give back too,” she said, explaining why she founded a non-profit organization called Classes 4 Classes. It’s a nonprofit that lets elementary school classes sponsor educational gifts (iPads, field trips, art supplies) for other classrooms. (And once a classroom receives a gift, its students give back to another class.) What started with 28 classrooms is now rolling out nationally.

“When you teach kindness, love, and empathy,” she says, “there is no room for hate. My purpose has always been to help children. Always know your purpose so you can be the change.”

One of the mothers whose child was killed by the gunman also has hope for the future. One thing she hopes is that the troubled young man who took her child’s life has received God’s forgiveness and is now in heaven with the children. Scarlett Lewis, who lost her 6-year-old-son Jesse at the hand of the gunman, says she “picture[s] him [Adam Lanza] being a little boy with a lot of anger and no tools and no nurturing environment to deal with it …”

Scarlett has started an organization in honor of her son called the “Jessie Lewis Choose Love Foundation,” the goal of which is to fund school programs to educate children on compassion, anger-management, and bullying.

Scarlett added, “My hope is that he is experiencing the same kind of love that the children are now, in heaven. He might have had a little bit longer journey to get there, but I hope he has.”

[Now form small groups and have your students answer the following questions.]

- How is it possible to have hope for the future after such a tragedy as Newtown?
- How does having hope change your perspective on tragedies?
- Upon what, or whom, should the believer set his or her hope?
- Why would that make all the difference, even in the midst of tragedy?

(When you are finished with the questions, go on to Step 2 in your Adult Teacher’s Guide.)

News Sources:


HOPE IN GOD

There is no more dangerous emotional state than hopelessness. A person without hope eventually descends into despair and begins to believe that his or her current circumstances will never get better. Christians should not hesitate to seek medical attention when nothing seems to help raise them up out of a paralyzing state of depression. However, our struggles to find hope in difficult circumstances should take us to the Lord, who promises to give us hope and a future.

We see how hope in God helped people in the Bible who suffered significant losses—people such as Joseph, who was separated from his father for years because of the petty jealousy of his brothers, and Daniel, who was involuntarily sent into exile and never saw his homeland again. Both saw that God was in control and their future was not determined by their past.

Those who put their hope in God can endure tragedy. Trusting God does not mean that we think He will never allow losses in our lives. What it means is that we can trust that God will never abandon us, and a better future with Him is always coming.

Now return to the small groups you had in Step 1 and discuss these questions.

- **How can reflecting on God’s past deliverance give us hope and a future in our present troubled circumstances?**

- **Do you need hope right now? Pray for each other, that God will bring hope to you and your situation and that you can lean on Him and His promise of a better future.**

Close the class together in prayer, asking the Lord to instill hope in everyone who is struggling with hopelessness at this time. Then praise God, who gives us hope and a future.
THE BIBLE IN THE NEWS
The U.S Navy has reversed a decision to remove all Bibles from the hotel and lodge rooms it provides for servicemen and women and their families: