Day Three: Bobby Pins and Rubber Bands

Is There Any Hope?

In his book *The Grand Essentials*, Ben Patterson tells of an S-4 submarine that sank off the coast of Massachusetts. The entire crew was trapped. Every effort was made to rescue the sailors, but every effort failed. Near the end of the ordeal, a deep-sea diver heard tapping on the steel wall of the sunken sub. As he placed his helmet against the vessel, he realized he was hearing a sailor tap out this question in Morse code: "Is there any hope?"[1]

To the guilty who ask that question, Jesus says, "Yes!"

To the death-struck who ask that question, Jesus answers, "Yes!"

To all the Noahs of the world, to all who search the horizon for a fleck of hope, he proclaims, "Yes!" And he comes. He comes as a dove. He comes bearing fruit from a distant land, from our future home. He comes with a leaf of hope.

Have you received yours? Don't think your ark is too isolated. Don't think your flood is too wide. Your toughest challenge is nothing more than bobby pins and rubber bands to God.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

1. The question the submarine crew posed was desperate and simple: "Is there hope?" How many people in your circle of acquaintances do you suppose are asking the same question—if not aloud, then alone in a quiet, desperate panic? How can you spot those who need an answer?

2. What makes people assume their "ark is too isolated" or their "flood is too wide" to allow for any hope?

3. How can we counter that way of thinking without sounding delusional?

4. Whatever hope the crew of the sunken S-4 submarine may have had, it ended with their deaths. But death is not the only cause of hopes being left unfulfilled. What would you say to someone who's been scarred by hopes that never came to fruition?

A Better Perspective

Bobby pins and rubber bands? My older sister used to give them to me when I was a child. I would ride my tricycle up and down the sidewalk, pretending that the bobby pins were keys and my trike was a truck. But one day I lost the "keys." Crisis! What was I going to do? My search yielded nothing but tears and fear. But when I confessed my mistake to my sister, she just smiled. Being a decade older, she had a better perspective.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8–9).

God has a better perspective as well. With all due respect, our severest struggles are, in his view, nothing worse than lost bobby pins and rubber bands. He is not confounded, confused, or discouraged.

Receive his hope, won't you? Receive it because you need it. Receive it so you can share it.

What do you suppose Noah did with his? What do you think he did with the leaf? Did he throw it overboard and forget about it? Do you suppose he stuck it in his pocket and saved it for a scrapbook? Or do you think he let out a whoop and assembled the troops and passed it around like the Hope Diamond it was?

Certainly he whooped. That's what you do with hope. What do you do with olive leaves? You pass them around. You don't stick them in your pocket. You give them to the ones you love. Love always hopes. "Love . . . bears all things, believes all things, *hopes* all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4–7 NKJV, emphasis added).

Love has hope in you.

5. Noah wasn't the only one to receive an olive leaf the day the dove came back bearing the twig in its talons. His whole family was fervently hoping for something to happen. From your own perspective, why is it easier to maintain hope when you are not going through tough times alone?

6. What happens when a community of people experience hope? How does that shape their lives and the lives of generations to come?

7. As believers in Christ, we have hope because we know God has a greater perspective on our troubles than we do. What do the following verses say about why we can always trust in God's plans for our lives?

Proverbs 3:5–6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (NIV).

Jeremiah 1:5: "Before I made you in your mother's womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (NCV).

Matthew 6:25–27: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" (NIV).

Romans 8:28: "We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him. They are the people he called, because that was his plan" (NCV).