



This year's Hope Meeting was hosted in Wesley Hall by Houston's Memorial Drive United Methodist Church. The Hope Meeting is one of Lifeway's most extraordinary and wonderful events held each December.

The Hope Meeting is an exceptional experience, when all of the young people of recovery join with parents and other family members in a time of reflection and in a time of sharing forward expectations and wishes. All share in personal narrations of insights and hope gained through individual pathways of recovery.

An older brother of one of the young people attended the meeting with his parents and chose to speak in a turn. He stated that he had quite different expectations for the evening; "to witness some freaks who had been getting high" but now was taken aback in awe. He had a most appropriate and concise recognition of what he heard and observed; he said that if he used drugs (which he did not) he would imagine that the "high" he would feel would not be as profound as what he felt just being in the room and listening to all the affirmations of hope, faith, and love. Showing great pride in his younger brother, the young man proclaimed his own hopefulness in his brother's recovery progress. He also stated that he knew the certainty of what the alternative would have been had his parents not gotten help...."jail or death." This brother went on to explain that what he came to realize by just attending one meeting was to understand his parents choices for putting his brother in the Lifeway program. What his parents tried to explain, this older sibling now deeply and meaningfully understood.

Many definitions of hope were described. One young person expressed that it was all about forgiveness and about "learning how to cope with life and stuff." Another young person was only 13 days sober but spoke up in hope, describing it as a "power." He wanted to always keep this thing called hope and carry it with him through recovery.

One parent said they came into the program without any hope, but she soon gained hope from the Lifeway staff and from the other parents. This parent also proudly stated that their son was now six months sober. Another parent had a similar start, disappointed by their son's choices. But now they are making new and happy memories again. They have learned new tools so that when there is another "dark corner" they will be better equipped to handle it. Another parent learned that having hope was learning to trust, to let go of trying to control something that she did not have the knowledge to do, like fixing her son. It scared her to let go and let others in to help. This mother expressed her new hope in her son with two full years of recovery. A few other parents followed in a similar witness to their own determination to analyze and control their young person (with little or no success). Through Lifeway, they found hope in their new skills of supporting their child in a recovery program. One mother described how she experienced hopelessness and fear, "A lot of fear in dealing with this issue." She has new hope as she feels she now has the help she needs inside the program 's support system.

One young person described her hopelessness and realized that state of being "just sucked." She was told the story about the row boat, rescue boat and helicopter all trying to get a flood victim to hold on to a rope so the person would not drown. "But you have to grab the rope!" This young person relapsed, but was hopeful in her new beginning....eight weeks sober. She said that she was starting to have fun again with her family this Christmas. "Just riding in the mini-van doing family stuff with my brother and sister is good. It is about forgetting the bad and realizing the good. It is being in a place where people don't judge me. I never knew such hope could be found in going to 'Coffee,' the fun time with real friends after a meeting."