

Finding

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in a Hopeless
World

Finding Hope in a Hopeless World



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HOPE *can seem elusive, but this booklet will give you proven strategies for beating hopelessness. And beyond that, you will discover a deeper level of hope that can give you peace and a powerful purpose in your life now—and forever!*



Causes of Hopelessness

So many today struggle with discouragement, despair and hopelessness. Sometimes it seems this world is designed to suck every last ounce of hope out of us.

Note: If you are in the midst of hopelessness, you can skip this chapter! Go directly to Chapter 2 for some immediate practical tips and Chapter 3 for the deeper, lasting hope we all yearn for.

“One of the saddest concepts in any language is contained in the word *hopeless*,” says longtime minister and Foundation Institute instructor David Johnson. When people have “reached a point in life where they have lost all hope, that is tragic and indescribably painful. It can happen on a battlefield or in a hospital room; in a marriage or when we feel indescribably alone; when we’ve given our very best and know it still won’t be good enough, or when we know we failed to give our best and others are going to suffer because of our inadequacy.”

Hopelessness can attack people from many different directions, but at its core it consists of:

- Facing terrible circumstances.
- Feeling there is no way out.

The terrible circumstances can have many roots: abuse, family dysfunction, poverty, injustice, being cheated, oppression,

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Even Jesus Christ experienced horrendous circumstances—being betrayed, abandoned by His closest friends, tortured and enduring excruciating pain as He died.”

social isolation, alienation, loneliness, etc. These can lead to anxiety, counterproductive thoughts and addictions, depression, apathy and suicidal thoughts.

The awful conditions we face might be visible to all, but they can also be hidden and our suffering invisible to those around us.

In addition to external factors, some people are also genetically predisposed to lower levels of serotonin, one of the neurotransmitters in the brain that affects mood, which can set them up for low-grade depression or a slightly negative filter for viewing the world.

Feeling there's no way out

No matter how bad things are, people seem to be able to deal with them when they have hope. When they can see a light at the end of the tunnel. When they know the suffering and deprivation will end.

But we become swallowed up by hopelessness when all the paths to a better future seem to be blocked, one after another. When the light at the end of the tunnel goes out. When nothing but darkness surrounds us.

For example, researchers have found that repeated emotional abuse in childhood can produce feelings of helplessness that persist and can become a negative pattern of thinking. These can make people more vulnerable to depression and hopelessness.

The overwhelming feeling that there is no way out, no escape, chokes us. It terrifies us. And over time it can turn from sharp pain to a persistent, agonizing apathy, helplessness and hopelessness.

Coping mechanisms gone wild

In our downward spiral into hopelessness, often we grab on to anything that might seem to mask the pain or help us get by. Alcohol and drugs and other addictions might seem to produce temporary relief, but in the end they only accelerate the process. Now we have the costs and effects of the addiction to deal with on top of everything else.

And too often the addictions themselves can be deadly. Public health experts in the United States talk of a hopelessness epidemic fueling the opioid and suicide crises.



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Princeton economists Sir Angus Deaton and Anne Case say opioid overdoses, suicides and alcoholism-related diseases are often “deaths of despair.” “We think of opioids as something that’s thrown petrol on the flames and made things infinitely worse, but the underlying deep malaise would be there even without the opioids,” says Professor Deaton (WBUR.org).

Harvard economics professor David Cutler points out that the problems can be related to the lack of a sense of purpose in life. “That is, even if one is doing well financially, is there a sense that one is contributing in a meaningful way?” (ibid.).

Hopelessness and suicide

As an extreme byproduct, chronic hopelessness can take away the will to live. It can blind people to the reality that things can and will change. The Mayo Clinic gives this good advice:

“When life doesn’t seem worth living anymore, it may seem that the only way to find relief is through suicide. When you’re feeling this way, it may be hard to believe, but you do have other options.

“Take a step back and separate your emotions from your actions for the moment.

A SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

God is love and is “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (1 John 4:8; 2 Corinthians 1:3). One reason He gave us the Bible is to provide encouragement when we face the low points of life.

King David looked to God as the source of real hope and comfort:

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

David also wrote about the loving care God offers to the downtrodden and vulnerable:

“A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families” (Psalm 68:5-6).

We can be encouraged by the compassion of Jesus Christ:

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered,

- “Recognize that depression and hopelessness can distort your perceptions and reduce your ability to make good decisions.
- “Realize that suicidal feelings are the result of treatable problems.
- “Act as if there are other options instead of suicide, even if you may not see them right now.”

(Note: If you or someone you know may be considering suicide, in the U.S. contact the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-8255. For suicide hotlines in other countries, see suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html.)

If you are feeling hopeless, you are not alone

We can feel isolated, strange, like no one can understand us. But realize that hopelessness is not a rare and isolated condition. You are not alone.

“There is not racial or ethnic domination of hopelessness. It’s everywhere,” said Bahamian-American actor Sidney Poitier.

And it is not unique to our age, though the conditions that contribute to it do seem to be intensifying and the support

like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

He offers:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

The apostle Paul describes wonderful peace of mind God can provide:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which

surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

The author of Hebrews sums it all up:

“For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Find more encouraging passages in the [“Encouraging Bible Verses”](#) section of our Life, Hope & Truth website.



structures that protect against it—families, churches and close-knit communities—are in decline.

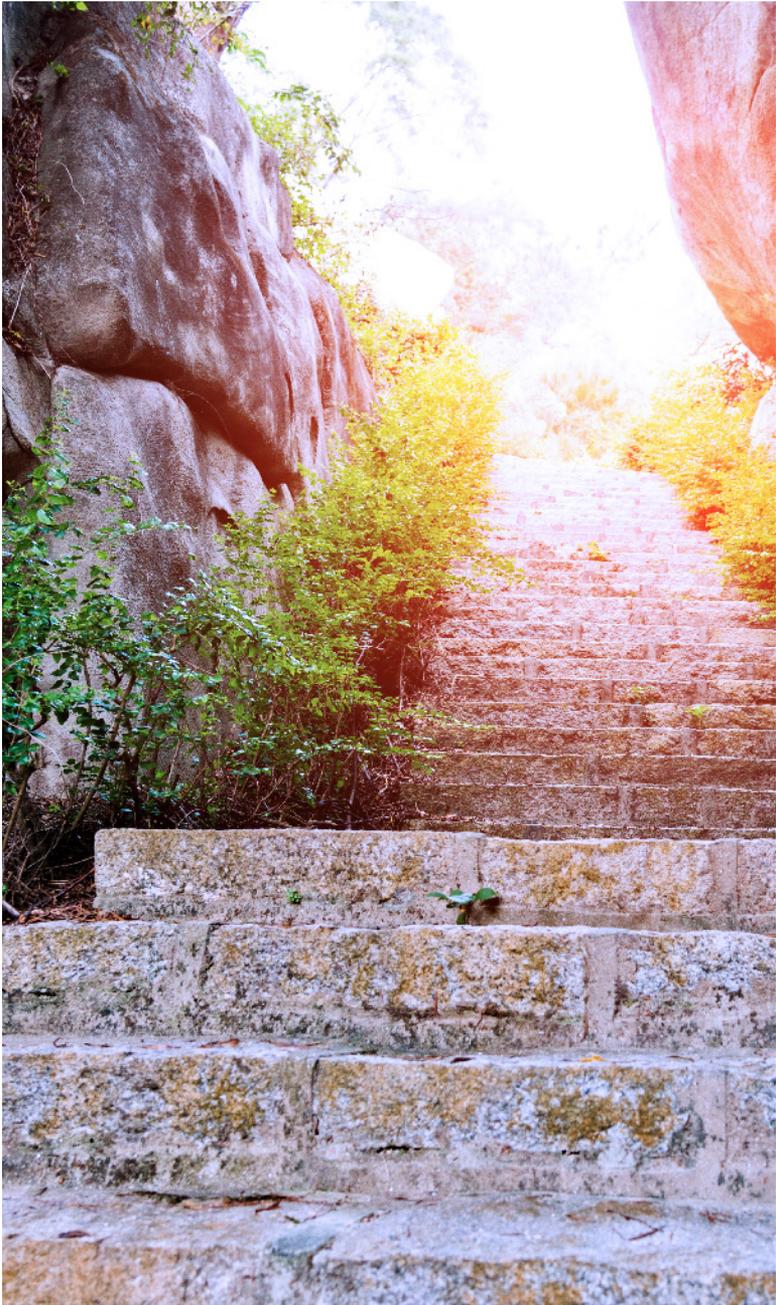
Yet even in Bible times, many faced such feelings. Job talked of days “spent without hope” (Job 7:6). Solomon wrote of trying to find meaning in things, experiences and even people, but concluding it was all futility—like trying to get a handful of wind (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

His father, David, said, “Our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope” (1 Chronicles 29:15). David understood the hopelessness of this transitory life—without God. But in many other passages he revealed where he found peace and real hope. See the sidebar “A Source of Encouragement” (p. 10) for encouraging quotes from David and others that can help lift us out of hopelessness.

Even Jesus Christ experienced horrendous circumstances—being betrayed, abandoned by His closest friends, tortured and enduring excruciating pain as He died. He understands the feeling of

being forsaken, of suffering alone. He can “sympathize with our weaknesses” since He “was in all points tempted as we are” (Hebrews 4:15). He understands, listens and offers incredible help and unlimited hope. There’ll be more about this in chapter 3.

But first, in chapter 2 take a quick tour of some of the proven resources immediately available to help you break free from the vise grip of hopelessness.



Steps Toward Hope

These practical, proven strategies can give you immediate help in dealing with the effects of hopelessness. You might think of dozens of reasons not to try, but there is one overarching reason to act—you are important to God! He loves you and wants you to break out of hopelessness.

If you are drowning in a sea of hopelessness, please grab a lifeline! Reach out to others, seek professional help and consider some of the proven and effective ways of dealing with hopelessness and depression featured in this chapter.

Taking this first step can seem impossible, but we pray that you will give it a chance. And we hope you will pray for God's powerful, loving hand to guide you. You'll find more about how God is the ultimate solution in the next chapter.

But first, here are some immediate steps experts advise for climbing out of hopelessness, whether what you are experiencing is mild, moderate or even severe.

Exercise

Perhaps the last thing you want to do when feeling hopeless and depressed is to exercise. But a great deal of scientific research shows that it can actually help you break out of the negative cycle. Exercise naturally releases endorphins that can have mood-changing effects.

A review of the research concluded: “In summary, exercise appears to be an effective treatment for depression, improving depressive symptoms to a comparable extent as pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy. Observational studies suggest that active people are less likely to be depressed, and interventional studies suggest that exercise is beneficial in reducing depression” (James A. Blumenthal, Patrick J. Smith and Benson M. Hoffman, “Is Exercise a Viable Treatment for Depression?”).

In addition, other diet and lifestyle changes can naturally increase the levels of important brain chemicals like dopamine and serotonin. Research this further on reputable health sites on the Internet.

Journaling

Many therapists encourage their clients to record their thoughts and feelings in a journal. This has several benefits. It is therapeutic, and it helps journalers sort through life experiences to arrive at “aha” moments that allow self-awareness of why they’re feeling hopeless. Also, it’s a record of progress. It’s easy to get stuck in hopeless thinking and forget that there were better times, or that there were worse times that we’ve survived—and we’ll survive this too.

Connecting with others

Struggling with depression and hopelessness can cause us to isolate ourselves. But if we can force ourselves to connect with

others, socialize and perhaps even find a loving accountability partner to help us, it can be a big help. Socializing itself is a healthy way to stabilize your mood because it naturally releases feel good chemicals in the brain.

Medical News Today quotes psychologist Susan Pinker as saying, “Face-to-face contact releases a whole cascade of neurotransmitters and, like a vaccine, they protect you now, in the present, and well into the future, so simply ... shaking hands, giving somebody a high-five is enough to release oxytocin, which increases your level of trust, and it lowers your cortisol levels, so it lowers your stress.”

Behavioral-activation therapy

This means getting involved in uplifting and meaningful activities—even though you don’t feel like it. Most seriously depressed people have no desire to do this and need a trained professional to help them understand how and why.

“People with depression often withdraw from the world, and this therapy seeks to bring them back in. Treatment involves helping people identify activities that add meaning to their life, like reading, volunteering or hanging out with friends, and encourages them to do these things without waiting for their



Photo: iStockphoto.com

mood to lift first. In a recent study published in the *Lancet*, this kind of therapy was shown to be as effective as CBT [cognitive-behavioral therapy]" (Mandy Oaklander, "New Hope for Depression," *Time*, July 27, 2017).

Motivational speaker Kathy Eubanks recommends, "One great tip when feeling hopeless is to do something of service to someone else. For example delivering Meals on Wheels or making a phone call to a shut in. When we do something for others, we gain a sense of purpose. We also see that others may be facing challenges as well."

People who are mildly to moderately depressed can benefit greatly from helping others. We can gain perspective on our situation by seeing that others have it worse or be encouraged by how others are coping with their own difficult situations.

Animal-assisted or pet therapy

Jeff Nalin, a licensed clinical psychologist at Paradigm Malibu Treatment Centers, says:

"Pet therapy has played a significant role in helping patients overcome depression. Bonding with animals causes our brain to release endorphins, the hormones responsible for making us feel happy and content. Animals also comfort us in times of need and provide unconditional love, which can be extremely therapeutic.

"Additionally, taking care of a pet will instill a sense of responsibility, and will encourage habits that may alter depressive thoughts. Because animals are dependent on us, we will take the necessary steps to satisfy their needs. For patients taking care of dogs, this means going outside and getting active. Animals are also wonderful icebreakers, so they can be particularly useful in therapy with depressed patients who tend to withdraw socially."

12-step programs for addictions

There are also many resources for those dealing with addictions. Jeremy Evans, alumni coordinator for Project Turnabout Centers for Addiction Recovery, writes:

“It has often been said that, ‘alcoholics and addicts struggle with a thinking disease which leads to a drinking disease.’ What that means to me, in my experience, is that somewhere in my own thinking there is a deeply rooted and well-defended hopelessness that needs to be uprooted” (“Coping With Hopelessness”).

To do that, he recommends going “back to what works—traditional 12-Step recovery” such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy and other professional help

Hopelessness, depression and other challenges can be too much to handle on your own, so it can be helpful to seek professional help. Cognitive behavioral therapy, for example, “helps patients identify unhelpful or negative thinking, change inaccurate beliefs, change behaviors that might make depression worse, and interact with others in more positive ways” (“Overcoming Depression,” American Psychological Association).

Dr. Nalin adds, “The therapy is focused on helping patients

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I’m not telling you it’s going to be easy.... I’m telling you it’s going to be worth it.”

to make changes in their own lives, and thus extends beyond the sessions with a therapist through ‘homework’ and practical activities.

“Because CBT focuses on helping patients to modify behaviors that are related to the struggles and symptoms they are experiencing, it can be a very powerful tool in treating addictions, and helping to prevent relapse. Some of the practical steps that CBT might incorporate into treatment plans include adding positive activities to the patients’ lives and restructuring negative and/or false thought patterns.”

Yolanda Graham, chief clinical/chief medical officer of Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health, explains the importance of getting past the stigma of getting professional help:

“We know that many people who make the decision to end their lives have depression or another chronic mental condition—whether or not it’s been diagnosed. Some people might appear to ‘have it all’ and are fully functional with families and friends. It could be the captain of the football team or a CEO of a successful company. Unfortunately, no one sees it coming and, as a result, the impact is devastating. People living with mental illness need to be reassured that there is no shame or fault in having a chronic disease.”

Professionals also can recommend other effective treatments, including other therapies and medication.

Make the effort. Get the help you need to break out of the downward spiral of hopelessness.

Realize this too shall pass

These words might seem too simple, but experts through the ages have recognized their power and wisdom. When we are caught in the net of hopelessness, we can see no way out. But there is always a way. “This too shall pass” gives us a tool to begin to escape the net.

Such reminders can save lives.

Paige Hunter, a college student in England, knows. She uses her spare time to attach notes to a bridge notorious for suicidal jumpers. She writes these notes hoping to save the lives of strangers who might be struggling with negative or suicidal thoughts.

“I know you’re tired. I know you’re physically and emotionally drained, but you have to keep going,” reads one of Paige’s notes.

“I’m not telling you it’s going to be easy,” another note reads, “I’m telling you it’s going to be worth it.”

Another says, “Be strong because things will get better. It may be stormy now, but it never rains forever.”

According to Beverly L. Jenkins’ article “Teen Stops Suicide by Covering Bridge With Messages of Hope,” “Paige’s notes have reportedly saved six lives already” (Inspiremore.com).

If you are feeling suicidal, contact a help line like [SuicidePreventionLifeline.org](https://www.suicideline.org) at 1-800-273-8255 in the U.S.

See [suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html](https://www.suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html) for suicide hotlines in other countries around the world. They can help you see past the terrible present that feels like eternity.

A deeper level of hope

The approaches presented in this chapter can help a great deal in many circumstances. But there comes a time when even the best human solutions are not enough. We need more.

The next chapter explores a deeper level of hope that is ultimately satisfying and unshakable.



An Anchor of Hope

God offers a solid hope that goes beyond anything we humans can discover on our own. Don't wait to take hold of these sure promises from our all-powerful, loving God.

Even when every human effort fails, even when circumstances seem hopeless, there is a powerful reason to hope. There is a lifeline from our Creator. The Bible compares the lasting, stabilizing effects of spiritual hope to an anchor.

God's promises are so sure, "we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:18-19).

In the tempests of life, God's promises and His help can serve to ground us and preserve us. Spiritual hope can also give real meaning and purpose to our lives.

God cares

When we are adrift and battered by the troubles of life, it can seem like no one cares. But our Creator invested greatly in you

and cares deeply for you. He meticulously designed every cell of your body and every part of your DNA. He has just as carefully planned your future hope. And to make that hope possible, He has given what was most precious to Him. Jesus Christ came to give His life that we may have an abundant life and endless hope.

After investing so much, there's no way He would ever give up on you. Paul asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). He answered his own question: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (verses 38-39)!

Hope of biblical proportions

The hope the Bible describes is not a mere wish or vague dream. Rooted in faith in God's promises, biblical hope is sure and unwavering. God Himself guarantees this hope. It's one of the big three: faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13:13; see the sidebar "Faith, Hope and Love," p. 27).

Faith and hope are inextricably tied together in the Bible and reflect a reality more sure and stable than anything in our physical universe. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Seeing the unseen

Faith and hope provide a portal into the spiritual realm where God lives. They help us to see the truth that is unchanging and the promises that are unbreakable. They help us remember what God has done and rely on what He has promised to do.

The heroes of faith embodied a hope in God's promises that gave them eyes to see the unseen future. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ...

A DOOR OF HOPE

The prophet Hosea was given a powerful and poignant message for those who were unfaithful to God. But God also held out hope for those who repented and returned to Him. He would bring them back from exile as He had brought them into the Promised Land the first time.

“I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt” (Hosea 2:15).

The *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* explains the background of this verse:

“The valley of *Achor*, ... [is] an evident allusion to the occurrence described in Joshua 7, from which it obtained its name of *Akhōr*, *Troubling*. This is obvious from the declaration that this valley shall become a door of hope. Through the sin of Achan, who took some of the spoil of Jericho which had been devoted by the ban to the Lord, Israel had fallen under the ban [“become doomed for destruction,” New King James Version], so that the Lord withdrew His help, and the army that marched against Ai was defeated. But in answer to the prayer of Joshua and the elders, God showed to Joshua not only the cause of the calamity which had befallen the whole nation, but the means of escaping from the ban and recovering the lost favour of God.”

Learn more about repentance and reconciling with God in our article [“How to Repent”](#) and its related articles.

“But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

You can read a mind-boggling description of that city coming down from heaven to the earth, as seen in a vision by the apostle John in Revelation 21 and 22 (see our online article [“New Jerusalem”](#)).

Human eyes cannot see the amazing, awesome “things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). But they are real and much more permanent than the atoms and molecules we are made of. God gives this spiritual vision to give us sure hope and powerful encouragement even in trials.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

The apostle Paul noted, “But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance” (Romans 8:25).

Hope through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures

God gave the examples and the prophecies of the Bible as a foundation for our hope. “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes, but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

God can be our hope even “in the day of doom” (verse 17). This age is full of trouble and sorrow, and humanity is bringing a day of doom on itself. But the Bible reveals that God’s plan looks far beyond all this to an eternity of peace and joy.

Even now God is a God of rescue and deliverance. As God told the captives in Babylon, “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. 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” (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

Still nagging questions

The Bible overflows with unshakable hope for those going through hard times. But all this raises the question, why do we have to suffer such trials now? Can’t we just fast-forward past this

time of trouble? And, since God is love, why does He allow such suffering in this world of hopelessness?

Chapter 4 will delve into these nagging questions.

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

The Bible connects faith, hope and love many times (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8; Galatians 5:5-6; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Hebrews 6:10-12; 1 Peter 1:21-22).

These three godly characteristics all produce fruit. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 Paul praised the members for their “work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Faith—belief in God and His promises—motivates us to strive to live as Jesus lived, walk as He walked. This includes obeying God and doing His works (John 14:12, 15).

Love—outgoing concern that is the essential characteristic of God (1 John 4:16)—labors to serve others (Hebrews 6:10).

Hope is not a fleeting or feeble thing, but a “desire of some good with expectation of obtaining it” (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament*, p. 570). Hope provides “full assurance,” thus it can motivate us to patient endurance (Hebrews 6:11-12). Godly hope is faith projected into the future.

Faith and hope work together hand in hand. It takes faith in God to have real hope, and it takes godly hope to have real, lasting faith.

Love elevates faith and hope above any selfishness, producing a desire for God’s plan to provide His blessings for everyone.

William Barclay puts it this way in his *Daily Study Bible*: “Faith without love is cold, and hope without love is grim. Love is the fire which kindles faith and it is the light which turns hope into certainty.”

Love’s outgoing nature and eternal qualities makes it the “greatest of these” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Study more about these big three in our online articles [“What Is Faith?”](#) [“Our Future Hope”](#) and [“God Is Love.”](#)



Why Does a Loving God Allow Hopelessness?

Some of the most difficult questions those who believe in our loving Creator have faced are: Why does God allow evil? Why suffering and hopelessness? The Bible gives answers that make sense.

God's nature and His love produce hope! So where does hopelessness come from?

The Bible shows it started with selfish, prideful thoughts by a powerful angel, called Lucifer in Isaiah 14:12. He rebelled against God and began a continuous campaign of hate and venom against his Creator. He committed himself to the futile goal of thwarting God's plans. Though that is impossible, still everywhere

this vicious dragon goes, he leaves evil and destruction in his wake. (Learn more in our online article “[The Fall of Satan.](#)”)

Rejecting hope

The way of hopelessness continued to evolve when this enemy lied to the first humans. He tempted them to choose pride and selfishness—represented by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—instead of the true hope of eternal life God offered—represented by the tree of life (Genesis 3:4-6, 22).

Adam and Eve essentially chose to decide for themselves (with Satan’s evil prodding) what they considered right and wrong. They rejected the real definition God provided, but they couldn’t actually change the results. What is truly wrong still causes pain, hopelessness and death, even if we rebrand it as not so bad or even good. Pretending that what is bad is good doesn’t make it so.

Sadly, the Bible shows that every human since Adam and Eve has at some point sinned—symbolically chosen to eat of the wrong tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And so we have all tasted of its fruits, which include hopelessness.

No matter how much good you take from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it’s still the wrong tree. It doesn’t have the real answers. It can’t give lasting hope.

Why a world of hopelessness?

Humanity’s wrong choices have combined over the centuries to produce the world of hopelessness we see today.

Every valiant attempt to fix this world’s problems eventually succumbs to the downward pulls of selfishness and pride with which Satan pervades our societies. Every well-meaning effort to promote fairness and freedom is seen by others as unfairly encroaching on their freedom. Every individual endeavor to pursue a happy and meaningful life meets obstacles, discouragements and failures.

Some remain resilient through such setbacks. But at some point everyone gets frustrated. Overwhelmed. Beaten down. Stressed. Disheartened. Depressed. Hopeless.

Without the solid hope of God's promises and His help, it is natural to slide into discouragement and despair.

Could God stop all of this?

Yes, but not without either turning us into robots or thwarting and frustrating a large portion of our choices and actions. He has chosen not to do that. If He did, He would have to stop us every time we decided to do something that would hurt us or the ones around us. And, sadly, that is far too much of the time.

God values the character that can be produced only by our free choice. He desires a relationship with us based on our freely making right choices. So, in the meantime, He permits wrong choices. (Learn more about this in our online article "[What Is Free Will?](#)")

But His plan leads toward a time when all will have made their final choices, and hopefully the vast majority will eventually make the right choices.

Then all who freely choose to believe and follow God will become His children. They will symbolically eat of the tree of life and live forever. They will have a future and a hope beyond our wildest imaginations!



Growing in Hope Through the Holy Spirit

God offers a gift of power and love and a sound mind through putting His very nature within us! His Holy Spirit helps us grow in hope.

Knowing the importance of hope is not enough. When our faith and hope are tested, how do we reinforce and strengthen them? How can we grow in hope?

The Bible emphasizes the source of hope and what the focus of our hope should be.

Hope in God

People have placed their hope in many things: science and technology, medicine, the military, academia, political leaders, the financial system, society, or even humanity as a whole. All of these have failed or will fail us at some point in the future.

HOW TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus told His followers that they would receive the Holy Spirit after His death (John 14:16-18). On the Day of Pentecost, God announced the beginning of the Church with powerful miracles, and the apostle Peter preached an inspired sermon describing how we can receive God's Holy Spirit.

After Peter showed his listeners—and, by extension, showed us—that they were responsible for the death of Jesus Christ, they were “cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37).

Peter answered with a summary of the steps God has laid out for the conversion process: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (verse 38).

The Spirit is given to the repentant believer after baptism when a minister lays his hands on the person and asks God to give the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).

Repentance, belief, baptism and the laying on of hands are the steps God asks us to follow today before He gives His Holy Spirit.

Learn more about this biblical process of conversion in our free booklet [Change Your Life!](#)

Closer to home, we place our hope in family and friends. But even here we can too often be disappointed. Such relationships are vital and must be continually built and strengthened, but it is too much to ask family members or friends to be our only or most important hope.

The Bible makes clear that the only One whose shoulders are broad enough to carry the full weight of our hopes is God.

Consider these messages from the Psalms:

- “Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God” (Psalm 146:5).

The passage goes on to explain why we can and should hope in God. He is the all-powerful Creator (verse 6). He “executes justice for the oppressed,” gives “food to the hungry” and “freedom to the prisoners” (verse 7). He has the power to open the eyes of the blind and take care of the poor and the powerless (verses 8-9).

- “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the LORD” (Psalm 31:24).

When we are disheartened, we can turn to God to strengthen our hearts. He can give us real courage—courage backed up with all the power in the universe!

Psalms 42 and 43 discuss hope in the midst of trials. The psalmist cries out, “My tears have been my food day and night” (Psalm 42:3). But then he takes stock of the situation and reminds himself of his hope:

- “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance” (Psalm 42:5).

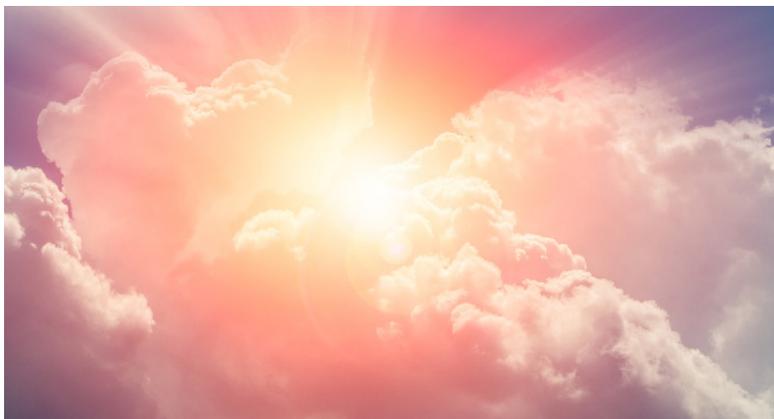
This same basic passage is repeated again in verse 11 and in Psalm 43:5. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves repeatedly of the source and strength of our hope. For more on these passages, see our online article [“Encouraging Bible Verses.”](#)

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”

When we have hope in God, we can ask Him to put more of His hope into us.

The apostle Paul described this as a mystery that has now been revealed to the saints:

“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).



Jesus had told His disciples that when He went away, He would send another Helper, the Holy Spirit, by which He would be in them (John 14:16-20). So the way we have Christ in us is through receiving the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 4:4-6).

When we receive the Holy Spirit, we become “children of God” and “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:16-17).

Read more about these awesome promises of sharing a glorious eternity and of inheriting all things with Christ in the next chapter. But for now notice some of the things the Holy Spirit can help us do in this life.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

The very power of God can help us transform our lives and deal with the challenges we face. The very love of God can help shape our hearts and minds to think like our loving Father. And we can replace fear and discouragement with a mind that’s peaceful, well-balanced and self-controlled. All of these contribute to the sure hope that the Holy Spirit makes possible.

Consider some of the other things the Holy Spirit does:

- The Holy Spirit opens our minds to understand God’s way.
- The Holy Spirit purifies our minds.
- The Holy Spirit teaches us.
- The Holy Spirit comforts and encourages us.
- The Holy Spirit keeps us in touch with God.

Our online article [“How Do You Know You Have the Holy Spirit?”](#) goes into these and other wonderful benefits of the Holy Spirit.

How can we have access to this wonderful gift of God? Read about the steps the Bible says we need to follow to receive the Holy Spirit in the accompanying sidebar “How to Receive the Holy Spirit” (p. 34).

Growing in hope

Hope and faith grow as we study the promises of the Bible and the examples of how God has fulfilled those promises in the past and in the Church today. Meditating—thinking deeply—about

our faithful God helps our hope to grow. Learn more in our online articles [“God’s Promises: Rock-Solid Hope and Assurance”](#) and [“How to Grow in Faith.”](#)

And, as with every gift of God, we can ask God to give us more hope. God desires for all of us to be strong and courageous, as He told Joshua. “Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

“CONTRARY TO HOPE. IN HOPE BELIEVED”

One example of the fulfillment of God’s promises is the story of Abraham.

Abraham is the hero of Romans 4. The apostle Paul illustrated the importance of faith and hope through the example of this man who has been called the father of the faithful.

God had promised great blessings through Abraham and Sarah’s descendants. But the problem was that they did not have any children. Year after year, they waited, till Abraham was about 100, and Sarah, 90. They knew she was well past childbearing age.

Yet, Paul explains, Abraham, “contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken” (Romans 4:18).

William Barclay translates the first part of the verse this way: “In hope Abraham believed beyond hope.” Dr. Barclay comments on this verse in his *Daily Study Bible*:

“The essence of Abraham’s faith in this case was that he believed that God could make the impossible possible. So long as we believe that everything depends on our efforts, we are bound to be pessimists, for experience has taught the grim lesson that our own efforts can achieve very little. When we realize that it is not our effort but God’s grace and power which matter, then we become optimists, because we are bound to believe that with God nothing is impossible.”

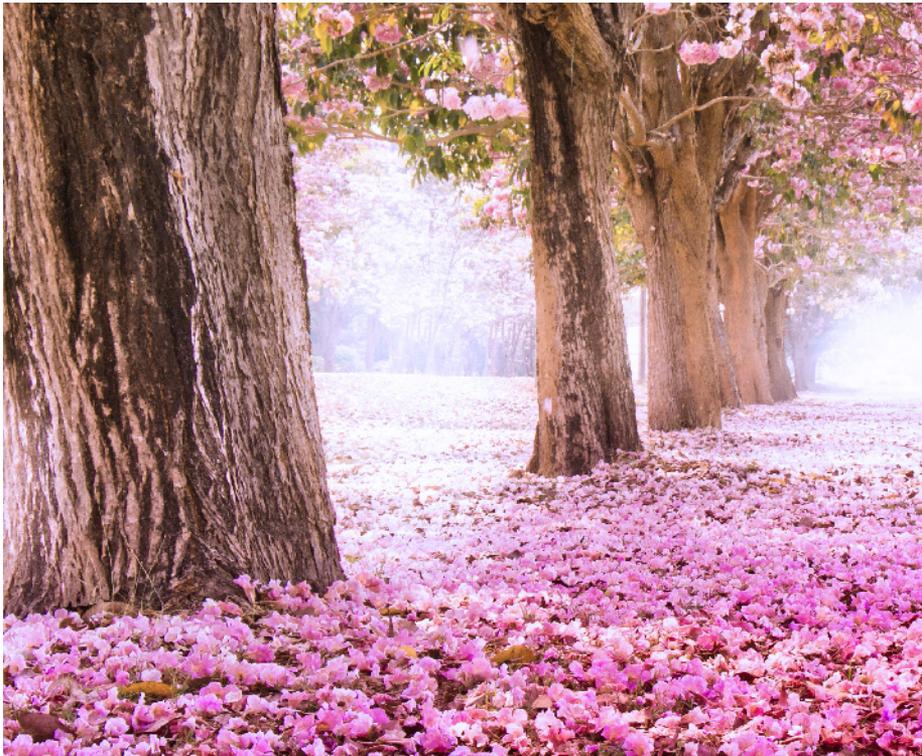
When we are beyond hope, we can remember the example of Abraham, who “contrary to hope, in hope believed” and was richly rewarded by the God with whom nothing is impossible.

And the message is repeated in the New Testament: “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul described a process for growing in hope that may seem counterintuitive. We don’t naturally associate more trials with more hope. But Paul wrote:

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance,



character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:1-5).

Without God and without the Holy Spirit, going through trials and tribulation can be a recipe for hopelessness. But with God’s help, and with an understanding of how godly character is built, this process can produce hope that “does not disappoint.”

Endurance, godly character and hope in God prepare us for an eternity of greater service and the joy of greater accomplishment. And again, the love of God shapes every decision and every action.

All this will produce a utopia that will never disappoint!

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Our Ultimate Hope

The Bible is a book of hope. God's plan is to save us and give us a meaningful life now and forever. He wants to share all things with us and to make us His sons and daughters!

God offers us a future filled with hope!
We all face enemies that we need to be saved from.
God's plan is to deliver us from all enemies.

He wants to deliver us from people who want to harm us, from habits and addictions that hold us captive, from sins that produce troubles and suffering in our lives. Even more important, our breaking of God's perfect and beneficial laws automatically earns death—the last enemy.

And God wants to deliver us from Satan, the evil one—our first and greatest enemy.

Who will deliver us?

Jesus' very name means Deliverer or Savior. Through Him, God made the way for us to escape all these enemies—even Satan and even death.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17).

The Bible calls this way of escape *salvation*. It tells us the steps to take to be saved, outlined in Peter’s response to those who were “cut to the heart” by realizing that Jesus had died for their sins.

“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 2:38). (Learn more about this process of conversion that leads to salvation in our free booklet *Change Your Life!*)

Jesus taught that “he who believes and is baptized will be saved.”

And, mercifully, God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Sadly, not all will make that choice, but God will make sure all have a full chance.

The hope of salvation

In this dangerous world, as we face our many enemies, the apostle Paul encourages us to put on “as a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:8). The helmet was an essential piece of a Roman soldier’s protective armor, as it has been for soldiers throughout history. We need the protection of the “hope of salvation” to keep our minds safe. For more on this, see our online article “[Armor of God: Helmet of Salvation](#).”

God is more than able to protect us and defeat all our enemies, and this gives us great hope and motivation.

But we won’t only be looking back on what we have been saved *from*. Much more, we will be looking forward to what we have been saved *for!*

The hope of the resurrection at Christ’s coming

In addition to the “hope of salvation,” the Bible also talks about the “hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2; 3:7) and the “hope and resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:6).

These are all related, since we must be saved from the death penalty of our sins in order to receive the gift of eternal life. And we will be granted the gift of eternal life through a resurrection—being raised from the dead.

Jesus' resurrection provides the proof that God has the power over death and that He will grant eternal life to His saints. This is the apostle Paul's point in the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15—the Resurrection Chapter.

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [died]. For since by

“

God is spirit and eternal. And He wants us to become spirit and eternal too. He wants us to be His children!”

man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming” (verses 20-23).

Most churches today neglect this teaching, and many Christians hear little about the need for a resurrection at Jesus Christ's return. Their general teaching is that Christians go immediately to heaven when they die, so why would they need to be “resurrected”?

But, as strange as the resurrection might sound to many, it is what the Bible teaches. Once you study what the Bible really says about the resurrections, you will find it is encouraging, awe-inspiring and full of hope.

God says we are mortal flesh and blood, but He wants to raise us immortal and incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:50-53). He says we will sleep in death, but He wants to raise us to everlasting life (Daniel 12:2). He says our society is heading for self-destruction (Matthew 24:22), but He and His resurrected followers will intervene and bring real peace and joy to this war-weary world (Isaiah 9:6-7; Revelation 11:15-18; 20:6).

Longtime minister David Johnson envisions the pivotal point of history—the promised return of Jesus Christ—this way:

“Into that darkened and hopeless world the light of hope will descend to the Mount of Olives and begin to spread from an ancient city like a beacon. Once again, the Word of God will ring out, ‘Let there be light!’ And the darkness of life without hope will be vanquished forever.”

That is why we should be “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:13-14).

Study more about these subjects in our online articles [“Hope in Christ,”](#) [“What Are the Resurrections?”](#) and [“When Will Jesus Return?”](#)

The hope of an eternal life of accomplishment and joy

God offers the “hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). This won’t be a life of boredom and frustration—far from it! Jesus said He came “that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

He reassured His disciples, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). As our article [“Many Mansions”](#) explains, Jesus was using the priests’ living quarters in the temple as an analogy of the permanent dwelling places He is offering.

Jesus is preparing to welcome His followers “abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 1:11). He wants us to have that wonderful sense of belonging, of being at home—forever!

But that’s not all. In fact, God intends for us to inherit “all things”—the universe and everything! “You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet” (Hebrews 2:7-8).

He also offers meaningful positions of responsibility that will give us an unending sense of accomplishment and excitement. These include being “kings and priests” (Revelation 1:6) and teachers (Isaiah 30:20). Our life now is a preparation for those

much greater responsibilities, as illustrated in the words of the master in this parable:

“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21).

Imagine helping Jesus Christ as He brings true justice and peace to this world. Isaiah painted a word picture of this wonderful time:

“Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:3-4).

And beyond that, imagine an eternity of supreme happiness! David wrote:

“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

Sons and daughters of God

When God created us, He made us in His image, but He formed us of dust (Genesis 1:26; 2:7). So we have the potential to be



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like God, with the ability to think, create and decide, but we're physical and temporary.

God is spirit and eternal. And He wants us to become spirit and eternal too. He wants us to be His children!

The apostle John exclaimed, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1-2).

His children will then be made fully in His image—incorruptible, immortal, His spirit-born children.

We will have an eternally close relationship of love, joy and peace—and all the fruit of God's Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; see our online series "[The Fruit of the Spirit](#)").

It's an unimaginably great hope! But God can open our minds to see it afar off and to embrace it.

After describing the incredible blessing of being the children of God, John added, "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

This hope is well worth the effort. We purify ourselves to become like God now, so we can enjoy a wonderful, exciting and abundant life with our Father and Elder Brother and many brothers and sisters forever!

Don't neglect this hope!

We hope you will take the next step on the path to salvation by downloading and studying the biblical passages in our priceless booklet *Change Your Life!*



About **LifeHope&Truth**

LifeHopeandTruth.com exists to fill a critical void in this world: the lack of understanding about the purpose of life, the lack of realistic hope for a better future and the lack of truth!

Neither religion nor science has satisfactorily addressed these issues, so people today are of divided opinions, confused or, worst of all, don't care anymore. The ancient words of the prophet Isaiah ring so true today: "Truth is fallen in the street." Why? Is it because God was right when He warned that humans are inclined to reject Him and usually choose not to know Him?

We are here for people who are searching for answers, who are ready to prove all things or who are hungry for more than what they've been taught most of their lives about God, the Bible, the meaning of life and how to live. We want to help you truly understand the good news of the gospel and fulfill Jesus Christ's admonition to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

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