

“Love always hopes” 1 Corinthians 13:7

I. What is hope?

A. Secular Definition (dictionary)

1. Noun: a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.
2. Verb: wish or strive for something to happen or be the case.
3. Secular hope is based on circumstances and the belief that your future will be better than the present and that you have the ability to make it happen. It involves both optimism and a can-do attitude.

B. Biblical Definition

1. “Hope and optimism are different. Optimism seems to be based on the notion that there's enough evidence out there that allows us to think that things are going to be better. **It's much more rational, and it's deeply secular.** Whereas hope looks at the evidence and says it doesn't look good at all, but I'm going to go beyond the evidence and make a leap of faith.” Cornel West, professor of religious studies at Harvard
2. Biblical hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised—its strength is in His character and His faithfulness.
3. Biblical hope is not based on circumstances. In fact, people in the Bible often recognize that even when there's no evidence that things will get better, there is still reason to hope.

II. The Nature of Biblical Hope

A. Let's explore a couple of passages in the Old Testament and New Testament that offer us a picture of what the biblical authors call HOPE.

1. Isaiah 9:1-7
2. Matthew 4:12-17

B. God will fulfill His promises to restore and redeem, but we need to allow for His creativity and freedom to do so in unexpected and/or unwanted ways.

1. God's timing
2. Unexpected way God fulfills His promises
3. This can be difficult and painful—Jesus can identify with us; Psalms invites honesty in prayer

III. Hope is a Person. Jesus is our Living Hope. (1 Peter 1:3-4)

- A. The reality of the empty tomb created hope (“a living hope”), so it's not just belief about something that happened 2000 years ago. It's a belief and reality that's alive and dynamic and at work today. It's so powerful that the only way to describe its effects on people is to say that you've been reborn and made into a new human (John 3).
- B. For Peter, being a follower of Jesus means to go through all of life's pain with a living hope that so transforms my outlook on all of those events, that I'm actually a new and different kind of human as to how I make sense of this.
- C. Jesus said that His life was going to be offered in the place of others. He would become what we are, so that we could become what He is.
- D. Our inheritance is secure and cannot be touched by earthly circumstances.

E. Worship Song: "Living Hope"

V. What does hope have to do with LOVE?

- A. faith (past) → hope (future) → love (present)
- B. A picture of Christian love (fountain metaphor)
 - 1. We experience God's love as His beloved child.
 - 2. One of the results of hope is that we learn to love the other people who share it.
 - 3. The love that Christians have for each other spills out into love for the world.

Discussion Questions

1. Listen as I read the Scriptures below that give us reasons to hope even when circumstances look bleak. Pay attention to the voice of the Holy Spirit stirring in your heart and write down what you hear Him say. Share as you feel led.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" Jeremiah 29:11

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" Phil 1:6

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" Isaiah 41:10

"In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" Romans 8:28

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

"The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing" Zephaniah 3:17

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" Romans 8:18

"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" Lamentations 3:21-23

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16

2. How has God fulfilled a promise to you in an unexpected way?
3. How do we handle the disappointment of knowing God can change our situation but our circumstances remain the same?

Scriptures

Isaiah 9:1-7

(v1) **Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—**

(v2) The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

(v3-5) You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

(v6-7) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Matthew 4:12-17

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, **which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:**

“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—
the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

1 Peter 1:3-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy **he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you.**

“Living Hope” by Phil Wickham

How great the chasm that lay between us
How high the mountain I could not climb
In desperation, I turned to heaven
And spoke Your name into the night
Then through the darkness, Your loving-kindness
Tore through the shadows of my soul
The work is finished, the end is written
Jesus Christ, my living hope

Who could imagine so great a mercy?
What heart could fathom such boundless grace?
The God of ages stepped down from glory
To wear my sin and bear my shame
The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
The King of kings calls me His own
Beautiful Savior, I'm Yours forever
Jesus Christ, my living hope

Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope
(2 times)

Then came the morning that sealed the promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me
Then came the morning that sealed the promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me
Jesus, Yours is the victory, whoa!

Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope
(2 times)

Jesus Christ, my living hope
Oh God, You are my living hope