

Journey to Hope

No One Walks Alone



Dave Laton, D. Min

My friends, the purpose of this pamphlet is to humbly offer some practical insights for developing and sustaining hope or restoring hope that seems lost. I pray that if you are seeking hope these thoughts with help.



This pamphlet contains information from the book, “Journey to Hope”. The full text is available through Bibletalk.TV or Amazon by that title. Use the QR code above to navigate to the Amazon site for the book.

For more information please visit: <https://ourjourneytohope.com>

The ESV Global Study Bible®, ESV® Bible
Copyright © 2012 by Crossway.
All rights reserved.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®)
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway,
a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
All rights reserved.

ESV Text Edition: 2016

Copyright © 2023 by Dave Laton All rights reserved.

What Is Hope

The basic definition of hope is “a desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment.” (Marriam Webster online dictionary).

Hope is one of the most powerful concepts of life and is at the heart of what God offers us. It blends our experiences, expectations, and current situations to develop our view of the future. Hope begins with a view of the future. If one has no expectation of a future, then there is little to no hope. If one has an expectation of a future, then there is hope.

Someone once said that hopelessness makes it impossible to care. Without hope, the future is just dust on the floor of life to be trampled upon and removed. Hopelessness screams to us to give up, all is lost. But hope gently silences the screams by reminding us that the final chapter of our life has not been written.

Our view of the future is either positive or negative depending on how we view our world and life. Hope helps provide motivation to begin or to continue during life’s challenging situations. Hope is also confidence in some future event or set of circumstances. The greater our confidence, the greater our hope. The greater our hope, the greater our motivation toward it.

Eternal and Lasting Hope

Hope is a critical element of life, both in our current situation and into eternity. The world sees hope as I think so, or maybe so. Christians see hope as I know so and I am sure of. A significant difference is our understanding that God is faithful to His promises. In a world so full of uncertainty, hope given by our Lord shines as a ray of light through the darkness of the world.

As the apostle Paul was approaching the end of his life, he said:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Paul shows us a view based on fulfilled promises from God for this life and eternal life. His statement is truly full of hope and one we can share if we are children of God. We see hope, as the writer of the book of Hebrews states, as an assurance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). We are assured because it is promised by God to those who are His. We have a confident assurance that God is always faithful to His promises. And because of that assurance, we have hope!

We find in scripture God's promise of salvation through grace and faith (Ephesians 2:8). We also learn of true love. And because of, and through all of this, we find hope. This view of hope ignites a desire to continue to a known future that is sustained by our relationship with our heavenly Father.

We will not find true hope from any political position or elected officials, the positions they hold, or the promises they make. Nor will we find eternal hope in our family. Political systems and elected officials are important, and certainly family is important, but even these can disappoint at times. Even these are of this world and not a source for eternal hope. The world offers a view of the future that is limited to this life. Only our Lord offers true and everlasting hope.

Those in the world that have no hope usually feel desperate loneliness. Tragically this often leaves them with no desire to continue living. We must make every effort to show them the love of our Lord and the true and lasting hope He offers. In doing so, we also show them that they truly never walk alone.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”
Matthew 11:28-29

Our Journey to Hope

The idea of a journey communicates that it is not a quick process. Along the way, we see growth, and our hope matures. This hope sustains us as we continue our journey. If we start with a strong foundation of hope and experience encouragement along the way, we will likely find ourselves traveling quickly to hopefulness.

Our journey to hope takes effort, faith, and persistence. It will have twists and turns, ups and downs, periods of forward movement, and sometimes backward steps. Yet the more we seek to grow, the more we will.

Don't despair or become discouraged. We have just begun our journey to hopefulness. A common illustration is that of a child. A child must learn much as it grows to adulthood. Small, faltering steps are taken, mistakes are made, and redirection is needed. This is true with us as we begin our journey to hope.

"I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14

The first stage in our journey to hope is described as **hope sparked**. In this stage we see a glimmer of hope much like the very first spark of light seen at the dawn of a new day. We see it but may not recognize it for what it is. We may have a clear idea of what we want to happen but there is uncertainty in our ability to attain it. A person receiving news of a serious illness might be told there is a small chance of recovery. A person in a broken relationship holds out a glimmer of hope that reconciliation may occur. There may even be a sense of desperation to grasp at something we perceive to offer hope.

There are general characteristics associated with this stage of our journey. A person might experience:

- Desire the possibility of hope
- Continuing feeling of doubt
- Lack confidence, questions whether they are making the right decision
- Willingness to try but still harboring a sense of defeatism

The second stage of our journey is **hope sensed**. In this stage there is still lingering doubt, but we begin to see evidence of changes in our situation that fosters a growing sense of confidence. There is a desire to increase our efforts in the direction we are going with the emerging hope that it will continue.

Looking again at the concept of coming out of a dark night, as we see the rising of the sun, we begin to see the world around us more clearly. The shadow of darkness remains, but it begins to rapidly fade away as the light of day increases.

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” 1 Corinthians 13:12

Here are some general characteristics in this stage:

- Our confidence begins to grow
- Recognizing a greater sense of hope
- Motivated to continue in the direction we are going and actions we are taking.

The third stage of our journey to hope is **hope seen**. We have greater confidence in our efforts as we clearly see the desired outcome of what we dared to hope for. This confidence is based on clearly observable changes in our situation.

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”
Romans 12:12

Again, referring to our example of transitioning from a dark night, as we are enveloped in the full light of day, we can clearly see around us, especially the pathway forward. The darkness, although perhaps still in existence around us, is not part of us. Here are some general characteristics of this stage:

- We recognize that what we hoped for is reality
- Our focus is on continuing to improve our life situation
- Our peace and calmness with the situation grows

Outrageous Courageous

The word courage is a common word that suggests many different images. A common definition of courage is, “Mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). We gather courage to help us persevere and withstand what is causing our fear.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31

Courage does not mean the absence of fear. Fear is a normal and at times, a healthy reaction. Former US President Franklin Roosevelt is quoted as saying, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear."

Courage does not eliminate fear but helps us work through and conquer it. We identify and acknowledge our fears, but we must not allow them to overwhelm us to where we are unable to act.

Sometimes what we are facing is not what is causing our fear. Our current situation may be only part of the issue. It could be that we are fearful of something else that is behind the situation we are facing. It helps to take the time to think through the current situation and try to isolate what is really causing the fear. There are many questions we can ask. For example, is it the fear of loss and separation, or the fear of pain? Is it fear of not being spiritually prepared for death?

Here are some specific questions to help identify the true source of our fears:

- How does what I am facing make me feel, and why?
- What is triggering my fear?
- What is my greatest fear about this situation, and why?
- What do I really want to do or have happen, and what is holding me back?

Hope and courage work together to give us strength to face the deep valleys and raging storms in our life. The courage found in hope helps us to stand strong and move forward as we deal with situations that seem to be beyond our control and threaten us or our loved ones, and to overcome our disappointments. Hope helps us move beyond the now and into the future. Together they put us back on track to living a fruitful life and providing a sense of purpose. We may not know the outcome or the length of that life, but we can fill whatever days we have with purpose.

Courage and Our Journey to Hope

Hope Sparked – Fear begins to lose its hold on us. Even the faint spark of hope can dispel the deepest of darkness like a candle in a dark cave. This spark encourages us to turn towards it in our desire to overcome fears.

Hope Sensed – As we begin to sense a greater feeling of hope, we begin to feel the courage to face challenges and fears. We may still harbor doubts and fears, but we are learning to control them instead of them controlling us.

Hope Seen – As we see successes in the pathway to overcoming the situation, we feel a stronger level of hope. We increase our efforts on that pathway realizing that success in facing our fears is a reality.

Restoring What Was Lost

Hope is fragile and can be easily lost if not well grounded. Restoring hope has the same elements as our journey to hope. We progress through hope sparked, hope sensed, and hope seen. But restoring hope has its own set of challenges. For example, it might be easy to slip into a “we’ve tried that before” mentality and feel that it will not work. On the positive side, we now know what hope looks like and have a goal towards which to work and grow. Here are some practical ways to begin to restore hope.

Keep things in perspective – In the throes of deeply stressful and challenging situations it is easy to lose perspective and allow the situation to control us. Begin to restore hope by taking a mental step backwards and looking again at the situation. It may open pathways we had not seen before. It helps us mentally and emotionally to prepare to face the situation. We take a step back by controlling our emotions, taking a kind of mental deep breath, and forcing ourselves to relax. We should continue to review the situation to make certain we understand it clearly and see our possible options.

Look for the positive elements of the situation – Sometimes finding something positive in a situation, especially early on, can be challenging. But we must make the effort. Look for small victories and share them with others. Also remember that *restoring hope is not necessarily about finding happiness. It is about finding peace.* One other thought on this is that when hope seems lost, perhaps it is there but in a different way. Perhaps we need to refocus rather than dwell on what we think is lost.

Look for creative solutions – Looking for creative solutions does not necessarily mean taking desperate actions but rather ensuring we have considered all our options. It is easy to overlook options when we are emotionally involved. Creative options are especially subject to being overlooked.

Remove those things that rob or challenge our hope. Things or thoughts that rob us of hope accelerate our spiral into hopelessness. Such things as worry, stress, disbelief, denial, and despair are common examples. These reactions may be natural, but we must not let them control us. They serve only to destroy our hope. Below is a comparison between what might rob us of hope and some help to restore hope.

| Robs Hope | Restores Hope |
|--|---|
| It won't work or hasn't worked before. | What can I do or remove to make this work? What can I change or how can I look at this to make a difference? |
| I don't have what it takes. | How can I obtain or access what I need to overcome this? Is there a source I can draw from for what I need? |
| I might fail. | You might also succeed. If I don't try, then I guarantee failure. If I fail, then I know what doesn't work and I can try something different. |
| If only I... | Don't use "If statements" as excuses. State instead what you have and what you can do. |
| The time isn't right. | The time may never be right. Don't wait for perfect conditions to act. Seize the moment now and move forward. |

Remember those things that gave us hope – Have you ever noticed what happens when you ask a child what he or she wants to be when they grow up? They have physical reactions. Their eyes brighten, their smile shows, they become animated. Later, as life happens, something begins to remove that hope and joy they felt. To help restore hope, we can recall our dreams and the things that brought joy to our life. Look at these and make the effort to regain them. Recall the good things and how they made us feel. This is not being unrealistic, but rather replacing the negative with the positive. It takes effort and may require the help of others but make the effort and choose to hope.

Develop a plan for hope – Someone once said, “Look at what we can do by accident, imagine what we could do if we had a plan.” We should develop a plan to restore hope. Here is a basic format for a plan for hope.

- Understand what you want to happen.
- Gather information.
- Set goals that you can achieve that move you towards your desired outcome (restored hope).
- Identify your strengths, weaknesses, options, and threats.
- Develop and put into action the processes to achieve these goals.
- Evaluate your success and adjust as necessary.

Final Thoughts

Hope is very much like the season of spring when we see the stirrings of new life following the darkness and cold of winter. As the new season continues and the darkness and cold retreats, new life, and the hope it brings erupt all around us. Our hearts are revived, and our joy increases as hope sparked becomes hope sensed and finally, hope seen.

Remember, our journey to hope begins with our view of the future. If we feel there is no future, then we have no hope. If we feel there is a future, no matter how faint, then there is hope.

Psalm 23:4 is one of the most hope-filled passages in scripture. In it David states,

“Even 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 conform me.”

The imagery of “shadow of death” certainly applies to the ending of physical life. It can also represent the death of a relationship, or other situations we face in life that leave us desperately grasping for hope. It can represent the end of spiritual life if we reject our Lord. We, like David expressed in the 23rd Psalm, find true and eternal hope and comfort through our Lord.

And it is to Him we give the glory.



“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.” Romans 8:18-19