
LOSS OF HOPE

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

- Proverbs 13:12

Many of us have gone through seasons where we have felt significant loss, fear, and hopelessness.

In the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, George Bailey placed his hope in being able to travel and see the world. He wanted to build great things like airfields, bridges, and skyscrapers, but none of those things came to pass. He eventually came to a place of great despair because the things he placed his hope in were knocked down one by one.

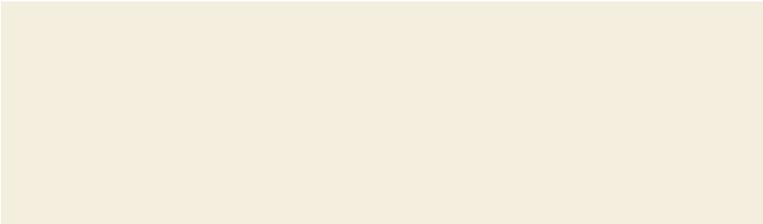
One of the things I love about God's Word is that it doesn't shy away from the messiness of life. The passages of Scripture surrounding the birth of Jesus tell us that it was one of those times of great despair.



In Luke 2:25 we read about a man named Simeon who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Israel was in a time of great political turmoil and spiritual darkness. Rome was an oppressive and cruel government, the religious leaders were legalistic, and God had not spoken through his prophets for 400 years! Simeon longed for the salvation and redemption that the Messiah would bring to his people and the entire world.

Simeon's hope was in the Messiah. This is the hope that Paul talks about in Romans 5:5 that does not disappoint.

Ask yourself, who or what are you placing your hope in?



SIGNS OF HOPE

"A mere baby, after all, lying in a manger long ago is still a sign of hope that the Creator has joined His earth and is heaven-bent on fixing it."

- Lewis Smedes, *Keeping Hope Alive* (p. 86)



My wife loves hiking the Appalachian Trail, but in some places the trail is not well defined, especially at night. She needs to be on the lookout for these little trail markers that let her know the way forward.

One little sign of hope can be all your soul needs to get through another day. Author Lewis Smedes writes that during the Great Depression people found hope in President Franklin Roosevelt's smile. And when people heard him say, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" it lifted their spirits. They took his words as a sign that the Depression would not last forever and better times were ahead.

There's something about hope that reorients our hearts and gives us renewed energy to take the next few steps forward. Search for signs of hope, and when you find them, start moving!



ANCHORS OF HOPE

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure ...

- Hebrews 6:19

I love the idea of Scripture anchors. There have been times in my life where it felt like wave after wave of worry, anger, and doubt were just crashing over me. During those times, I held tightly to God's Word to remind me of his promises and faithfulness.

In Hebrews, the author writes about hope being an anchor for our souls. There's something about the strength and weight of hope that has the potential to keep you unshakable when everything around you is falling apart.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

- Romans 8:28

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."

- John 5:17

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Romans 8:38-39

Just because the Christmas season is upon us doesn't mean that your problems disappear. Take some time to search the Word of God for messages of hope you can use as anchors for your soul.

