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# Celebrating Hope

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One aspect of peace is that it is powerful to put to rest the turmoil and chaos of life and soul – it quiets the past pain, trouble and turmoil.

Joy, then, could be the invitation in this moment to embrace God, His powerful and lifegiving presence that can dwell with each and every one of us, and experience the goodness of God in the moment we find ourselves in.

Hope, following on, could be easily seen as the future aspect – what is that we are looking forward to – what is drawing us on, and what are we fixing our eyes on?

Hope, in God's language, isn't 'a possible good thing that might happen'.

Hope is the joyful expectation of good – that which is certain and coming. Hope is the trust in things that are right now unseen, but are going to be reality in the future. Godly hope draws us through our circumstance because there is definitely something better coming.

## **People in Darkness**

*'There's nothing new under the sun.'* – Ecclesiastes 1:9

When Jesus arrived, He was born while His family were under the reign of a despotic leader and oppressive world empire – Rome.

It was a time of darkness, of despair.

It was a time when hope seemed lost, that there was no change.

*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.” – Isaiah 9:2 (ESV)*

## **God Has A Plan**

By some counts, there are over 350 prophecies concerning Jesus (His birth, life, death and resurrection) in the Old Testament scriptures.

## **The Promise of a King like David**

*“He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” – 2 Samuel 7:13 (ESV)*

There are then many other promises of God about this king: Psalm 2:6, Ezekiel 34:23-24, Micah 5:2, Genesis 14:18, Psalm 89.

*“And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” – Luke 1:30-33 (ESV)*

## **The Promise of God with Us**

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David*

*and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” – Isaiah 9:6–7 (ESV)*

*“And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” – Isaiah 7:13–14 (ESV)*

We shouldn't be surprised that God did this; He promised it, He spoke hope into our very deepest needs and darkest deeds.

## **The Promise of a Saviour**

Genesis 12:1–3 / Matthew 1:1

*“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” – Genesis 3:15 (ESV)*

## **On That Very First Christmas**

The first Christmas is both the reality of a saviour entering the world, to deal with all that has separated humanity from the one whose image we carry; and it is the proof of the trustworthiness of God to fulfil His word in the absolutely perfect way.

## **Christmas Comes To Us**

Why did Jesus come?

John 3:16–17

Hope is the joyful expectation of good – that which is certain and coming. Hope is the trust in things that are right now unseen, but are going to be reality in the future. Godly hope draws us through our circumstance because there is definitely something better coming.

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” – Romans 15:13 (ESV)*

### **Discussion Questions/Reflections**

1. What challenges to hope have you experienced in your life?
2. How do you navigate between worldly hope (it might happen) and Godly hope (this will happen)?
3. Spend some time reflecting on the scriptures listed in the outline:
  - + How do these scriptures encourage you?
  - + What do they tell you about the heart and nature of God?
  - + How do you see God’s faithfulness portrayed in these passages?
  - + Are there other portions of scripture that encourage you to put your hope in God?
4. Jesus came at Christmas because God loves us so much, and desires to be reconciled to us. How does that impact your daily walk? What do you need to let God do to remind you of this?
5. In what areas of your life can you see that God has been faithful? What is the testimony of hope in your life?
6. In what areas of your life do you need God’s hope? Spend some time now inviting God into that place, and ask Him to reveal His plans and His love for you in that area.