



A SIX-WEEK CHURCH-WIDE STUDY ON HOPE



WE HAVE THIS HOPE AS AN ANCHOR OF OUR SOUL, FIRM AND SECURE.

Hebrews 6:19

You are about to embark on a journey of hope. This journey is designed for Care Groups at Island ECC, but it can also be used for personal study.

Each week's study corresponds directly to that week's sermon from the "Anchored" series and ends with two stories of hope: a historical testimony and a personal story from someone in our own church family.

One thing I have been learning recently is that hope is not cultivated alone. It is strengthened as we gather together, carry one another's burdens, and remind each other of the hope we have in Christ.

May you experience this all the more as you explore this hope in community.

Kevin Kusunoki
Pastor of Care Group Ministry

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SESSION ONE



ANCHORED HOPE: THE NEED FOR AN ANCHOR

OPENING REFLECTION

“We have this hope as an anchor of our soul, firm and secure.”

This promise, found in Hebrews 6:19, is the basis for this study. We all need hope – not only to understand it, but to experience it.

Life has a way of knocking us off balance. A medical diagnosis, financial crisis, fractured relationship, or the slow cultural winds of anxiety and doubt can leave us drifting into fear, isolation, and despair. When the waves get rough, we instinctively look for something to hold onto: bank accounts, careers, relationships, or self-sufficiency. These temporary anchors may soothe our anxiety for a while, but they quickly give way to further insecurity.

Hebrews 6:13-20 introduces a radically different kind of stability. God has not left us to navigate life at the mercy of the wind. He has provided an anchor for our souls – one that hooks upward into the unshakeable reality of heaven itself, holding us steady through the unpredictable circumstances of life. When our anchor holds in heaven, we can stand steady on earth.

START THE CONVERSATION

Choose 2-3 questions to begin.

- Approximately 30% of people suffer from motion sickness while on a boat.
Does that statistic hold true in your group? What does that feeling of instability feel like, and how do you manage it?
- Who is someone in your life who consistently shows steadiness in their faith?
- What is a minor or major storm in your life right now where you would love to find better stability?

ANCHOR IN THE WORD

I. THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S PROMISE

Read Hebrews 6:13-15 aloud.

In ancient times, it was common to make a legal covenant by swearing an oath to a higher authority. Since God is the ultimate authority, “He swore by Himself”. He went above what was necessary so His people could trust Him.

The author quotes Genesis 22:17, where God promises Abraham, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants”. This came after Abraham was told to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, before God provided a ram instead. Yet Abraham still had to wait patiently before the promise was fulfilled. He waited 25 years for Isaac’s birth, and decades more before the “many descendants” became true.

Discuss:

- What is a hope or promise that you have been waiting for a long time?
- How does this passage encourage you to continue to lean on the promises of God?

II. TWO UNCHANGEABLE THINGS

Read Hebrews 6:16-18 aloud.

God is deeply committed to giving us encouragement we can stand on. Human oaths establish truth, and God humbles Himself to use this human convention to accommodate our weakness and doubt.

The confidence of the believer rests on two distinct pillars: God’s promise and God’s oath. Neither can fail because it is impossible for God to lie.

Verse 18 also uses the image of “fled for refuge”, echoing the Old Testament Cities of Refuge in Numbers 35:9-15. These cities protected people from revenge-driven violence before a proper trial could be held. Hebrews pictures believers as refugees running away from judgement and running towards the safety of Christ.

Discuss:

- What stands out to you about the character of God from this passage?
- How does this picture of God and His actions towards you provide spiritual encouragement?
- What areas of your life, such as character flaws, thought life, or family sin patterns, have you “fled from” as a result of your faith?

III. THE ANCHOR AND THE VEIL

An anchor provides stability amid strong currents and crashing waves. Usually, it is dropped overboard so it can dig into the floor of the ocean or lake. But Hebrews gives us a picture of an anchor thrown up, mooring our souls directly to the throne of God.

In the Old Testament Tabernacle, the veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest could enter, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement, called Yom Kippur. By contrast, Jesus is our High Priest forever. His intercession is complete and final, not needing to be topped up annually.

Jesus is also described as a forerunner, a trailblazer who goes ahead to secure a position. His work ensures that we will eventually follow Him inside the Holy of Holies as well.

Discuss:

- What does Jesus' role as a "high priest forever" mean for your daily prayer life?
- How does this image of Jesus as a forerunner provide strength for your walk with God?

HOLD FAST

- From this passage, what stands out to you as especially encouraging or helpful in your walk with God?
- What practical actions help a believer "hold fast to the hope set before us" (v.18 ESV)?
- What are the "hope imposters" in your life – the ideas or objects you are most tempted to put your hope in?
- How would you counsel someone who might be tempted to overspiritualise hope in Christ? What is the balance between being responsible for our actions and emotions, while keeping our hope in Christ?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Choose one "hope imposter" you identified. Pay attention to when you reach for it, and practise holding fast to the hope set before you in Christ.

WISDOM FOR THE STORM

"Thanks to the anchor, or rather to the God who gave it to you, no storm has overwhelmed you."
Charles Spurgeon

"In the tempests and trials of life, his mind is calm as long as his hope of heaven is firm."
Albert Barnes

"Fasten the little vessel of your life to that great anchor, Christ, who has died, and who lives for you."
Alexander MacLaren

WITNESSES OF HOPE

Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer were two Christian aid workers captured and held by the Taliban in Afghanistan for 105 days. Arrested in August 2001 for teaching Christianity, their captivity spanned the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks. They faced psychological torment, solitary confinement, and the threat of execution before being rescued by Special Forces.

They later co-authored *Prisoners of Hope: The Story of Our Captivity and Freedom in Afghanistan*, echoing Zechariah 9:12: "Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double."

Their imprisonment was excruciating. They were interrogated, threatened with execution, and separated from their families and the outside world. They sustained their hope by singing worship songs, memorising Scripture, and praying together inside their cells to ward off despair. Their reliance on God allowed them to show kindness and composure to their guards, transforming their prison experience into an active testimony of faith.

Today, they both continue working for humanitarian relief and mobilising the church to care for the poor of the world.

STORIES OF HOPE

TETHERED TO THE ETERNAL

SELINA SOU

Growing up, I was naturally an optimist and someone who loved to encourage others. Over time, family and friends came to see me as a strong, resilient presence physically and emotionally. It felt natural for me to enter a profession dedicated to creating a safe space for people navigating the difficult terrains of life.

A few years ago, a heavy storm hit my family. My sister-in-law faced the rapid decline of a seven-year battle with cancer. Throughout that agonising season, I prayed continually and surrendered the situation to God. At the same time, we searched for treatment options overseas, hoping she might qualify for new clinical trials or medications, but in vain. In the process of trying to make sure everyone else was okay, I failed to recognise my own need for security and reassurance. Beneath the surface, the weight of fear, sadness and anxiety was quietly pulling me under.

God met me one morning during a devotional. As the narrator shared the message, “All is well”, something in me unlocked. I lay on the floor with my hands open, weeping. In that moment, I released all my emotions to God, who held me gently. He knew I was scared and helpless before I could register it. I experienced a deep sense of peace and security in Him – a realisation that while human solutions and efforts have limits, God is the only One who can truly offer this blessed assurance.

This season reshaped my faith. I realised that underneath all my frantic doing, I was desperately trying to find hope through finding a solution. Yet, while we do not stop doing our part, I was reminded again that our ultimate, anchored hope is found in Jesus alone. Human efforts have limits, and He is the only One who can truly provide the anchor for the soul promised in Hebrews 6:19 – a hope that is firm and secure. If God is our anchor, we cannot just admire Him from afar; we must actively tether our hearts to Him daily.

If you are currently navigating a storm, please know that you do not have to carry it alone. We are invited to step into His presence, tether our weary souls to the eternal hope of Christ, and rest in the only anchor that remains eternally steady.



SESSION TWO



ANCHORED RESILIENCE: THE DISCIPLINE OF HOLY GRIT

OPENING REFLECTION

Few character traits are as highly regarded as grit. Gritty people remain dedicated to a task, even when it becomes exhausting. While we often assume people are simply born with grit and confidence, this study highlights a powerful truth: grit is a discipline that can be actively cultivated.

To understand holy grit, we will look at three biblical examples: Joseph, Ruth, and Daniel. Each one shows a different component of resilience: perspective, commitment, and habit.

START THE CONVERSATION

Choose 2-3 questions to begin.

- What is a random skill you spent hours or years mastering just for fun?
- Who is the grittiest person you know, and what makes them so gritty?
- What is the difference between healthy grit and just being plain stubborn?

ANCHOR IN THE WORD

I. JOSEPH – TAKING THE LONG VIEW

Read Genesis 50:15-21 aloud.

Joseph's story began with betrayal. His brothers sold him into slavery. He was later falsely accused and thrown into prison. Yet through a remarkable series of events, Joseph rose to become second-in-command over Egypt and eventually provided food for his starving family.

When his brothers feared revenge after their father's death, Joseph looked back on years of slavery and imprisonment and saw God's hand: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."

Discuss:

- Why is it difficult to see "God's intention for good" while we are in the middle of our trials?
- Joseph does not deny that his brothers meant to harm him. How does holy grit differ from toxic positivity or pretending everything is fine?
- Think of a past situation where someone intended harm to you, but God ultimately used it for good. How did navigating that situation build resilience in you?

II. RUTH – UNYIELDING COMMITMENT

Read Ruth 1:11-18 aloud.

Ruth faced a bleak future after her husband died. As a Moabite woman, she had every cultural and legal right to return to the security of her homeland. Naomi even pleaded with her to leave. Instead, Ruth chose costly loyalty: "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay."

Discuss:

- In verse 14, Orpah leaves. How do you stay committed when you see others quit and suddenly find yourself the only one left standing?
- Looking at verses 16-17, Ruth leaves no escape clause in her commitment. Why are we often tempted to give ourselves an "out" when we make commitments today?
- Naomi does not just give Ruth permission to leave; she repeatedly pushes her away. How do you maintain commitment when a situation or person is practically begging you to quit?

III. DANIEL – THE ROUTINE OF GRIT

Read Daniel 6:10-12 aloud.

Daniel demonstrates holy grit in the small, mundane tasks of life. As a teenager, he was taken to Babylon in exile. Yet even at the height of his political success, Daniel never abandoned his private, daily habit of prayer. His routine of faithfulness was so consistent that his enemies knew exactly where he would be and what he would be doing.

Discuss:

- When daily faith habits become inconvenient or awkward, what excuses do we usually make to hide our faith or blend in?
- Daniel prayed three times a day "just as he had done before". Why is it hard to maintain a daily spiritual habit when life is going well?
- If your coworkers or family members secretly monitored your private schedule, what consistent habits would they find?

HOLD FAST

- Which component of grit is hardest for you to maintain: perspective, commitment, or habit? Why?
- In all three examples, holy grit was not about relying on personal willpower to survive. It was about surrendering the ultimate outcome to God. In what area of your life do you need to stop trying to “grit your teeth and bear it”, and instead surrender the outcome to the Lord?
- Biblical grit is community-dependent. What is one step you can take this week to share your burdens with others?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

COMPONENT	BIBLICAL EXAMPLE	PERSONAL RESPONSE
Perspective	Joseph	Where do I need to take the long view and trust God’s hand?
Commitment	Ruth	Where am I tempted to quit or look for an “out”?
Habit	Daniel	What daily faith habit needs to become more consistent?

WISDOM FOR THE STORM

“Resilience is not the ability to grit your teeth and bear it; it is the willingness to fall into the hands of God and let Him carry you.”

Elisabeth Elliot

WITNESSES OF HOPE

Elisabeth Elliot’s life offers a powerful picture of holy grit. In 1956, Elisabeth and her husband Jim, along with their 10-month-old daughter, were living in Ecuador ministering to the Quichua tribe. Jim and four other missionaries later attempted to make contact with the unreached Auca tribe. Tragically, just a few days into their mission, they were speared to death, leaving Elisabeth a widow in a foreign land.

Instead of fleeing, Elisabeth remained and continued ministering to the Quichua tribe through medical care and Bible translation. She even opened her home to two fleeing Auca women. Two years later, she moved into the Auca village with her daughter – the village of the men who had killed her husband.

For two years, she learned their language, cared for their medical needs, and preached the love of Christ. In the midst of her suffering, one line from a poem by late 19th-century author and musician Minnie Kenney Paull guided her: “Do the next thing.” This quiet, daily obedience became the blueprint for her resilience.

STORIES OF HOPE

KEEP SEEKING

ANTHONY LO

Work is always a stressful topic for the majority of Hong Kong people. An additional struggle for working Christians is to live out our faith and to trust God despite challenging circumstances.

In the first few months of 2026, work was very tough for me with a couple of new projects and increased tension between my supervisor and me. I worked hard, trying to prove myself, but the harder I tried, the more lost I felt. Every workday felt like a battle, and I constantly felt that I was being judged for every email or piece of work that I sent out.

In the midst of my struggles, I was reminded to seek God first and hold Him tight:

Keep seeking God through prayer – when every day’s worries and stress emptied my strength, my prayer life was built stronger as I had to ask God to give me my daily bread, renew my strength, and trust that He would provide for me each day.

Keep seeking God through His people – when I was tempted to hide myself under the disguise of rest, I was grateful for the connections with brothers and sisters from my Logos care group and Shift Exchange fellowship, who kept me in check and let me know that they supported me and prayed for me.

Keep seeking God through His Word – when my inner voice screamed with self-criticism, self-doubt, guilt and shame for my imperfections, my daily devotion on God’s Word reminded me that I am God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, and that I am working for the Lord and serving my neighbour through my work.

Through these disciplines, I was encouraged to persevere with hope in Jesus, who stepped into suffering, understands my struggles, provides daily, and always remains faithful. If you are also going through a tough situation, seek Jesus and you will find Him!

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. Isaiah 43:1-3



SESSION THREE



ANCHORED FREEDOM: THE FREEDOM OF SELF-FORGETFULNESS

OPENING REFLECTION

Self-forgetfulness does not mean thinking less of yourself in a harsh way. It means thinking of yourself less often. In our modern world, we spend much of our energy protecting our image, worrying about what others think, and trying to prove our worth. This constant self-focus brings anxiety and pride.

Our sinful nature draws us towards caring more about ourselves than anyone or anything else. Modern technology can further perpetuate this self-focused lifestyle. Jonathan Haidt notes that constant digital interruptions make it difficult “to think, focus, forget ourselves enough to care about others, and build closer relationships”.

True freedom comes when we lose our obsession with self. When we are full of God’s love, our ego stops demanding the spotlight. We become free to love others without constantly asking, “What about me?”

START THE CONVERSATION

Choose 2-3 questions to begin.

- Who is someone you admire who is accomplished or successful, but does not often speak of their success?
- What is one skill your parents wanted you to develop, but you resisted or secretly hated?
- If you could immediately be excellent at something you currently have no skill in, what would it be?

ANCHOR IN THE WORD

I. PAUL'S BACKGROUND

Read Philippians 3:4-6 aloud.

Before coming to faith, Paul cared deeply about his reputation and record. His identity was tied to heritage, religious group, training, and good deeds. His bragging rights were impressive, but they produced arrogance and superiority.

Acts 22:3 also tells us that Paul “studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors”. As a graduate, so to speak, Paul was proud of his training and spiritual value system.

Discuss:

- What kinds of background, training, success, or reputation are people tempted to build their identity on today?
- How can good things become sources of arrogance or superiority in us?

II. PAUL'S CONVERSION

Read Acts 22:6-11 aloud.

When Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus, everything changed. Paul realised that his own good deeds could not save him. He encountered mercy that transformed his life. Though he did not deserve the love of God, God extended forgiveness and freedom.

Paul's conversion was dramatic, but most people's journeys may be more gradual, investigative, or a childhood faith that takes on deeper meaning in adult life. However God orchestrates our spiritual journey, it is equally glorious and transformative.

Discuss:

- What stands out to you about the mercy God showed Paul?
- How does Paul's story challenge the idea that our record or reputation is what makes us acceptable to God?

III. LIVING WITHOUT SELF-OBSESSION

Read Philippians 3:7-8 aloud.

Paul's perspective on his accomplishments changed greatly after coming to faith. He was not embarrassed about his past; he simply learned to rightly value his background and achievements compared with knowing Christ.

Paul writes that we must “consider loss” those accomplishments that could steal our affection for God or produce pride. The Greek word hegeomai carries the idea of leading or guiding with authority. This is not casual reflection. It is declaring a new status and position.

Discuss:

- What does Paul's “before and after” teach us about self-forgetfulness?

HOLD FAST

- What are some areas in your life that might need to be “considered loss” like Paul did so they no longer steal your affection from God?
- To nurture a self-forgetful posture, which of the following practices grabs your attention and can be put into action?

PRACTICE	PERSONAL RESPONSE
Look at the cross	Remember that God already loves you fully. You do not need to earn your worth or hide your flaws.
Know your patterns	What areas produce pride in you? What subjects do you love to talk about because you appear smart?
Pray for others	Try shifting your prayers away from only your needs. Pray for the joy and healing of people around you.
Serve quietly	Do good things for others without needing praise or thanks. There is power in anonymity.
Speak words of life	Disrupt the tendency to seek validation by verbally encouraging others. Compliment often. Send an encouraging text. Express gratitude quickly.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Choose one practice from the table and put it into action this week. Notice how it shifts your focus from self-protection to love for God and others.

WISDOM FOR THE STORM

“The self-forgetful person would never be hurt particularly badly by criticism. It would not devastate them, it would not keep them up late, it would not bother them. Why? Because a person who is devastated by criticism is putting too much value on what other people think, on other people’s opinions.”

“The truly gospel-humble person is a self-forgetful person whose ego is just like his or her toes. It just works. It does not draw attention to itself. The toes just work; the ego just works. Neither draws attention to itself.”

Tim Keller, The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness

WITNESSES OF HOPE

William Wilberforce (1759–1833) is best remembered for his tireless efforts to abolish slavery in the British Empire. A closer look at his life reveals that this came after years of failure. It required 20 years of careful bipartisan cooperation in parliament before he saw his efforts pay off.

When Wilberforce became a Christian, he was already deeply entrenched in politics. He wondered whether God might want him to leave politics and join vocational ministry. His mentor, John Newton, encouraged him to use his newfound faith to guide his political career. Wilberforce remained in politics, focusing on the abolition of slavery.

Self-forgetfulness allowed Wilberforce to give God the glory for the eventual victory, build alliances across political divides, and endure relentless opposition. Getting his ego out of the way proved to be key – a formula that only deep faith in Christ can supply.

STORIES OF HOPE

FROM SELF-FORGETFULNESS TO UNDERSTANDING SELF

PEARL CHAN

There are biblical teachings that seem counter-intuitive, such as, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35) and “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Self-forgetfulness is no different. It is the antithesis of psychological studies that have self-evaluation as the central theme. Is a focus on self egoistical and self-absorbed?

It is my understanding that to forget self is to think and look beyond oneself. It does not negate the importance of self. After all, the commandment to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:39) places loving self as fundamental to knowing how to love others.

C.S. Lewis wrote that self-forgetfulness is, in essence, humility. Tim Keller contended that if we truly understood what Christ has done for us, we can live a free life of joyful, selfless service.

Accordingly, self-forgetfulness is evidence of the transformative grace of God in the redeemed life of the believer. So is self-forgetfulness not a state to achieve, but an on-going working out (Philippians 2:12) of a mindset to nurture and a habit to develop?

A harsh lesson to “forget” self came in one of my toughest, esteem-stripping life events. Anger, sadness, guilt, self-judgement, and a sense of inadequacy were my acute emotional responses. I almost took solace in them while ruminating on and on! Soon, I realised the self-absorption in these emotions, while valid, had put me in a mental and emotional rut. In honest questions raised through prayers and reflecting on His Word, I was convicted that the self-absorbed focus had to go: it was downward-spiralling and hopeless!

Our Gracious Heavenly Father has made it clear that there is no condemnation for those in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:1), and that freedom – from the misconstrued values and self-importance I held – can be mine. It was my choice to make by taking Him at His Word and looking to Him for wisdom and direction.

Through the forgiveness granted by Jesus’ death on the cross (1 John 1:9), I just need to confess to God, trust and let go. Of entitlements, of the need to justify, and of presumed outcomes! I can choose to surrender to Him who is sovereign and faithful.

I live with the tension of self-awareness and self-forgetfulness daily. A work in progress!



SESSION FOUR



ANCHORED STRENGTH: THE STRENGTH OF VULNERABILITY

OPENING REFLECTION

Image management is a real problem. Many people spend a great deal of time and energy caring about their public persona. Through carefully curated social media posts, selective sharing, and habitual management of other people's opinions, we can end up lonely and isolated.

Undiscerning oversharing is not the answer, but neither is a self-protective, mysterious existence. Scripture gives us guidance on a healthy and secure balance – an unexpected strength that comes through wise vulnerability.

START THE CONVERSATION

Choose 2-3 questions to begin.

- What three words would your friends use to describe your personality?
- How would you describe the level of emotional intimacy in your family of origin? Were words of encouragement shared? Were family struggles talked about?
- How has this family background affected you? Do you tend to mimic it, or react against it and try to create a different vibe?

ANCHOR IN THE WORD

I. OPEN WIDE YOUR HEARTS

Read 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 aloud.

Paul modelled open and affirming communication with the Corinthians, but they had not reciprocated. He tells them, “open wide your hearts also”.

For many, failure is perceived as weakness. We learn to present only the best versions of ourselves because we fear that admitting weakness or fear will allow others to take advantage. For others, there may be willingness to open up, but little experience or self-awareness to do it well.

Discuss:

- What makes it difficult for people to “open wide” their hearts today?
- Where do you tend to fall: self-protection, oversharing, or a lack of self-awareness?

II. THE NUDGE TOWARDS VULNERABILITY

The book of Proverbs gives us wisdom for healthy communication, authentic vulnerability, and not cheap oversharing.

SCRIPTURE	PROMPT
Proverbs 12:25 <i>Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.</i>	When you feel overwhelmed with worry, how easy or hard is it to share your burden with someone else? What makes a “kind word” powerful in lifting that weight?
Proverbs 17:17 <i>A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.</i>	How does a true friend show love differently when life is easy compared with when hard times come?
Proverbs 27:9 <i>Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice.</i>	When has honest, caring advice from a friend brought joy or direction to your heart?
Proverbs 18:1 <i>An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends and against all sound judgment starts quarrels.</i>	Why does pulling away from others often lead to pride, selfishness, and arguments?
Proverbs 27:17 <i>As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.</i>	How can a difficult or sharp conversation be helpful instead of harmful?

III. THE CAUTIONS TO HEED

We need to open up, but we also need discretion and wisdom in knowing when and how.

SCRIPTURE	PROMPT
Proverbs 29:11 <i>Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end.</i>	Why is it tempting to “give full vent” immediately? How can we practise bringing “calm in the end” before speaking?
Proverbs 11:13 <i>A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.</i>	What character traits or behaviours help you know if someone is a “safe space” for your private thoughts?
Proverbs 13:3 <i>Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.</i>	What does the need to “guard” your lips reveal about what is going on inside your heart and mind? How does this apply to digital communication?
Proverbs 20:19 <i>A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much.</i>	Why is a person’s treatment of other people’s secrets a warning sign for how they will handle your vulnerability?
Proverbs 25:9-10 <i>If you take a matter to court with your neighbour, do not betray another’s confidence...</i>	Have you ever shared too much too quickly and regretted it, or had a secret exposed? What did that teach you about choosing your inner circle?

HOLD FAST

- Which proverb nudges you most towards greater vulnerability?
- Which proverb gives you the clearest caution about wisdom and discretion?
- What would wise vulnerability look like for you in this season?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Identify one safe person you can be more honest with this week, and one area where you need to guard your words more carefully.

WISDOM FOR THE STORM

Speaking about the temptation to allow hurts to cause us to retreat and isolate, Mark Twain said:

“We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove-lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove-lid again – and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one anymore.”

WITNESSES OF HOPE

In the book of Judges, Gideon was an unlikely and slightly unwilling hero. He was plagued by inferiority and insecurity, allowing his “labels” to define him more than his relationship with God.

He questions the work of God: “Pardon me, my lord... but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?” (Judges 6:13). He questions his own adequacy: “How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family” (Judges 6:15). He also asks for a sign that it is really God speaking to him (Judges 6:17).

Gideon did not hide his worries or bring pretence to his relationship with God. He brought his insecurities honestly to God. In God’s gentle kindness, He allowed Gideon to eavesdrop on the enemy and be encouraged by what he heard. When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshipped, then returned to the camp with courage.

Gideon was honest with himself and with God. God gladly met his weakness with evidence to bolster his faith. His vulnerability became a path to boldness and strength.

STORIES OF HOPE

SHARED VULNERABILITY: FROM FEAR TO HOPE

SOPHIE IP

If you had told me five years ago that one of my best friends would die of cancer right after her birthday, I would have walked away offended, secretly praying it was a lie. Except it wasn't.

Her diagnosis led us down a three-year path of constant queries about treatments and cures. Spiritually, I grappled with two conflicting beliefs: that God, the almighty Healer, would miraculously heal her, or that His plans were undecipherable and I should wait patiently, even if it meant losing her.

As a coping mechanism, I tried my best to stay composed and spoke of her casually, as if she just had a mild cold, thinking it would help our community navigate the unknown without causing any emotional turbulence. But I was wrong.

Two years into her treatment, her prognosis turned drastically grim. That was when I realised no one could do this alone. In retrospect, it was God's loving hands that drew us, brothers and sisters in Christ, together, and embracing each other's vulnerabilities made all the difference. Grieving the loss of a common friend was the catalyst for admitting our brokenness and hopelessness.

It started with praying together. During one hospital visit, someone decided to wrap things up with a prayer. I had dreaded it, fearing I wouldn't be able to contain my tears. To my surprise, articulating my fears out loud made them shrink; faced together, these troubles no longer towered over us. Because as much as there was shared fear, there was shared hope.

It was this collective hope that made the discussions of death lighter. It was as if a weight had been lifted from our chests, and we ditched the walk on eggshells to be honest, barefaced. We no longer felt the need to gloss over the bitterness and pain, for we knew that despite the forthcoming separation, God was with us, and from Him alone is life everlasting. From then on, the notion of death also entailed a future reunion.

In her bedridden days, my friend shared this prayer: "May the test you've faced be a testimony to your faith, the mess become a message of hope, and the 'Why, God?' become a 'Wow, God.'"

With hope, vulnerability became our shared language that led us to see God and find incredible strength. As Hebrews 6:19 says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."



SESSION FIVE



ANCHORED CONFIDENCE: THE STABILITY OF A FAITH IDENTITY

OPENING REFLECTION

Early in childhood, adults ask what we want to be when we grow up. As the years go on, those choices can close in on us and squeeze us into a box that forms our identity. As adults, almost every new introduction eventually includes the question, “And what do you do for a living?” We answer, “I’m a _____.”

And there it is. We have given ourselves a label and carved out an identity. We also take personality tests to understand who we are, placing ourselves in neat categories so others know how we tick. But people change. Identities change. What we once thought defined us can disappear. If our identity is built on what we do or accomplish, it will always be vulnerable to change.

Therefore, we need to be anchored in our true identity – not the one we build, but the one we receive from God.

START THE CONVERSATION

Choose 2-3 questions to begin.

- What label or identity did you have, or strive for, growing up? The smart one? The athletic one? The quiet one? The artistic one?
- What are some ways people today try to define who they are? Which of these can become unhealthy or misleading?
- If you could not mention your job, family role, nationality, hobbies, or accomplishments, how would you introduce yourself to someone new?

ANCHOR IN THE WORD

I. THE IDENTITY WE CONSTRUCT

Read Luke 22:31-34 aloud.

Peter was confident that he knew who he was: “Lord, I am ready to go with You to prison and to death.” Yet Jesus knew Peter would fail, and still said, “I have prayed for you... that your faith may not fail.”

Peter’s brave, fearless, loyal identity was about to be exposed as something he had constructed for himself.

Discuss:

- What does Peter’s response reveal about the identity he had built for himself?
- What does Jesus’ prayer for Peter tell us about the difference between an identity based on our own strength and one rooted in Jesus?

II. IDENTITY UNDER PRESSURE

Read Luke 22:54-62 aloud.

Earlier that night, Peter was willing to identify himself as Jesus’ disciple. But when pressure came, he denied knowing Him three times. When Jesus looked directly at Peter, Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

Discuss:

- What changed for Peter, and what does this reveal about how easily our identity can be shaped by circumstances?
- What are some situations where we might be tempted to hide or downplay our identity as followers of Jesus?
- What do you think Peter was grieving in that moment: his failure, the loss of his self-image, his relationship with Jesus, or something else?

III. THE IDENTITY WE RECEIVE

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10 aloud.

After Christ’s resurrection, Jesus restored Peter. Peter later writes that our identity does not come from ourselves, but is given to us by God. We are chosen, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, and the people of God.

This truth gives us rest. We do not need to fabricate another identity to make ourselves special or important. We can rest knowing we already belong to God.

Read 1 Peter 5:10 aloud.

Discuss:

- Which phrase from 1 Peter 2:9-10 is most meaningful to you right now?
- How does receiving your identity from God bring rest?
- How does 1 Peter 5:10 connect identity with being made “strong, firm and steadfast”?

HOLD FAST

- What part of your identity are you most tempted to build on or protect: career, success, relationships, abilities, reputation, or something else?
- Where are you currently feeling pressure to prove yourself, be enough, or maintain a certain image?
- If your circumstances, accomplishments, or roles were taken away, what would remain true about who you are in Christ?
- Is there an identity, label, or “inner vow” you may need to surrender to God so you can more fully receive who He says you are?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Choose one label or identity you are tempted to protect. This week, practise reminding yourself that you are already chosen, God’s special possession, and a child of God.

WISDOM FOR THE STORM

“I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.”

John Newton

“The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.”

C.S. Lewis

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

1 John 3:1

WITNESSES OF HOPE

Rich Mullins was one of the most influential Christian singer-songwriters of his generation. He wrote songs that became well known in churches around the world, including “Awesome God” and “Sometimes by Step”. He gained notoriety, fame, and success, but he never let himself be defined by those categories.

He was uncomfortable with the celebrity label placed on him. With the financial windfall from his work, he asked his church elder board to manage his income, choosing to live on an average salary and give the rest to the church. He did not want his identity to be “the famous Christian musician”. He wanted to be Rich, the child of God.

Mullins was also honest about his weaknesses and struggles. His honesty was not a celebration of sin, but a recognition that his confidence could not ultimately rest in his own goodness. His life offers a picture of someone fighting to separate his identity from his accomplishments. He reminds us that confidence does not come from being successful or talented, but from being anchored in our identity as a child of God.

He knew that his only identity and stability was in the arms of Jesus.

STORIES OF HOPE

THINKING GOD'S THOUGHTS AFTER HIM ZACHARY LEUNG

My faith in Jesus was anchored to a rock-solid zero for half a century. But some scientific data about the universe ignited a passion in me to rethink the whole question of God. As a data scientist by training and a former professor, I was equipped to start my own personal research project. After two years of study, I decided to accept Jesus into my life.

I was happy to be a scientist and a Christian, intuitively believing that science and Christianity could easily co-exist. But a conversation with a church leader put a power struggle inside me. With all good intentions, he taught me that Church and science were different matters, and that our thoughts about them should be kept separate. But being a scientist is 24/7. Being a Christian is also 24/7. Was this separation idea asking me to be split in two? Is faith in Jesus so delicate that it cannot withstand science? Someone even warned that science might distance me from Jesus.

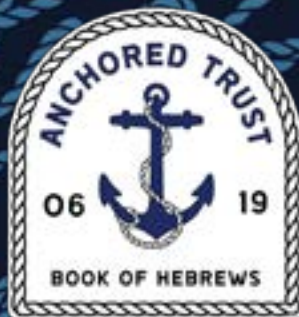
I struggled, but I knew that they were wrong. The Bible begins by declaring that God created the universe (Genesis 1:1). Jesus tells us that He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). How could science conflict with the church if Jesus is the truth who created the universe?

Fast forward, I attended a seminary to explore the relationship between science and theology. I learned that God gave us two books: the Bible and the universe (Romans 1:20). The Bible records God's words, and the universe demonstrates God's works. After seven years of study, ranging from theology and archaeology to philosophy and the sciences, from astronomy to zoology, I learned that not only are there no contradictions between science and theology, but there is indeed great harmony between them. I might have put Jesus to a test, but this test was anchored in Him (1 John 4:1). I might have had doubts, but Jesus welcomed the doubting Thomas (John 20:27).

All truth is God's truth. The hope I have in God anchors me not only through real life, but also through real science. It gives me confidence that my identity as a Christian does not need to be separated from my identity as a scientist. A great scientist in history, Johannes Kepler, explained that scientific research was about "thinking God's thoughts after Him". Isn't that beautiful? Aren't we to think God's thoughts after Him when we read the Bible? Aren't we to think God's thoughts after Him in whatever we say and do, 24/7?



SESSION SIX



ANCHORED TRUST: THE WISDOM OF WAITING

OPENING REFLECTION

For modern people living in a fast-paced city like Hong Kong, waiting is not something we desire. We often consider it a waste of time. Yet waiting is simply a fact of life. Some people make the most of their waiting, while others waste the waiting itself.

In this study, we will look at the life of Paul the Apostle and how he seized opportunities in his time of waiting. Waiting is not a detour from God's plan; it is often the very path God uses to prepare us for His purpose.

START THE CONVERSATION

Choose 2-3 questions to begin.

- Think of a time when you were stuck in a long line, caught in a traffic jam, or faced a delayed flight. What was your initial reaction, and how did you cope?
- Share a story of when you had to wait for something important: a job offer, a relationship, or a medical result. What was the hardest part of that waiting?
- Have you ever made a hasty decision because you were tired of waiting? Looking back, what did you learn?

ANCHOR IN THE WORD

I. LESSON FROM PAUL THE APOSTLE

Activity: Using the map of Paul's first (in yellow) and second (in red) missionary journeys, locate these key places: Antioch in Syria, Cyprus, Galatia, Pisidian Antioch, Phrygia, Mysia, Bithynia, Troas, and Macedonia.



source: overviewbible.com

Paul was a man of action, driven by a passion to spread the Gospel. Yet his story shows that spiritual growth often happens in interruptions.

II. THE FIRST DELAY – INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Read Acts 15:36-41 aloud.

STEP	PROMPT
The Conflict	Who was involved in the sharp disagreement, and what was the issue?
The Consequence	This conflict delayed Paul's plan. The church would have been involved, and it took time for Paul and the church in Antioch to form a new team. The impatient Paul was forced to wait.
The Perspective	Put yourself in Paul's shoes. He had a clear strategy, a plan, and a great team, yet conflict split the team. What emotions might he have felt? What questions might he have asked God?
Personal Connection	What lesson can you learn from this incident?

Finally, Paul formed a new team with Silas. Along the way, Timothy joined them. After visiting the churches he had planted before, Paul was ready to relaunch his journey. However, his hope was delayed again.

III. THE SECOND DELAY – A CLOSED DOOR

Read Acts 16:6-10 aloud.

STEP	PROMPT
The Observation	Paul and his team made two attempts to go in a specific direction. What happened each time?
The Surprise	The Holy Spirit "kept them from preaching the Word" in Asia and "would not allow them" to go into Bithynia. Why might this be surprising to Paul? What are some common assumptions about God opening or closing doors?
Paul's Response	When the doors kept closing, did Paul stop and wait passively? What did he do instead? What does this teach us about passive waiting and active preparation?
The Spiritual Insight	With the benefit of hindsight, what was the real reason God was closing these doors? How might this change how we view unanswered prayers or unmet expectations?

IV. THE HEART OF WAITING – ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS

In times of waiting, what you are thinking in your heart and doing with your hands will determine the results of your waiting.

For each verse, identify one key word or phrase, then discuss: “What would this look like in my real life this week?”

VERSE	ONE-WORD SUMMARY	WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN MY LIFE RIGHT NOW
Hebrews 11:1 <i>Faith is confidence in what we hope for</i>		
Isaiah 55:8-9 <i>God’s ways are higher than our ways</i>		
Psalms 46:10 <i>Be still, and know that I am God</i>		
1 Peter 5:6 <i>Humble yourselves under God’s mighty hand</i>		
Philippians 4:6-7 <i>Do not be anxious, but present your requests to God</i>		
Luke 9:23-24 <i>Deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Me</i>		
1 Thessalonians 5:11 <i>Encourage one another and build each other up</i>		

HOLD FAST

- Looking at the seven attitudes and actions above, which comes most naturally to you, and which is most challenging? Why?
- Is there a specific area of your life where you feel stuck or are waiting on God? What do you sense He might be saying to you through this study?
- Based on this study, what is one concrete thing you will do differently this week to make your waiting more productive and God-honouring?
- Break into pairs or small groups. Share one specific thing you are waiting for, and pray for each other, asking God for the grace to trust Him in the waiting.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

If helpful, categorise your waiting this week:

TYPE OF DELAY	WHAT IT MAY REQUIRE
The Conflict Delay, like Paul and Barnabas	Reconciliation, forgiveness, or a tough conversation
The Closed Door Delay, like the Holy Spirit’s prohibition	Discernment and trust that God has a better plan
The Growth Delay, like John Sung (see next page)	Active preparation through study, prayer, or skill-building

WISDOM FOR THE STORM

“I am sure that God keeps no one waiting unless He sees that it is good for him to wait.”

C.S. Lewis

When the Chinese Mao bamboo, also known as Moso bamboo, is first planted, there is virtually nothing to see for the first few years. Around the fifth year, it may “suddenly” grow up to 80 feet within six weeks. What is visible is spectacular, but what is invisible is even more amazing. During the first few “waiting” years, the bamboo grows its underground root system so wide and strong that visible growth becomes possible.

WITNESSES OF HOPE

Sung Shang Chieh, or John Sung, was an instrumental pastor and evangelist in China and Southeast Asia in the early part of the 20th century. He grew up in a Christian family, and his father was a pastor.

Sung pursued graduate studies in the US and received his PhD in Chemistry from Ohio State University in 1926. Despite his excellent academic record, he was convinced that God had called him into ministry.

While studying at Union Theological Seminary, he had a powerful spiritual experience that he called his spiritual birthday. With newfound joy and excitement, he began to preach fervently to his peers and even the lecturers. The seminary considered him insane and confined him in an asylum for 193 days.

This confinement forced Sung into a “waiting mode”. Yet he seized the opportunity and did not waste a day. During that time, he read the Bible cover to cover 40 times. This waiting became God’s grace for him to build his biblical foundation.

With help from the Chinese Consulate, Sung was released and returned to China. On the way home, he threw his academic awards and certificates into the sea, except his doctoral diploma, which he kept for his father. His ministry later grew from China to Southeast Asia, bringing many people to Christ. Towards the end of his life, he contracted intestinal tuberculosis, but continued to preach despite the pain. He died at the age of 42.

STORIES OF HOPE

HELD BY THE ANCHOR: HOPE IN LIFE’S TRANSITION BERNARD CHANG

For many years, life moved along a familiar track: work, responsibility, church, service, and routine. During COVID, that rhythm was interrupted. What first felt like disruption became a season of searching. I began asking: Where is God leading me? How do I move from success to significance?

That season stretched me because waiting exposed what I had been anchored to. Position, achievement, reward, recognition, and professional identity can appear secure, but they cannot hold the soul in uncertain waters. The world may offer temporary confidence, but not lasting peace; comfort, but not true freedom.

In that waiting, God reminded me that hope is the foundation of life – not optimism, but hope rooted in His unchanging nature. His Word became an anchor dropped deep into my soul. As circumstances shifted, Christ remained steady. Through Scripture, prayer, Bible Study Fellowship, and quiet moments in nature, God reminded me that He is faithful, sovereign, and good.

I began to understand that true grit is perseverance strengthened by God. True freedom includes release from the need to prove myself. True strength often begins with surrender, not control. True confidence is knowing I belong to Christ. True patience is trusting God’s timing while He forms something deeper within me.

Given this renewed mindset, and with my wife’s faithful support, including our daily morning prayers spoken openly before God, we sensed it was time to make a bold move. It was not simply a career decision, but a step of faith, trusting Christ, our anchor, to hold us as we moved into the second half of life. In 2024, I stepped away from partnership in a global architectural firm and entered a new season, pursuing art as part of my calling.

Through the lens of Revelation, my paintings seek to reflect the gospel in a fallen world. They address global warming and climate change not only as environmental crises, but also as spiritual realities affecting cities, nature, and humanity. Through destruction and renewal, darkness and light, crisis and resilience, I hope to express creation’s brokenness and redemption’s promise. Revelation lifts my eyes to Christ: His victory, justice, redemption, resurrection, and the promise of eternity through Him.

To anyone waiting: go deep with God. The surface may feel uncertain, but Christ is a firm anchor. Rooted in Him, waiting becomes wisdom, resilience, and quiet strength.

