What am I HOPING FOR?
What am I hoping for?

We live in a world full of uncertainty. Job loss, injuries, a family crisis, a loved one passing away ... things like this can happen at any moment and change our world forever. Do we just cope with it and get on with life? How should Christians react to life’s uncertainty?

The Bible says the answer is hope. This isn’t flimsy ‘wishful’ thinking. It’s not an “I hope I get that new DVD boxset for Christmas” kind of hope.

The hope the Bible tells us to have is one of confident expectation. In the Bible, the apostle Paul
reminded the church in Ephesus about their life before they knew God: “At that time you were without Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world.” (Eph. 2:12).

The last phrase is crucial. They had “no hope” because they were “without God in the world”. Yet those who trust God do have hope. The basis of hope is not a theory, wishful thinking or working ourselves into the ground. Hope is based in a Person: God.

The real hope God offers isn’t simply ‘hoping’ everything will turn out alright in the end. It is about knowing what God has promised us and being certain that He will deliver on His promises. Paul wants us to understand hope is a reality rooted in God Himself.
So what is this hope?

We all worry about many different things. But perhaps the one thing that everyone fears is death. The Bible says “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement” (Heb. 9:27).

Death is an enemy that we can’t defeat on our own. The Bible says death (and the judgement of God) is the correct penalty for our sin.

But Jesus came to earth to receive God’s judgement for us, die in our place and rise to new life three days later. He took the fear of death and replaced it with the certainty of new life after we die. Jesus promised a place in heaven to all who trust Him (John 14:1-3). Death is no longer the end; it is just the beginning:

_Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead._ —1 Peter 1:3

The hope of this new life changes not only how we view death, but also our lives now and everything in them. Our lives on earth are not just about what happens while we’re here. Paul wrote that “our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious
body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” (Phil. 3:20-21). It is so certain that we will be with Jesus after we die, that we are already called “citizens of heaven”.

This means that the focus of our lives isn’t just ‘today’ or the problems of today, but on the promise that we belong to God. No matter what we may face in this life, or what we may have to go through or suffer, we will be given new life (and new perfect bodies) in heaven. Jesus, who has defeated our great enemy, has the power to do this.

This safe, unbreakable relationship with God is the basis for hope, which is real and expectant confidence. It is because of His love for us that He sent Jesus, His Son, to die in our place and pay for our wrongs. We cannot please God on our own, but He has done everything necessary to make us worthy of heaven and to assure us that we will receive a welcome into His home after we die. We will not enter heaven based on our own merit or work, but because God delights in us and loves us enough to rescue us from sin. Our salvation relies on God and the work He has done on our behalf through Christ, not on our work. This is why our hope and confidence is in Him.

[4] WHAT AM I HOPING FOR?
So what does it actually look like to live with hope?

Lives of hope rely on God: Paul said, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13). The only way we can “abound” (or overflow) in hope is by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we trust Jesus, God puts His Spirit in us so that we are joined 100% to God every minute of every day. We become His and He calls us His own children.

Just as we need God to defeat death for us and bring us into heaven, so too do we need Him to help us live every day. His Spirit helps us read the Bible and pray so we can get to know Him better and grow in confidence about who He is and what He has promised us.

Relying on God will help us change our point of view on everything. When we face things we feel unable to cope with, we will discover that God is more than enough. He can pull us through the toughest times, keeping our eyes on the promise of being with Him in heaven whilst He makes us more and more like Himself every day.
Lives of hope are brave: God is the only one who stays the same in an uncertain world. Knowing this can help us live bold lives! We don’t need to live in fear of anything. In a letter to the church in Corinth, Paul explained that we can confidently show others the character and love of God, saying “since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12). Our hope is that God will give new life to everyone who trusts Jesus. Being confident of this truth, we can seek to share it openly with those we know, rather than shying away from questions about our faith.

Christians are like “letter[s] from Christ” (2 Cor. 3:3). People should be able to look at us and see that we belong to God. We may face sickness, job loss, broken relationships and any other number of painful things, but none of these things need shake our hope in God! Paul himself suffered many things whilst sharing the hope of Christ, including beatings and imprisonment. Yet he told the church in Philippi:

The things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

—Philippians 1:12-14 (emphasis added)
We do not have to approach challenges, problems or opposition with dread or despair. We can live with confident expectation in God’s provision and love. Even the bad times and trials can be used by Him to bring others into His kingdom. No matter what happens, our confidence in God can allow us to bravely share our faith, even in difficult or overwhelming circumstances.

**Lives of hope keep going:** When things are overwhelming and we feel helpless, we don’t need to give up! “We also glory in [trials], knowing that [trials produce] perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Rom. 5:3–5).

This means that as we keep on trusting God, despite the difficulties we go through, He’ll help us keep going (persevering) to become more like He is: patient, kind, loving, etc. (Gal. 5:22-23). As we see His character developing in us and in our attitudes, we will become more and more confident that we belong to Him and that our lives are in His hands. Even the difficult times will help us know God better and gain a stronger trust in His promises.

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*Our hope is that God will give new life to everyone who trusts Jesus.*
Because Jesus became a man on earth, He understands our weaknesses and struggles better than we realise. He faced hunger, exhaustion, rejection, betrayal, grief and false accusations. We are told, therefore, to “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). God understands what it is to go through hard times. He knows how to care for us and provide for our needs. We can come to Him with every burden we carry.

At the time, trials may feel impossible. But God will always stay with us and help us so that we can look back and say: “we are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; [confused], but not in despair; persecuted, but not [abandoned]; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-9). God is “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Eph. 3:20). Our hope is our certainty that God will bring us through any trouble we may face and safely into heaven.

We also glory in (trials), knowing that (trials produce) perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Romans 5:3–5 (emphasis added)
Jay recently shared his story with Our Daily Bread Ministries. He was a man who knew what it was to be in a dark, hopeless place. But then he met Jesus, and now he is walking in the light and teaching others to do the same.

“I was raised in a church. I called myself a Christian. I thought I was, I guess because I had been in the church all my life. I believed there was a God. But I didn’t really know how to read my Bible and I just didn’t know the Lord.

After I tried college, where I was selling marijuana . . . it evolved into selling cocaine. It was real easy to just go to the bars every night and sell drugs. And I didn’t want anybody selling to my customers, so I was there all the time. It became a very dark, depressing life. I can just remember lying in my bed wondering if I was going to wake up or if I was going to overdose. I didn’t know how bad I was. I couldn’t see it. I was blind.

But I do know that after I was born again [in Christ], everything looked different. The main thing I wanted to do was just to read my Bible. I started using [the Our Daily Bread Bible reading notes] in my morning time with God. A lot of times
we don’t know where to open our Bibles, so it was very instrumental in teaching me how to develop a deeper relationship with God and to grow my faith. Isaiah 58 talks about opening up your home to strangers and sharing . . . and so I really took that to heart. We’re His hands and feet [to those we meet].

It’s all about grace. And God teaches me to try to be the same grace that He’s been to me . . . You’ll see that the more time you spend with God, the more in control of your life He is. And He can lead you in the right direction and the right path. I feel like I am thriving now.

Even though I was worthless then and even though I don’t feel worthy now, I know that I can be used. As long as you’re with God, all things are possible.”

From a life of darkness and hopelessness, Jay’s world was turned around when he trusted God. Jay’s confidence in God’s grace gives him the strength and passion to tell others about the wonderful hope Jesus offers. Even when he feels “worthless”, Jay keeps his eyes on the sure hope that God will “lead you in the right direction and the right path”.

You can watch Jay tell his full story, and see many other stories of God’s grace and love transforming His people, at ourdailybread.org/story.
Sharing hope

Just as Jay models, the hope Christians have is a hope to share! Christianity doesn’t just offer another worldview or philosophy; it offers real confidence in the Person, work and promises of God, expressed in real and practical love to the people He has made.

Perhaps it is best explained in these words from the Bible: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).

We are told to be ready to tell others about our hope and our reason for being confident in God. And there is no better trigger to open up a conversation with others about Jesus, than the obvious presence of hope in our lives.

Others will see our hope and confidence (especially during trials when, according to many, we should give up or just ‘trudge on’ with our heads down) and want
to know where we get it from. They will ask for the reason behind our hope. And we should be ready to give them an answer. Unless our lives are defined by confident hope in God, no one will notice—and they won’t ask. Our hope in God will make us stand out.

In Christ, we have real hope, not a wishful attitude that fails to see the realities of life. At first, the people around us may think it strange—this ‘unexplainable’ hope that makes us different. But in a world desperate for someone to rely on, men and women will be drawn to our hope and to the God who makes hope possible.

Our hope in God will make us stand out.
The *Looking Deeper* series offers great Bible teaching for Christians. Whether you are a new Christian or a mature believer, we have a range of short Bible studies on many crucial topics and questions.

At Our Daily Bread Ministries, our mission is to make the life changing wisdom of God’s Word understandable and accessible to all. We’re passionate about helping our readers draw closer to God and share their faith in Him with those they know. Please do share these *Looking Deeper* articles with others who may benefit from them. You can request print copies of any of the titles on the [*Looking Deeper website page*](mailto:lookingdeeper@ourdailybread.org?subject=Request%20Print%20Copies).

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