

## Wednesday Encouragement: Hope (Advent)

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I really like this time of year, and it stems from my childhood. I grew up in a small Methodist church until high school. I really enjoyed the four weeks leading up to Christmas because, if you don't know, it's the season of Advent. The wreath and candles would be in the front of the lectern and we would light a candle for each Advent week that passed. I will be honest—I really didn't understand the reason behind the season of Advent growing up, but I did recognize that with each candle that was lit we were one Sunday closer to Christmas. I now recognize that this season leading up to Christmas is a time of hope.

So, what is hope?

Our dictionary tells us that hope is a state of anticipation. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew people had two words for hope. Their meanings were *"to wait for or a feeling of anticipation and then the release of the stress caused by it."*

What were the Old Testament Hebrews waiting for? Simple answer: God. I like how the poet writes it in Psalm 130:5-7.

<sup>5</sup> *I am counting on the Lord;  
yes, I am counting on him.  
I have put my hope in his word.*

<sup>6</sup> *I long for the Lord  
more than sentries long for the dawn,  
yes, more than sentries long for the dawn.*

<sup>7</sup> *O Israel, hope in the Lord;  
for with the Lord there is unfailing love.  
His redemption overflows.*

Biblical hope is different from our dictionary version. In our society, hope is founded in optimism, where we can choose to see how our situation could work out for the better. In biblical hope, we see biblical figures not relying on the possibility of things getting better but choosing to hope anyway. I think the prophet Hosea and King David are good examples of this. We can see it in the poetry David wrote in **Psalm 62** (*go ahead and read it now it's only 12 verses*).

David is able to say "My hope comes from God," even though he is surrounded by his enemies.

What does this mean for us and our hope today?

This past year has been rough, and I'm not sure we're out of the woods just yet. But I choose to hope. I think we can learn a lot from scripture on this because we can choose to have hope by looking back at the faithfulness of God. We move forward by looking back at what God has done for His people.

God's past faithfulness should motivate us to hope for the future.

So, let us celebrate this Advent season by putting our hope in the reason for the season: Our Lord Jesus.