

Week 3 | Hoping

Begin with prayer

Find a quiet place and stand still for a moment. Dedicate your journey today to God, asking him to speak to you as you read, pray and walk.

*Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by you,
always follow your plans and perfectly follow your holy will.
Grant that in all things great and small,
I may do whatever you require of me.
May your will be done in time and in eternity,
by me, in me and through me. Amen*

Teresa of Ávila



1 Thessalonians 1:3

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The hopes of the world – money, power, status – are fragile, insubstantial beings, ready to be carried away by the slightest gust of wind. But the Bible shows us that the hope of God is not some will-o'-the-wisp but solid and mighty, powerful and completely dependable. We still need hope, because we still see 'through a glass, darkly' (1 Corinthians 13:12, KJV). But one day, we will see God face to face, and our hopes will be gloriously realised in Christ.

Reflect

Hope is not always easy – it challenges us, bidding us to move out of our comfortable zone of despair, that grey sludge which covers the brightest thing with its mess of apathy and inertia.

Hope encourages us to look beyond our current circumstances, to imagine a better, brighter future, and then to work towards making that vision a reality.

Hope reminds us that God isn't finished with us yet – even though we might feel we have more or less finished with God!

Questions

The poet Emily Dickinson describes hope as 'the thing with feathers that perches in the soul'. It sings a 'tune without words', offering ceaseless comfort and reassurance. How would you describe hope? What gives you hope?

Prayer

*Hope like the gleaming taper's light
Adorns and cheers our way
And still as darker grows the night
Emits a brighter ray*

Oliver Goldsmith

'God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but on trees and flowers and clouds and stars.'

Martin Luther

Evidence that God's love extends throughout his creation is found in the entire Bible, rejoicing in the capacity of nature to reveal not only God's love for the world and those who inhabit it, but also God's endless creativity and imagination. Jesus constantly uses examples taken from nature to illustrate aspects of God's kingdom and our own behaviour within it. We are taught to appreciate landscapes and to learn from the details of flowers and the behaviour of birds.

As you journey today, let your senses be filled with wonder at your surroundings, so that you learn from and rejoice in the gifts of the natural world.

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