

In daily life - towards imitation

Here's a story or testimony to flesh this out... Over the last couple of weeks I have had the privileged of visiting an elderly member of our congregation that has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. This man knows he is coming to the end of his life. He has been struggling with significant pain and discomfort. Yet whenever you spend time with him you are aware of the peace and joy with which he faces his future. Last week when I talked with him about how he was feeling about dying. He paused and said, "I am looking forward to meeting Jesus face to face", "and it won't be long now". His hope in Jesus was unshakeable. That confident assurance that he will spend eternity in the presence of God in glory because of Jesus was an inspiration and a challenge.

STUDY QUESTIONS – EXPLORING THE INFORMATION (ABOUT 30 MINUTES)

Study Questions based on 1 Peter 1:3-9

How does the future, as Peter described it here, offer you hope in your setting?
When have you seen Jesus (through a person or event) in a way that increased your faith?
What joy or reassurance do you find here in this passage?

Living it out

What area of your life is difficult for you to be hopeful about?
What reasons do you have for hoping in the Lord?

Prayer suggestion:

Thank God for being the source of hope. Pray for courage when you face hopelessness.
If you are struggling to be hopeful in a situation perhaps use Psalm 130 as a basis of your prayer.

Joining a group and other resources:

We encourage everyone to join a group if possible. We have daytime or evening groups and youth cells. If you would like to know more, please visit our website, or contact Guy on 01423 504160.

There are many great resources to help you pray and enjoy the Scriptures on a daily basis.

www.pray-as-you-go.org A 12 minute guided prayer and meditation to listen to.

<https://www.wordlive.org> Many excellent daily reading approaches, available as an app.

<http://www.sacredspace.ie/> A short guided prayer and meditation to read.

Or download the app from Soul Survivor, with short daily videos: <http://bible.soulsurvivor.com/>

www.smcn.org.uk

INSPIRE

Everywhere...in everything

Week beginning: 9th November 2014.

**Weekly discipleship and spiritual growth resources for all ages, groups and individuals.
Follow up material on Sunday's teaching for groups and individuals.**

GROWING AT HOME

Three suggested discipleship activities suitable for all ages to help you grow, based on up - to God; in - to each other; out - to mission

Up: Find out, together with people in your family or a friend this week, about some of the promises God makes in the Bible. (e.g. John 15:5) Talk together about a promise that speaks especially to you.

In: All God's people have been given gifts to help encourage others who are following Jesus, and to serve the community. Talk and pray together about what each of your gifts may be.

Out: Take a newspaper cutting about something that is bad news. Pin it on the wall and, each time you pass it, ask God to work the Good News of Jesus into that place or people.



Whole church prayer meeting
this Wednesday at 7:30

Everyone welcome

Come and spend time with God...
together

DAILY READINGS AND PRAYERS.

These daily readings are the same as the ones used in church every morning from 9 - 9.30. Feel free to join us, or use them at home. Read one or both of the readings asking yourself, "What is God saying to me, personally?" and, "How can I respond today?" If you are pressed for time there is a focus verse from the passages. Try reading the verse slowly, three or four times, allowing God to shape your heart and mind through His word. You can use these together with our daily prayer diary from the monthly newsheet.

Monday 10th November

Readings: Psalm 19, Revelation 5. Focus verse: 5 Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.' 6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

Tuesday 11th November. Remembrance Day.

Readings: Psalm 21, Revelation 6. O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those men and women who have died in active service: in Iraq, in Afghanistan and elsewhere. As we honour their courage and cherish their memory, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday 12th November.

Readings: Psalm 23, Revelation 7: 1-4; 9-end. Focus verse: And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore, 'they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

Thursday 13th November.

Readings: Psalm 26, Revelation 8 Focus verse: 3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand.

Friday 14th November

Readings: Psalm 28, Revelation 9: 1-12. Focus verse: 9 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. 2 When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss.

Saturday 15th November

Readings: Psalm 33, Revelation 9: 13-end. Focus verse: 20 The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk. 21 Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

SUNDAY'S TEACHING: RESOURCES FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS.

First thoughts:

Have you carried out or experienced any "random acts of outrageous kindness" this week??!

This week's teaching in a nutshell:

Your Hope is as Alive as Jesus. 1 Peter 1: 3-9; Luke 24: 1-6.

Does war have the last word? As we look back on 100 years of history since the 'war to end all wars' and remember those who have died in battle and honour their memory and then look around the world today and see it gripped in conflict we may be tempted to ask the question – Does war have the last word?

The message for Remembrance Day is the message that lies at the core of our faith. That death is not the end, because Jesus has defeated death. And just as Jesus was raised up to be with his Heavenly Father so shall we be raised up in the eternity that is the hope and centre of our faith. This is the faith to which we have been called and it is the hope that can sustain us through all manner of difficulty and hardship. We hope all the time, and we're often disappointed. I hope I get an A in that test. I hope they hire me. I hope she says yes. I hope we can get a new car. I hope he remembers our anniversary. Our hopes don't always come true.

Christian HOPE is not merely a wishful thinking (without any foundation). BIBLICAL HOPE is a confident expectation based on solid certainty - it rests on God's sure promises. Paul tells us it is a hope that will not disappoint us, our Hope will find fulfillment in Jesus. As Tom Wright says "All the promises of the Bible find their Yes in Jesus". How many problems have appeared to be resolved only to reoccur again? How many times have we heard, "I won't hurt you or disappoint you again?" How many countries have enjoyed freedom from tyranny only to be enslaved again? Hope that is centered in a fallen world is destined to fail. Our hope is in the sovereign God whose love is everlasting and his mercy endures forever.

Our hope is not in some intellectual idea, some scientific theory or some fantasy but in a person. The person of Jesus. The one who died to set us free. Our hope in God is unlike any we've ever had, and that is because there is a moment in history that sets this hope apart from any other. Peter writes, "...he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." Death couldn't handle Him, and the grave couldn't hold Him. He overcame the power of sin and death and he is alive. God established and secured your hope when he raised his Son. Therefore, your hope is as alive as Jesus.

We should look both back with gratitude on the past, and look forward with the Christian hope written on our hearts. We are people of hope because we believe that God isn't finished with history. "In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song; This Cornerstone, this solid Ground, Firm through the fiercest drought and storm. What heights of love, what depths of peace, When fears are stilled, when strivings cease! My Comforter, my All in All, Here in the love of Christ I stand".