



A Themed Devotional Series on Hope

For CVM Professionals

By CVM Staff

This series of devotionals was created around CVM's annual theme of "Hope" from Hebrews 6:19. We hope you enjoy getting to know the CVM staff better while learning to find hope in Christ. We encourage you to prayerfully journey through the study with others, or individually, with your Bibles open, looking up the *scriptures* (in italics) and discussing the **questions** (in bold). The devotionals are really intended to be a jumping off point to go deeper in God's Word.

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Hope

Steadfast and Sure

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.” Hebrews 6:19

We all hope. Hope is a natural part of our emotional expression. Wikipedia defines hope as: “...an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation.” Expressions of hope are a part of our daily emotional rhythm. Sometimes, we express them verbally and other times they are subconscious. “I hope I can find a parking place.” “I hope that dog won't tear out his sutures.” “I hope I don't get called in on an emergency tonight.” “I hope I made a favorable impression on that interview.” “I hope we have something good for dinner tonight.” The list can go on and on.

The intensity of our hope often is linked to the size of a particular challenge. Have you ever said, “I really hope...”? Hope by definition, is linked to the expectation for a positive outcome. Have you ever said, “I am not going to hope for...” because you have doubt about a defined expectation? Sometimes, hope is confined to our immediate environment. At other times we express hope for much bigger things, world peace, the end of hunger, etc. etc..

Who does not want positive outcomes? Finding a parking spot close to where I am heading is not something that consumes me. Then again, my hope for a friend with a serious illness or challenge seems to have a deeper root in my being.

If someone were to ask you, “Where do you anchor your hope?” What would your response be?

We often link hope with our own ability to create a positive outcome. The Webster definition for hope is a bit different. “A desire of some good, accompanied with an expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable; an expectation of something, which is thought to be desirable; confidence; pleasing expectancy.” Our hope is most anchored when we have confidence in a particular outcome. If we have studied well for an exam, our hope for success is anchored in those efforts and is stronger than when we go into an exam and have not studied at all.

We can anchor hope only in that which we have faith in. I can hope that my car will start after I put in a new battery only if I have faith that the battery I bought is a good one and fully charged.

Webster has a second definition for hope “One who, or that which, gives hope, furnishes ground of expectation, or promises desired good.” Sometimes, our hope is set on the basis of our own strength or the strength of someone we trust. We hope in family and friends to come through for us because we have faith in them. Our hope is strongest when those whom we have anchored our hope in have not failed us before.

Hope

Steadfast and Sure

The hope spoken of as an anchor for our soul is referenced from Hebrews 6:18 the verse prior to our theme verse this year. It speaks of the hope set before us. It is defined as a “better hope” (Hebrews 7:19), a hope that is firm to the end (Hebrews 3:6), a hope without wavering (Hebrews 10:23) and a hope that is linked with faith (Hebrews 11:1). We find God, know Him, are saved by the blood of His Son, and then journey in faith to follow Him. This journey produces within us hope. A hope that is an anchor for our soul. Hope like so many of our words has a fullness when it is understood in the character of and work of God in our lives. A biblical hope that is sure and steadfast. The Message translates this section of scripture as follows

“We who have run for our very lives to God have every reason to grab the promised hope with both hands and never let go. It’s an unbreakable spiritual lifeline, reaching past all appearances right to the very presence of God where Jesus, running on ahead of us, has taken up His permanent post as high priest for us, in the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 6:18-20

We all hope. Our hope is the strongest when it is anchored by faith in God. We are to be men and women who run for our very lives to God for every reason. We grab on with both hands to this hope.

- How about you? What does hope look like for you. Where do you anchor your hope?
- Share a story when you anchored your hope in the Hope which He set before us. What were the outcomes?
- What is a situation in your life where you are praying for faith that you might have a hope anchored in God for a desired outcome.
- How can you encourage one another on this journey?



Kit is a 1978 graduate of Colorado State University. He served as a veterinarian in the US Air Force and in private practice in Panama City, FL before going with his wife Jan and daughters Molly and Missy to serve with CVM in Kenya from 1985-1990. Kit then returned to Seattle to serve in the CVM home office and has served as the Executive Director since 1993. He and Jan are the proud grandparents to seven grandchildren and are blessed to walk their calling out in the CVM family.

Hope

Hope vs. Expectations

I had many frustrations learning language when my family and I moved to Nepal to serve as CVM fieldworkers there. But one of the most frustrating for me was the fact that they use the same word for “hope” and “expect”. These were not interchangeable in my mind. For instance, “I hope it will be sunny on Saturday, but I expect it will rain just like the last three days.” Or, I can hope to win the grand prize with a raffle ticket, but I don’t really expect to win. It made no sense to me that the same word could be used in both ways.

Let me tell you about the elderly woman who finally taught me how to understand this. Prem, a grandmother, was the only Christian believer in her village. We met at church. She would walk two hours (on a path that would take me three hours) each way to church, each week, in order to hear the Word of God. She was illiterate and there was no other believer in her village to read the Bible to her. She and her family were quite poor, living in a mud house where they survived with a combination of a small subsistence farm and working as day laborers in others’ fields during the day.

Prem often sat next to me at church, on the hard concrete floor, women sitting on the right half of the church, men on the left. A good friend of mine named Sue was a missionary doctor in the same village where I lived. Often Dr. Sue would have to work all night at the mission hospital and then climb the hill up to church in the morning. Sometimes she would start to fall asleep during the two hour service. I would have just let her sleep for a few minutes but Prem would hit her hard to wake her up because Prem valued the Word of God so much, she didn’t want Dr. Sue to miss any of it!

One week Prem came by our home after church to share her exciting news. The women’s group in her village was starting a literacy class. “Finally, at long last, I will be able to read God’s Word!” she exclaimed.

Although I did not say it aloud, I was thinking, how could I help her with her inevitable disappointment? She will not be able to learn to read the Bible in a basic literacy class. The Bible was similar to a King James Version, filled with unfamiliar terms and very small print. Nepal had no Message or Good News version. Prem was a grandmother, and probably had cataracts from a lifetime of fieldwork without sunglasses or at least she’d need eyeglasses. Prem was a low caste or “untouchable” ethnic group so would not be allowed in the home of the high caste woman who would teach this class. Since Prem not only did not know the alphabet yet, but also not even how to hold a pencil, she would probably spend most of her time learning to make basic letters.

After working in the fields all day, Prem carried her Bible to class six nights a week for several months. She sat in the dark outside the teacher’s home with only candlelight as she tried to make out the letters. At the end of the course, I visited her in her home.

Prem was so very excited. After dinner, she pulled out her Bible and began to read, and read, and read. She read more fluently than many educated people I knew. This was a miracle. There

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Hope vs. Expectations

is no way that she could have learned to read like that without a divine, supernatural intervention. God heard her prayer and answered by giving her the desire of her heart, to read the Bible for herself.

Prem both hoped and expected to be able to learn to read the Bible and she did. Prem had the kind of hope that truly can be an “*anchor for our soul*” (Hebrews 6:19 NIV). Her hope was based on faith, not some kind of a wishful thinking hope, the way I was using it. For her, hope was confidence and expectation, God would answer her prayers. Hope and expectation were exactly the same.

“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts”

-Romans 5:5 NKJV

This is the kind of hope we can all have in our Savior. He who has poured his love out for us will not disappoint.

- Are “hope” and “expectation” the same for you in daily life? In your spiritual life? Do you hope or expect to heal the next patient or resolve the next staff conflict?
- Have you known people who have complete confidence that their prayers will be answered? Did you think the answers were miraculous?
- What does it mean to hope for something? Is it “waiting with expectation” or is it daydreaming? Do we have the kind of hope that can be an anchor for our soul?



Dr. Karen Stoufer grew up in California, attended veterinary college at Cornell University and practiced in small animal clinics in upstate New York and the California Bay Area, and started a house-call practice, until she and her family went to Nepal as CVM fieldworkers in 1990. In 2003, they returned to the USA to work in the CVM Seattle office where Karen serves as Asia Regional Director and Training Director. She and her husband Ron have two biological daughters raised in Nepal and three former foster daughters who are refugees from Nepal, raised in America. Interests include refugees, guide dogs, third culture kids, camping and their two grandchildren (not in that order!). Email: kstoufer@cvmusa.org

Hope

Where's Your Hope?

What are you placing your hope in?

If hope is “a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen” as Google tells us, then you’re probably hoping for a lot of things. Some of them as minor and fleeting as hoping for a warm sunny afternoon to get some fresh air and walk your dog after work. Others as significant as hoping for good lab results or a favorable prognosis. And who of us isn’t hoping and desiring favor in the future of our family. Finding the perfect partner for life, and success with having and raising healthy children is paramount among the dreams of most everyone at some point.

For me, the difficult part about hoping, is expectations. Time and time again, I try not to get my hopes up. I don’t even watch movie trailers, as I’m much more likely to enjoy something if I have no, or low, expectations of it. If I allow myself expectations of something or someone, I am so often disappointed, and disappointment is a miserable state to live in. But it’s hard not to desire the outcomes that seem best for us and the ones we love.

With the rise of social media and emojis, I’ve noticed new words and symbols taking over many threads. “Fingers crossed,” “Sending positive thoughts,” “Sending good vibes,” “Sending good juju...” These are now popular ways to tell someone you hope things turn out well for them, without actually doing anything about it. The trend toward vibes and juju reveal the shaky foundation our culture is leaning on. I doubt many who use the term, even realize that juju comes from West African witchcraft, but I’m sure they do recognize it has nothing to do with Christ.

Personally, I have no idea how to send any kind of thoughts, let alone vibes or juju to someone, but I do know how to send thoughts to God. The nice thing about metaphorically crossing your fingers, or sending good brainwaves, is you don’t actually have to do anything after you type that note. Maybe the encouragement will bolster the spirits of the recipient of your goodness, but what if you took things a step further? What if you placed your hope in Christ both for others in need and for yourself in times of need, through prayer? Praying for that person may not be a whole lot different than redirecting your good thoughts for them toward God, but it could mean taking a step of action if God responds with an idea for how to help.

Maybe He wants you to set up, or contribute to, a GoFundMe account or a MealTrain to get a friend through a really difficult time. There might be a way to serve them or love them very intentionally in Christ’s name. Or maybe you could give some of your time to deeply listen and empathize with someone who needs an ear or a shoulder. God has given you comfort in many of your own trials, to be a comfort to others in theirs. *“The God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”* -2 Corinthians 1:4. That is a whole lot of comfort!

Sometimes, when we pray for what we’re hoping for ourselves, God will remind us to get up and pursue what we desire, instead of just hoping for that patient to be healed, that family we long for, that job of our dreams, or that relationship to be restored.

Hope

Where's Your Hope?

In Spanish, the word for Hope is Esperar, which is also the word for Wait. Sometimes, Hoping is doing as little as waiting patiently. However, the thing about Hope is that it doesn't always have to be so passive. Google's second definition of Hope is Trust. Throughout the Psalms, and much of the Old Testament, we are encouraged to put our hope in the Lord, in his unfailing love, and in His word.

I imagine all of us would say we hope and trust in the Lord. Maybe it's a paradigm shift, but if we recognize that His love is unfailing (Psalm 147:11), and we trust that His ways are greater than our ways (Isaiah 55:9), then it makes sense to, "*Hope in the LORD and keep His way.*" -Psalm 37:34

I often lose sight of His unfailing love when looking at His directions for me, seeing them as outdated and stifling. But when I truly trust His love for me, I remember that His word is full of instructions that will bless my life abundantly; sometimes physically, sometimes spiritually. In my humble opinion, **sin is always a result of failing to trust God.** If we truly believe He knows what He's doing and loves us unfathomably, then of course we'd follow His path and obey what He asks of us every time. Alas, we so often think our ways, and the world's ways are better, but hoping, trusting, or following the world is bound to end in disappointment.

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another..." -Hebrews 10:23-25

- What are you hoping for right now?
- What does that hope look like, where are you placing it?
- Is there an area of your life where you might not be trusting God and His loving directions? You can trust Him, he will not disappoint.



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Hope Through God's People

If you have an extra 7 minutes, please watch this fantastic video, "Read Scripture: Ruth" by The Bible Project: <https://youtu.be/oh1eoBeR4Jk>.

"Even if I thought there was still hope for me..."

Naomi's hope died with her husband and sons. She believed that God's hand had turned against her, and she was left with grief and deep bitterness. In a strongly patriarchal society, a woman in her position had very little opportunity to care for herself, and Naomi had given up on the idea that she would be redeemed, that she would be saved.

Even during her time of hopelessness, Naomi still had hope for her daughters-in-law, saying to them, *"May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband"* (Ruth 1:8-9). **Sometimes we believe there is no hope for us, even as we give hope to others.**

Here is something surprising about the story of Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth: The narrator never mentions God. Yet we know that God is a major character in the story because we see him at work in and through his people. After the women immigrated to a different region in search of food, Ruth happened to meet a distant relative named Boaz. Boaz generously offered food and protection to these poor immigrants, obeying God's explicit command in Deuteronomy 24:19, and asked God to reward Ruth's graciousness toward her mother-in-law.

In time, through the loyalty and generosity of the people around her, new hope crept into Naomi's life of lament. Both Ruth and Boaz were people of strong and noble character (2:1, 3:11). The way Ruth and Boaz treated each other and Naomi helped restore her belief that God wants to redeem his people. **God works through his followers, and the way you choose to live can serve His big plans.**

By the end of this short narrative, Ruth and Naomi were redeemed, according to their societal customs, through Ruth's marriage to Boaz. They even got a glimpse of God's bigger work. Shortly after Ruth married Boaz, she had a son named Obed, who became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. And David, as you may know, was the kingly ancestor of our Messiah, Jesus Christ. In his incredible love and power, God took Naomi's hopeless tragedy and transformed it into a story of hope-filled redemption for the entire world.

God's faithfulness continues even when you cannot see it. Although it wasn't obvious to Naomi in her grief, God was working compassionately through the circumstances and choices of his people. The author of Lamentations could empathize with Naomi's story. From his affliction and bitterness, he saw the big picture and wrote, *"For no one is cast off by the Lord*

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Hope Through God's People

forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love”
(Lamentations 3:31-32).

- What situation in your life seems hopeless? Acknowledge this to God, and consider discussing it with a few faithful people close to you.
- Are you generous toward others through your daily actions and attitudes? How does God's grace shape your character? What role do you play in this formation?
- How is God calling you to participate in his big story of redemption? What do you need to surrender today to be obedient to him?



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Hope

Hope and Reality

As I write this, the word *hope* is all too close to my heart and lips. Perhaps this closeness will blur my judgement in writing on this topic, but rather, I pray that this intimate view will bring you much learning - with less heartbreak.

The reason that hope is so close to my thoughts as of late is that my brother-in-law, at 42 years old, has been given weeks to a few months to live, due to cancer. He has a wife. He has three little girls; all under the age of 10. He is the shepherd of a church. He is a loved son and brother. He is all this and much more.

In this unchosen journey, the crossroad of hope and reality has been very real to me. It has been most evident, so far, in one moment in particular.

After meeting with the Oncologist and viewing various scans and test results - my sister-in-law looked at me and asked a question that the doctors had not yet answered. She asked, "How much time do I have left with my husband? When am I going to be a widow?" I had seen the MRI. I had heard the choice words of the doctor. Nobody really knows the answer to the question of "how long?" but I had an educated guess.

That is where the crossroad appeared. How do I answer those words of a wife and mother honestly - yet with hope?

Your days as a veterinarian are probably spent delivering news to clients. Good news, bad news, and everything in between. Those conversations are as much a part of our job as is examining an animal or prescribing medication.

What we are communicating is the science that we have been blessed to learn. The science is the reality that hundreds of cases and studies beforehand have told us. Science predicts the likely outcome based on what we know and see.

How we communicate is not as clearly defined. We must consider both the context of the case, and the context of the person receiving the information in order to best deliver the news. This is the art of veterinary medicine.

What is hard as veterinarians is that sometimes we only see the science and neglect the art. We get overwhelmed with all that is happening in our day and we lose sight of the importance of how we communicate to the person standing in front of us.

We as Christian veterinarians sit in a pocket of great opportunity. The opportunity to deliver hope in the everyday reality of sickness. We often see God weaving difficult moments into someone's life in order to bring about positive change. "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*" – Romans 8:28

By taking the time during those moments to choose our words carefully, we can create space for clients to have hope. In those darker moments, people often share their own personal struggles

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Hope and Reality

with us, because we are trusted. The words we use in reply to their vulnerability will vary depending on the person and the situation. But no matter where we are; in a clinic or on a farm--we can communicate hope through words, tone, empathy, sympathy, shared moments, quietly listening, and prayer.

The definitive reference for how to speak and share hope is Jesus. As you read God's word and observe how Jesus communicated to people of all walks of life - you will see that sometimes he speaks in both, soft words and hard truths. Sometimes even at the same time (Matthew 13). As veterinarians, we have knowledge of what science predicts. This means that there can often be some hard truths to communicate. But in using Jesus as an example, we can deliver those truths with love, kindness, and hope.

The most impactful way that we can deliver hope is by sharing the name of Jesus Christ with those that we interact with. We should take hold of every opportunity that God gives us in order to share the hope that lies within us. *"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

Delivering hope requires having hope ourselves. Be sure to dig into God's word daily - as this is the ultimate source of truth that gives us hope. Hope in our Redeemer and His promise of a solution for sin. As you are fueled by that truth daily, let His hope (and love) flood out of you with everyone you interact with.

- In what ways do you think you can display hope as a veterinarian to clients?
Colleagues?
- If you're in a group maybe talk through giving a difficult diagnosis to a client. What are some good and bad ways to do so? (Consider the grieving client, angry client, aloof client, or the "I want to do everything yet have no money client")
- Jesus is our true hope. How, or when, might you be able to share this with clients and colleagues, or pray with them?



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Hope

Shopping For An Anchor

About 25 years ago, we had the excitement of buying a boat. We were going to have so much fun. We envisioned all the great things we were going to do and realized we needed to buy some equipment. We set out on our first trip to have a great time. After a while, we decided to stop and just relax and have some lunch.

Now, I don't know if you have ever boated, but when you stop and there are waves or wind, your boat will drift. You guessed it, we bought all the fun stuff but not the necessary stuff. I never said I was the smartest boat captain out there. The next week we went shopping for practical things for the boat, like an anchor.

We were fully equipped now, anchor and rope. We headed out and stopped the boat, let down the anchor and started eating. When I saw that we had drifted, I noticed that I hadn't tied the anchor rope tight, so I had to pull in the slack and secure it this time so it wouldn't loosen up. The anchor can't work unless it is tied tight to the boat.

At some point, I realized this boat was gonna preach! The anchor and the rudder are reflections of our life in Christ. Our anchor in Christ is our faith in Him while our rudder is His Word as it steers our life.

One thing I have learned in life is that I am not the only one that has bumps in the road. Everyone has trials and suffering. The closer I have become with friends and shared our "real" lives, the more I know that everyone is going through something. The saying goes, we are all in a storm, coming out of one, or fixing to go into one.

I need to be real here with you for a moment. I grew up in a low middle class home. It was a loving home. I did decent in school and sports. I was blessed to have a job of some sort since I was 12 and had some spending cash. I had true friends. Got into college and got my job with a vet that let me do a lot. Got married to the love of my life. Got into vet school. Got offered every job I interviewed for. I was 27 by then.

You would think, man this guy has it really going. I was saved and baptized when I was 13, but drifted away from church and God until I got out of vet school. Kathy and I returned to church when I got my first job and really enjoyed being back in the presence of the Lord. I left that job after 10 months to go in as partners with a guy that I worked with while in vet school.

There are some milestones in peoples' lives and now at 30, some of mine were going to start happening. My partner and I divorced. I joined another practice and things that were promised weren't kept and little things kept happening that were not what I was wanting in my life. I loved practice, but there were always things going on that kept me on my knees. We were both very involved with our church and serving and growing in the Lord so much. We started doing 1-2 short term mission trips a year and then went full time on the mission field. Satan attacked us in different ways while on the field. I came home to do Region Rep work with CVM and things seemed to really smooth out.

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Shopping For An Anchor

Then, we had another milestone in our lives. Our son got married and our first granddaughter was born! But then we were estranged from our son and his family. WOW, never saw that coming. Over the next 8 years, we saw some more rocky ground. Three years ago, I had medical issues crop up with cancer and my wife has had numerous ailments, some that are going to stay. The we closer walked with the Lord, the more Satan attacked. My faith could go down the toilet, or it could grow.

It has been amazing how God has called me closer to Him through His Word. The closer I have come to the Lord, the less the storms affect me. Paul was a great example in Acts 27 in the storm. He calmed the men that knew they were going to die, to sit and eat after 14 days of raging storm and not eating. God has given me the assurance that all that I am going through is for my good and for the good of others. I have a new ministry to those with estrangement (there are lot of us) and health issues, as I have been there.

My anchor has given me a lot of opportunities to share my hope in Christ. Some days I think Satan is really ticked off because he keeps trying to chisel away at me, but because I stand on a solid rock, I can battle the raging sea. Now, I don't want you to think that there aren't days I struggle, because I do, but my anchor is where I find comfort when I seek refuge in Him (Nahum 1:7). His Word is my rudder to steer me closer to Him and He anchors me so that I can resist Satan's attacks. James says in 4:7-8, we can resist Satan and make him flee from us.

How we can show God and others where our hope is:

1. Our prayer life and what we pray for; how many decisions in your life do you pray for?
 2. Our time in God's word - Psalms 119:10, "I seek you with all my heart"
 3. Our time being a witness-sharing who our best friend is. Acts 1:8
 4. Our time showing the fruit of the spirit. Galatians 5:22
 5. Being obedient to God's Word. John 14:15, 21
 6. How we react to trials, tribulations, and suffering. James 1:2-3
- What anchor are you tied to? Have you ever drifted because you had no anchor or weren't tied close enough to it?
 - Have you ever crashed because you turned loose of Christ?
 - Can you remember times you drifted and felt disconnected to Christ and times you stayed tightly connected and could feel and see God's hand move in your life?
 - Are you open with others so that you can be there for each other?



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Hope

Hope Under Fire

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." -Daniel 3:17-18

King Nebuchadnezzar ruled an empire of peoples and nations and languages. He made a statue of gold that towered 9-stories high. He gathered all the officials of all the peoples and commanded that at the sound of "every kind of music" everyone must fall down and worship. *"Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace."* Hopeless, they fell. But not all.

Malicious Chaldeans accused 3 Jewish officials, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego of non-compliance. The king was furious. He called them before him. He repeated his command and his threat, *"But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"* Answer: nobody. Hopeless. But wait...

They answered the king, *"...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will... But if not, ...we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image..."* Boom! The king was challenging the living God. Tweet that back to your home countries, all you peoples and nations.

Was King Nebuchadnezzar more angry than confident? Is that why he ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than normal? Mighty soldiers bound Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, "in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats" and threw them into the furnace. It was hot enough. It killed the mighty soldiers that threw them in. Where's hope now?

Hope was with them in the fire. Only the ropes burned—their clothes didn't even smell like fire. Not one hair was singed. Jesus walked with them in the flames. He did then, and He always will. A pagan king blessed Jehovah, and all the peoples and nations heard the news. Our hope is in Him alone!

Mercy Me sings the song "Even If":

I know You're able and I know You can, Save through the fire with Your mighty hand

But even if You don't, My hope is You alone

I know the sorrow, I know the hurt, Would all go away if You'd just say the word

But even if You don't, My hope is You alone

It is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul.

When I served in Africa with CVM, there were many stories of hope under fire. Ethiopian evangelist, Petros, was worried. His wife was sick, at a clinic about two days hike from where he sought to bring the Gospel, deep in the bush of southwest Ethiopia. What if she was dying? He thought he better go. That decision cost him his life.

Hope

Hope Under Fire

That very night, he was martyred. And it all seemed hopeless. I've stood by the tree where he was killed, run my fingers over the bark where someone carved a cross to mark the spot. Satan had ruled the land for many centuries—crushing fear, killing babies if the rituals were not observed, sending drought and famine when the spirits were offended.

I thought it was superstition. I thought with all my veterinary science I could explain away their dread of evil spirits. But over and over I saw, that if they didn't do what the spirits told them to do, they really did suffer one way or another. They had no hope. Until they believed in Jesus! Unbelievers noticed a change! One came to my door, "Dr Fred, you better tell us about your God. You've done none of the rituals, and you are getting rain. We've done everything we can think of to appease the spirits and we're still getting drought!" Hope is in Him alone.

God was already preparing His next move. It started ten years earlier when a Bunna man named Garisho hiked to a distant village, was accused of murder and thrown in jail without trial. There was no food service in jail. However, it was during communism; so church leaders and pastors were also in the jail, and Believers brought them food each day. Garisho pretended to be a Believer in order to share their food. They weren't fooled, but insisted he come to Bible study and prayer times. They taught him to read the Bible. He accepted Christ—in the only church not shut down. In the prison.

When he was finally released, he made his way back to Bunna lands, arriving two days after Petros was martyred. He told me, "Satan thought he had won the day when Petros died." It looked hopeless, like the darkness had won again. But God had been working. Garisho was now a Believer, literate enough to read the Bible, and God used him to start the first Bunna church!

Our hope is in Him alone. Even when all looks hopeless! Isaiah 43: 1-2 says, "*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 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 Savior...*"

- **What fires or flames do you face, that seem hopeless? What rivers threaten to overwhelm you? These may be spiritual, relational, health, work, etc.**
- **Can you think of several ways these stories remind us to hope in Him? What did God do in each situation that seemed overwhelmingly hopeless?**



One month after vet school graduation (WSU, 1983), Fred Van Gorkom went to Ethiopia with Christian Veterinary Mission. While working in veterinary projects, famine relief, refugee and discipleship ministries he met Vicki, also a veterinarian (OSU, 1982). They married in 1986, returning immediately to remote southwestern Ethiopia where they raised their four children while doing community development and church planting. In 2008, they moved to CVM Seattle where they both serve to help mobilize others for the privilege of international missions. Email: fvangorkom@cvmusa.org

Hope

Hope and Lament

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, Lord my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me.

~ David, Psalm 13

Hope and lament have been in my field-of-view a lot lately. About a year ago, I knew I wanted to serve in mission and ministry, but I was burnt out with the role I was so familiar with- and I didn't know where to turn. In this same year, my wife was thriving at a Christian international development organization, but the decision was made to re-organize, eliminating her whole branch. These were tough times, yet I knew, and know, deep down that God loves us. So where does that leave us in times like these?

To be fair, lament is a word we don't use often. It means a passionate expression of grief and sorrow. Hope is discussed more often -- as an expectation for certain things to happen. These are not two things we generally associate together, but as I'm learning, I think they are more related than we think.

I've been travelling a bit lately. When I fly, I do what most air travelers do these days- watch free movies! And hope and lament are even showing up a lot here. I watched *Star Wars* on a flight back from SAVMA in Philadelphia. Which *Star Wars*? The original one of course, whose title is "*A New Hope*." The whole series is based upon hope, and also features lament, as good and evil are in constant opposition. Then, I watched Pearl Jam's *Let's Play Two*, which is part concert/part documentary of the Chicago Cubs in 2016. That year, the Cubs won the World Series for the first time since 1908. The last time they won, cars hadn't caught on yet, sliced bread was two decades from being invented, the U.S. had 46 states, and the Ottoman Empire was still a thing. For real. A Cubs fan had much lament in their life, but the hope to which they clung was finally realized.

On my way back from Fetch East (formerly CVC East), I watched *The Shawshank Redemption*, a classic movie about men in prison. The whole 'film' is an essay on hope, as Morgan Freeman's character, Red, shares his view of hope: "Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane." Tim Robbin's character, Andy Dufresne, shares the opposite view: "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies." No spoilers here, but one view of hope, despite all their lament and time in prison, eventually wins out, and I bet you can guess which one.

Now, I've been in church all of my life. And in all that time, I've heard many messages on hope, but few, if any, on lament. There is this stigma associated with lament, like it is somehow not trusting in God. But, we know David (the author of Psalm 13) was "*a man after God's own heart*" and yet he is very raw and emotional here. Emotions can sometimes make good companions,

Hope

Hope and Lament

but they are not always steady leaders. And of course, lament can be much more than emotion- it can be very real pain and anguish. Some lament comes from circumstances outside of our control, and some lament comes as a result of our own doing. Either way, we are able to approach God and lament, because we have a Father who loves us.

Psalms 13 shows the reality of how we can both hope and lament. Verses 1-4 show David crying out and questioning God. Yet, David's story does not end totally in lament. He also has hope. Take a look at verses 5-6, and you will see a shift. David confesses his trust in God and praise Him. David is free to be real and raw before God, but he also knows a truth that God is good, even if he doesn't feel this in the moment.

And lament isn't just isolated to David, it's all over Scripture -- from the older testament to the newer one, with persons such as Moses, Jeremiah, the book of Lamentations itself, and even Jesus. If you recall Jesus's final hours, we see an intimate shot of Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. He asks "*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me.*" Jesus is in anguish, in pain. "*Yet not my will, but yours be done.*" Jesus finishes his prayer with a truth and a trust in God, even in his hurt.

"In this world you will have trouble..." Jesus said this as an observation, basically a guarantee. But, He also finished this statement with "*But take heart! I have overcome the world!*"- John 16:33. Hope is present, and hope will win in the end. Sometimes it takes a little longer than our choice timeline to realize the outcome of our hope, but in God's hands, our hope is secure. I think we can do a much better job of teaching, dare I say empowering people, to hope and to lament. We need to know when to speak and when to simply listen. We need to fully grasp these concepts ourselves and live into them. Will you join me in living out these two Biblical principles for ourselves and for others?

- Do you feel comfortable expressing your despair and disappointment to God? Is there anyone in your life to whom you can share such feelings?
- Has there been a tough moment in your life, where you see God's hand in hindsight? Did God feel close or far away during that season?
- What are some things for which you hope? (Feel free to share some lighthearted things, too, as I had despaired for sweet tea in Seattle until Chick-fil-a arrived).



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HOPE

Keep Hope Alive

*“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.”*

-Romans 15:13

What is HOPE? The modern idea is “to wish for, to expect, but without certainty of the fulfillment; to desire very much, but with no real assurance of getting your desire.”

Biblical Hope is the strong and confident expectation, the sure certainty that what God has promised in the Word is true, has occurred, or will in accordance with God’s sure Word.

One very important clarification regarding Biblical hope is that it’s not an escape from reality or from problems. We live in a world full of problems, pressures & strife. The bible says in John 16:33 “*...In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*”

In the veterinary community, clinical or major depression has risen by 33% since 2013, according to a new report from health insurer Blue Cross Blue Shield. Depression diagnoses were found to be rising in every demographic, but the uptick has been especially dramatic among young people.

Since 2013, rates have spiked by 47% among Millennials. One such student says, “It almost seems like they’re setting you up to fail because of the sheer amount of work and amount of classes you have to take at the same time, and how you’re also expected to do so much.” In the spring of 2017, nearly 40% of college students said they had felt so depressed in the prior year that it was difficult for them to function.

Anxiety, depression, stress, pressure to succeed...these are all real issues that can overwhelm us at times. I want to affirm those that are dealing with these issues. You are not alone. And some can work through these issues more easily than others. This devotional is not meant to provide all the answers. It’s meant to point you to Hope.

As believers, we often have uncertain and certain hope at the same time. For instance, we may pray and hope for deliverance from a present trouble and not know **if, when** or **how** God will answer our prayer = UNCERTAIN HOPE, while knowing He will ultimately deliver us and that our eternal destiny remains secure in Christ = CERTAIN HOPE.

Let’s unpack that for a minute...how can we be so conflicted? And let’s be honest, we all do this. We can truly believe that through our relationship with Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we will spend our eternity in heaven. Yet, we can doubt His forgiveness for our sins, feel uncertain of his amazing love for us, or underestimate his power of healing.

HOPE

Keep Hope Alive

How do we attempt to Keep Hope Alive? My belief is that HOPE must be cultivated. We need to be reminded of God's spoken promises over our lives. Hope Grows in Action!

We can't afford to neglect:

- Scripture (His love letter to us)
- Prayer (Our conversation with Him)
- Worship (Our love song to Him)
- Fellowship (Building each other up and being built up by others)
- Ministry (Serving others – taking the focus off ourselves)

My prayer for each of you is that when you feel hopeless, alone or overwhelmed, you are reminded that there is nothing that you feel, that you see, that you go through that Jesus doesn't know about. He sees you! He wishes to walk alongside you on your life's journey. He is the God of Hope!

- We can all deal with stress. What are some practical ways that you have dealt with stress in your lives?
- What does Hope look like in your life? Give an example of uncertain hope and certain hope that you have dealt with?
- Do you find value in fellowship? If so, give an example of how it has helped you. If not, give an example why not.
- When you feel depressed or stressed, do you tend to retreat and isolate or do you reach out for help? Why?



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Hope

Stormy Seas

How easy it is in our politically, spiritually, socially, and racially divided times to give way to despair and give up hope. With all that divides us, and the monumental challenges we are facing, holding on to hope can seem so futile. Whether it be change on the large scale such as in the body of Christ as a whole, or on a much smaller scale like change in our own lives, it often seems out of our grasp. While it may seem in vain, it is essential that we hold on to hope, for hope in both the present and the future is what enables us to keep getting up in the morning, and to keep fighting for change.

With more awareness and openness about depression and anxiety, what can we do to hold onto a sure and strong hope in the midst of being honest and open about where we are struggling? Not a hope that we will be healed one day, a hope that we won't hurt anymore, or a hope that the world will be more just, but a hope that is grounded in the cross of Christ. A cross that bore the One who was suffering, the One who died, the One who was mistreated and abused, and transformed all that into the most glorious hope of all.

We need the hope that comes through our faith in Jesus that compels us to do all that we can, no matter how small, to make life better for others who are hurting. And to reach out for help when we are the suffering one. Hope that through it all we will be held and we will be loved. Even if God doesn't calm the storm, He will hold the sailor and calm him or her through the storm. It's not merely a hope that one day the pain will end, but it's an act of offering our pain to the world, so that others will be companioned in their pain and no longer feel so alone.

Someone once said that every loss we have ever experienced and every pain we have ever felt, God has also felt and really experienced with us. He didn't just watch our suffering but He entered into it and suffered it with us. We are not alone and that provides hope that we will make it through. A strong hope that can feel the pain and loss, yet not ignore it, or throw platitudes at it, but that still remains sure that we are loved, and held, and being brought home.

So many of you have lost someone this year, have been in terrible accidents, received hard diagnoses, or watched a loved one flounder. Can we find a way to enter in and feel the pain and loss of those trials, and know Jesus has felt them as well? Can we sense Christ coming alongside us in those painful moments and receive hope as His gift to us... an audacious bold hope that holds on in spite of evidence to the contrary. A hope that all manner of things will be well, and in some ways are already well, in spite of our loss, can only come from Christ.

In our own power, we cannot fix the suffering we have experienced, or those around us are enduring. We cannot right all the wrongs, or heal all the wounds that we encounter. But in His great love for us, He gives us the gift and the hope of eternal life, even though we could never earn it.

*“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us,
not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.
He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,*

Hope

Stormy Seas

*whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,
so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs
having the hope of eternal life.”*

-Titus 3:4-7

This “eternal life” is often confused with a pain and tear-free afterlife. But the eternal life that Christ bought for us on the cross, is so much more than a hope in what’s to come after we die. He purchased us a hope for today.

“Now this is eternal life:

that they know you,

the only true God,

and Jesus Christ,

whom you have sent.”

-John 17:3

So, when the world and its burdens threaten to overwhelm us, let us cling to the hope of eternal life. Not a Band-Aid for our troubles, but an anchor in any storm. Eternal life that starts now through our relationship with Jesus, the abundant life that He came to bring us. He has gone before us and weathered the storms, and He walks beside us as we pass through them now.

“We who have run for our very lives to God have every reason to grab the promised hope with both hands and never let go. It’s an unbreakable spiritual lifeline, reaching past all appearances right to the very presence of God where Jesus, running on ahead of us, has taken up his permanent post as high priest for us...”

– Hebrews 6:18-20 The Message

- Is there a storm in your life that’s threatening to overwhelm you?
- How could you comfort someone else you know who’s going through a storm?
- Have you ever thought of Eternal Life as knowing God and Jesus Christ?
- How might this change the way you live, and your hope for today?



This devotional is a joint work of Dr. Lauren Charles and Tracy Rubstello. Tracy, CVM’s former Short-term Mission Coordinator, contributed much of the material from her vast knowledge of and experience with mental health. She is now working as the Director of Development with Foster Care Camp in Seattle, Washington.

Hope

A Confident Assurance

The Storm

Success. Personal, physical, and professional success. .my livelihood, passion, dedication, talent, and identity. I was losing it... all of it.

I was a wife and mom, working full time and attending night classes four days a week. I knew what I wanted and thrived as a student graduating top of my class. Within a week, I started working at a local clinic that recruited me while I was a student, and within six months, I bought the practice from the owner, hired more staff, and continued to build a very successful therapeutic massage practice for the next 10 years. I also served in the church choir, a weekly women's group, and at one point, lead a team of 23 adults for a month long short-term mission trip to Mozambique, Africa.

Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? But I experienced many trials as well. The loss of my 15-year marriage, navigating how to manage life as a single mom with a baby and young child, and physical health challenges. All of which contributed to me making the difficult decision to close my thriving practice after 10 years. My future was uncertain..

Life is filled with constant change, failed relationships, overwhelming responsibilities, stuff! What happens when things don't go according to plan? Do we lose sight of hope?

Paul writes; *"I pray that God the source of hope will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit."* -Romans 15:13

Hope in God

Lee Strobel writes, "Hope is the inextinguishable flicker God ignites in our souls to keep us believing in the prevailing power of His light even when we are surrounded by utter darkness."

It's the quiet resolve He hardwires into our spirit that clings to the seemingly impossible truth that *"in all things God works for the good of those who love Him"* and that, in the grand scheme of things, *"we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us,"* -Romans 8:28, Romans 8:37. Through His Spirit, we build faith in an everlasting hope that fills our soul with His presence and love for us.

Hebrews 10:22 *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."* In the next verse it says, *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."* In other words, Hope doesn't waver or get lost in circumstance because it is rooted in the faithfulness of God. Why do we have faith in God? Because He never fails!

Faith – The Full Assurance of Hope

Do we fully understand the relationship between full assurance of faith and full assurance of hope? Is there a difference? I would suggest that Hope is our participation in action of faith that focuses on the future. In biblical terms, wherever there is full assurance of hope, there is faith.

Hope

A Confident Assurance

Faith is the full assurance of hope and biblical faith is a confident expectation and desire for good things in the future.

You can see this in Hebrews 11:1, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

The relationship of Faith and Hope can become clearer to us when doubt enters the picture. Doubt is the enemy of biblical faith and can destroy our confidence if we allow it. By placing our Hope in God, hope becomes an essential part of faith. Let’s look at the above passage more closely to illustrate the point. What happens when we take away hope in Hebrews 11:1? We don’t simply lose the definition of hope, *we lose the meaning of faith.*

Biblical hope allows us to look away from our narrow vision and opens us to a higher view point in the “full assurance of hope” – the expectation of great things from God. – Hope in God!

Hope is the sense of expectancy and optimism that God wants to instill in all of us who love Him and have faith in Him. It’s an overriding confidence He gives, reminding us that, even in the midst of our greatest problems, God is still with us – and He is greater than any challenge we might face.

- How do you define hope?
- Share some examples of having hope in your life. What was the focus of your hope?
- If God is the source of Hope, as it states in Romans 15:13, what are some ways you can stay connected to that source?
- How important is having faith? Can you give examples of how faith gave you assurance of hope in difficult circumstances?

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” -Jeremiah 29:11



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Hope

God's Glory & Suffering

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” – Romans 5:1-5

When the world seems to be getting the best of you where do you go, or what do you do? In China, where Shelley and I lived for 10 years, countless folks end up taking their own life. Why? I believe for many, if not all, it is because they have lost hope; a hope that is nonexistent in their world view of communism (atheism). For example, one of my Mandarin teachers once shared with me about a man he highly respected who had just committed suicide. This was a man who had obtained everything revered in China. He had political positioning, financial abundance, educational eliteness and abounding popularity. My teacher was in a conundrum – if someone who seemed to have everything lost motivation to live what lay in store for him? He knew I was a Christian so he wanted to hear how Christ fit into this tragedy.

Ravi Zacharias (a Christian apologist) observes that no matter what world view people embrace they actually attempt to live as though there is meaning to life, a standard of morality and a glimmer of hope (a confidence of something better to come). And the presence of meaning, morality, and hope are in fact a rational argument for the existence of God. When you take God out of the picture meaning, morality, and hope logically & empirically don't make sense. So when people in the midst of suffering come to realize that a hope enabling them to embrace another day is not to be substantiated in their belief, life becomes a total despair leading to depression, anxiety ... psychoses ... even suicide.

The reality of life is that we all suffer. Suffering, for whatever reason (inflicted by oneself, inflicted by another, or inflicted by living in a fallen and broken world) can challenge us with how to find relief and look forward to tomorrow. I believe that the book of Romans gives insight to that question. God calls us to rejoice. First, we are called to rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2). And second, we are oddly enough called to rejoice in our sufferings which we are told will produce hope (Romans 5:3). It seems that hope will be added onto hope – that in suffering we can find more hope. God empowers us through His grace just not to survive but to stand.

The experience of God's glory (the reality and presence of God) should arouse in us an incredible response. It should stir us to worship, to love, and to pursue a deeper relationship with God. Our hope in the glory of God is believing God is bigger than all the chaos and evil not only in the world but also in our lives. That hope encourages us to live for something much greater than ourselves knowing that God counts us as precious. The hope of the glory of God should change our perspective from despair in the sufferings of today to rejoicing in a hope that covers all situations.

Hope

God's Glory & Suffering

Rejoicing in our sufferings – Wow – that can be a tough one to even imagine especially if you have suffered atrocities yourself. God says that suffering produces endurance which produces character that produces hope. *“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts ...”*! These words (suffering, endurance, character, and hope) need to be really explored and contemplated. I am one who holds to the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture, therefore I believe that if God has written it down it has to be true, timely, and embraced. But that doesn’t make it easy to do or believe. We need to lavish love and empathy on those who have suffered, including ourselves. We also need to understand that God’s solution through rejoicing could be more than difficult to understand for those who have experienced incredible pain or may even still be going through such suffering. A good read on finding victory in the midst of suffering is *“In the Aftermath”* by Beverly Moore (wife of George Moore, DVM).

Hope came into Shelley and my world on January 25th of this year. Our 9th grandchild was given that name because of a word given to my daughter and her husband during a difficult time in their marriage. As Hope’s parents were working through overwhelming and unresolvable conflicts, a simple word was given in passing – hope. Christ’s power and love entrenched in that word took their focus off of the tarnished and complicated past and placed an expectancy (new hope) on what God could do today. The hearts previously filled with despair flipped to rejoicing. It was so life changing for them that in remembrance of God’s breaking through there is now a precious little lady who will remind us all of the gift of Hope in Christ that allows us to rejoice in our sufferings!

- Where do you go or what do you do when you need to escape from suffering? Do you turn to Christ or escape somewhere else? What does that look like and how does that work for you? Do you find lasting peace?
- Do you agree with Ravi Zacharias that meaning, morality, and hope are evidence for the existence of God? Is there anything special in how a Christian worldview understands these compared to other religions?
- Have you ever been able to rejoice in the sufferings you have gone through? Have you seen God use your suffering for good? Do you think that those who suffer abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, etc.) are to rejoice in their sufferings?
- Do you have any testimonies where you have seen God break through bringing hope where it had seemed hopeless?



Drs. Monty & Shelley Mathis are WSU veterinary graduates ('86 & '88 respectively). They both came to Christ one year after graduating. WSU's CVF group played an important role in their coming to Jesus. After having their own practice for 10 years Monty & Shelley plus their daughter & son moved to the Himalayas with CVM. 15 years later they returned to the US where Monty is CVM's Mission's Coordinator and Shelley has returned to clinical medicine. Interested in long-term missions – drop Monty an email: mmathis@cvmusa.org