

When we lit the first candle on the first week with our girls, we talked about how Jesus said He is the light of the world. Then from there we talked about hope. Years ago on this week, I asked what hope means. Lydia declared... “I HOPE I get a puppy for Christmas”. That Christmas I broke down... I caved to the incessant requests from Cindy and the girls to get a puppy.

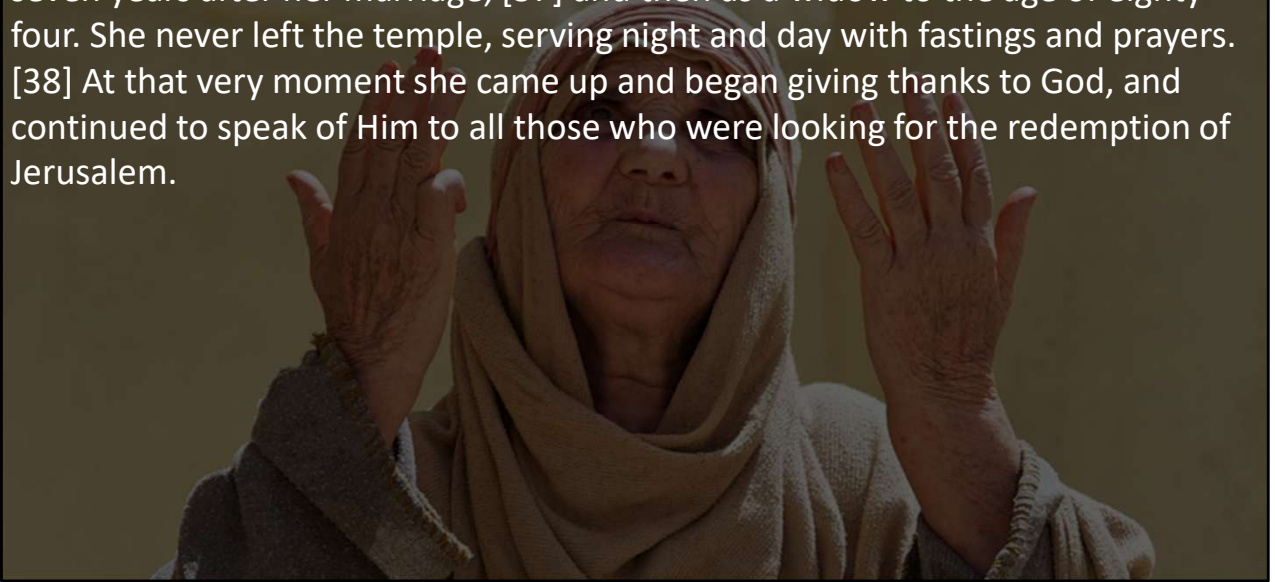
I think that child-like understanding of hope is often the meaning we carry in the Christian walk. Even though I caved and we got a puppy for Christmas, the hope we have as Christian is much deeper than the idea we normally have of hope of that specific gift at Christmas time. It is much deeper than that.

Let’s watch this short video and understanding the richness of this word from a Biblical perspective. Access the video with the QR code or follow the link (<https://spencerchristianchurch.subspla.sh/hznb5bx>) The video is not needed but it might be helpful as a parent to watch it in advance to help teach your kids the significance of this word during this time of year. If you want to keep it simple and unplugged, skip the videos each week through the study and move to the next page.

When I think of hope, I think of two of my favorite characters in the Christmas story... not the shepherds, not the magi, not even the heavenly hosts... Two older people that displayed active expectant HOPE.

Luke 2:25-35 NASB And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. [26] And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. [27] And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, [28] then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, [29] "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word; [30] For my eyes have seen Your salvation, [31] Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, [32] A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel." [33] And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. [34] And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed— [35] and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Luke 2:36-38 NASB And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, [37] and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. [38] At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.



ADULT VERSION OF QUESTIONS

1. In Luke 2:25-35, Simeon waited faithfully for the Messiah, guided by the Holy Spirit, and his hope was fulfilled when he saw Jesus. How can you actively practice hope in your daily life by trusting God's promises, even when waiting for His timing feels challenging?
2. Anna in Luke 2:36-38 devoted herself to worship, fasting, and prayer, never losing hope for God's redemption. What practical steps can you take to cultivate hope through spiritual disciplines, and how might this inspire others in your community to persevere in faith?

KID VERSION OF QUESTIONS

1. In Luke 2:25-35, Simeon waited a long time to see baby Jesus, believing God's promise. How can you show hope by trusting God when you have to wait for something special, like a prayer or a good thing to happen?
2. In Luke 2:36-38, Anna prayed and thanked God every day, hoping for Jesus to come. What's one way you can pray or do something kind to show you trust God's love, even when things feel hard?

HOPE LEADER: "The days are surely coming," says the Lord, "when I will fulfill the promise..." The season of Advent beckons us to turn our attention to the coming, to the expectation, and to the waiting.

RESPONSE: To You, O Lord, we lift up our soul. In You we put our hope; do not let us be put to shame.

LEADER: God tells us that we will be able to read the signs; that indeed all of creation will join in the expectation. Help us, Lord, to hope alongside all of the created world for redemption and restoration.

RESPONSE: To You, O Lord, we lift up our soul. In You we put our hope; do not let us be put to shame.

LEADER: Let us stay alert. Let us pay attention. Let us wait, not like others who have no hope. But let us work in our waiting. [Light one purple candle.]

ALL: We light the candle of hope and remember our commitment to hope as a practice. Hope is sustaining us, and we combine our works with our faith in this season of expectation. Amen.

As you prepare to light the first candle, have one person read the "Leader" lines and others read the "Response" line.

If you are using this as a personal devotional, read both parts and then light the first purple candle. Take a few moments of solitude to appreciate how Jesus is the light and hope of the world.

If you have small children, use the "Response" lines as a short prayer before you light the first purple candle known in many traditions as "The Hope Candle". Enjoy the glow of the candle together in a quiet moment with your kiddos. Then reward the one who was the most attentive the joy of blowing out the candle. Believe me, this will help you next week if you remind them of how you get to blow out the candle.