

1st Sunday of Advent – Hope

November 29, 2020

Just for Parents

Our culture often defines hope as merely a fanciful wish or a casual desire: “I hope tomorrow is a better day.” “I hope to go to Disney World next year.” “I hope the Chicago Cubs win the World Series.”

What is hoped for may or may not come to pass. The hope of believers, however, is more than a desire or a wish. It’s an unshakable confidence in God — even when circumstances give us reason to doubt.

G.K. Chesterton observed that hope only has any real meaning when things are hopeless. “As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is a mere flattery or platitude,” he wrote. “It is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength.” We must teach our children the difference between our culture’s view of hope and the hope we have in Christ. Hope is not mere optimism or wishful thinking; it’s an essential part of our faith. When we hope in the Lord, as mentioned 23 times in the Psalms, the following benefits await us.

Hope in the Lord gives us strength. Our culture teaches us to have self-confidence, but believers are to place their confidence in the Lord. When we hope in Him, we find the confidence and strength to face any challenge that comes our way.

Hope in the Lord teaches us patience. Society encourages us to solve our own problems. But when we face an impossible or hopeless situation, we must learn to wait patiently on the Lord. We do not need to be anxious or worried. We can find peace in God’s unfailing love for us.

Hope in the Lord brings encouragement. You know that feeling you get at the end of a long week? The anticipation of the weekend lifts your spirits. Now think about stretching that weekend out for eternity. We can find encouragement and joy amid life’s struggles because we know we will live forever with Jesus. That is why we are told to anticipate His glorious return (Titus 2:13).

Because of Jesus, we have hope both for this life and for eternity. Help your child learn more about our hope in Christ with the following age-appropriate activities and discussions.

Key Points

- Hope is an unshakable confidence in God, despite one’s circumstances.
- Hope is essential to a believer’s faith.
- Hope gives strength, teaches patience and brings encouragement.

Explore

If you haven’t already, help your child make a Christmas list. Or if they have made a list, pull it out. Talk about how they have a good list and so many of the items on their list are fun and would be enjoyable to have. Ask them if they know whether or not they will be getting the items. How do/don’t they know? Let them know that there are some things that we can hope for and know will happen.

Lesson

We are going to do a “Scripture Study” and see what the Bible has to say about hope. Read these passages and ask these questions, paraphrase or simplify as needed:

Psalm 20:6-8 – What is it that David (the person who wrote many of the Psalms) knew? Who/what should we trust in?

Psalm 25:3 – What won’t happen to someone who hopes in God? Take time to explain what shame is.

Jeremiah 29:11 – What does God want to give his followers? (hope and future)

Romans 5:1-5 (Younger kids, focus on vs 3,4,5) – What is something that we can boast / say for certain that we have? (Hope) And how do we get this hope? (suffering produces perseverance which produces character which produces hope. So yes, in this time of upheaval when nothing is “normal” God is trying to help us have hope)

1 Timothy 6:17 – What are we not supposed to put our hope in? Why?

Respond – pick the activity or activities that work best for your family.

Preschool Activity

Use this activity to help your child understand that putting our trust in Jesus gives us hope. Tell your child you are going to play a game of hide-and-seek with a toy. Ask him to choose a special toy, and reassure your child that he can trust you to hide his toy in a safe place.

Choose a hiding place that is unlikely to be discovered without your help. When your child has searched for a while and seems ready to give up the hunt, offer to help him. With verbal clues, lead your child to find his hidden toy.

As you celebrate together, thank your child for trusting you during the game. Explain that when he believed you would keep his toy safe, he was showing hope. He didn’t worry about his toy because he had hope that he would get it back safely. Just as your child trusted you to take care of a favorite toy, so we can trust God to take care of us.

School-age Activity

Use this activity to help your children recognize the hope they have when they trust God to guide them.

Using books or pieces of cardboard, create a “steppingstone” path from one side of your living room to the other. Add small challenges along the way, perhaps a chair to climb over or narrow “balance beams” made of masking tape. As you work, talk about the obstacles we face in life: moving to a different school, making new friends, being sick.

Now place a blindfold over your child’s eyes. Explain that often we can’t see how to get through the obstacles in our lives. We may say that we “hope” to find our way through, but what are our chances?

Take your child's hand and guide him along each step of the path, explaining that we can face the challenges of life because we know that God is with us. Even if we can't always see where we're headed, our hope comes from knowing that God directs our steps.

Tween Activity

To teach your tween how hope in the Lord gives us strength, try this activity. Gather a paper towel, plastic bag and water gun. Choose one member of the family to hold the paper towel against his chest as a shield. Have another family member shoot the water gun at it. Before starting, ask: "Will the paper towel keep him from getting wet?" Discuss how the paper towel is not made of water-resistant material.

Repeat the activity, this time with a plastic bag as the shield. Ask the same question. Talk about the advantage of using a plastic shield because it is made of a trustworthy, waterproof material.

Talk with your kids about how self-confidence without reliance on God is like trusting the flimsy paper towel to keep you dry. You can hope that you stay safe from harm or hope you're strong enough to withstand peer pressure, but you may not have what it takes on your own.

Instead, place your hope in God because He is the all-powerful, all-knowing Creator who gives you strength and confidence when you rely on Him. You can be confident that He will provide you with what you need to face any challenges that come your way.

Time With Your Teen

When teens ring in a new year, they often look to the future (or at least the next few months) with hope and youthful optimism. Hope is a good thing—it's part of how God motivates us to keep growing and moving forward.

The danger, though, is that hope can become distorted into "if only" thinking. Your daughter's hope to excel in school can become twisted into thinking her college future is set "if only" she gets an A in biology. Your trumpet-blowing son may think he'll feel better about himself "if only" his marching band wins the regional competition.

That's why it's important to talk with your teen about the difference between having hope in "if only" scenarios and having hope in God. Your teen's desires for the future may not come true, but he can still trust that God loves him and guides his life. Talk together about your hopes for this new year. Whether you actually write out your resolutions or simply discuss them over dinner, broach the question of how it might feel if goals and dreams go unfulfilled.

Does your teen know where to put her hope if plans don't go her way? Discuss Proverbs 16:9, "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." God is in control, and He cares for us. Rather than settling for an "if only" attitude, we can have confidence that God's plans for us are best.

Bless

Pray Jeremiah 29:11 over your child(ren) inserting their name instead of the word "you".

"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."

Resources and Ideas from: "The Reason for Hope," the compiled article is © 2012 by Focus on the Family.

PICTURE THE SCRIPTURE

Journal in Pictures

Draw a picture to remember the Scripture.



Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... Love your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22:37,39

BIBLE STORY TO COLOUR



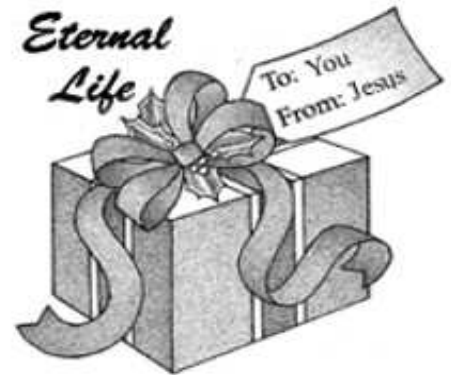
Paul sharing the Gospel in the Synagogue. He wanted people to know the real hope that they could have.

BIBLE STORY ACTIVITIES

The Gifts that Jesus Brings

The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Matthew 11:5 (NIV)

The puzzle is based on Matthew 11:2-11 (NIV).



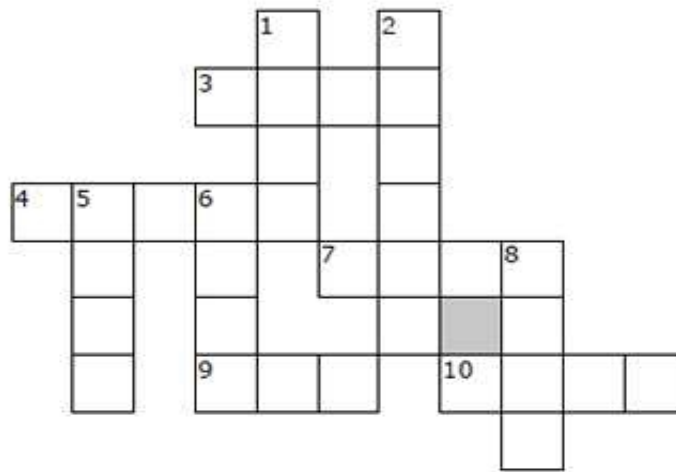
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R K P R I S O N T T U P O X O
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D L M K R C E X L M D E W C I
V K J A S D F L L C S W S Q S
H B E S B B I E E D H E A R T
E H L U I L A M E P H O N N I
A Y Z I P G W H I P R B P X N
R O N C N H H M I M G O Q A E
D Y D X Q D I T A H I Y S M J
A O Y K B B P H F L F E H Y E

BLIND	LAME	HEARD	DEAF	HEAR
GOOD	PREACHED	POOR	CHRIST	DEAD
RAISED	SEE	LEPROSY	PRISON	JOHN
NEWS	CURED	SIGHT	WALK	HEAR

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ACROSS

3. To receive sound using your ears
4. Unable to see
7. Something that is pleasant or enjoyable
9. To be aware of what is around you by using your eyes
10. To move along by putting one foot in front of the other

DOWN

1. Not living
2. A place where criminals are forced to live as a punishment
5. Unable to walk correctly because of injury to or weakness in the legs or feet
6. Information or reports about recent events
8. Unable to hear

DEAF
HEAR

SEE
DEAD

NEWS
BLIND

GOOD
PRISON

WALK
LAME