

Encounter Church
Sunday January 18, 2026

Lighten the Load
Unload Disappointment

Proverbs 13:12 (MSG)-“Unrelenting disappointment leaves you heartsick, but a sudden good break can turn life around.

(NLT)- “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life.”

THE ENCOUNTER CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT: Encounter Church is offering hope, health and healing to a hurting world!

HOPE- I like to say that hope is the confident expectation that something good is going to happen.

When studying God’s Word, you discover that real hope is—a nothing-is-impossible-with-God attitude and an awareness that God is actually expecting, looking and longing to show you His goodness!

Isaiah 30:18-(NLT) “So the Lord must wait for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion. For the Lord is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for his help.”

This hope the anchor of our soul—our mind, will and emotions.

Hebrews 6:18,19- (NLT)- “So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary.”

(Read the two stories)

(1) It’s 1952, off the coast of California. The morning is chilly, the Pacific Ocean is frigid, and thick fog rolls over the water like a gray blanket. A young woman named

Florence Chadwick steps into the water. She's already the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions—she's tough, experienced, and determined.

Today, she's attempting to become the first woman to swim the 26 miles from Catalina Island to the California coastline. For hours, she strokes through the icy waves. She's flanked by boats that watch for sharks and provide encouragement. Her mother is in one of them, cheering her on.

But the fog is thick—so thick she can't see the shore. She begins to lose hope. Her muscles ache, and her mind is overwhelmed by the fog and the cold. After 15 hours in the water, Florence does something she rarely did: she gave up. They pulled her into the boat.

She was devastated—until she realized something heartbreaking. The shore... was less than one mile away. Later, in an interview, she said this: *"I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it."*

Sometimes the fog rolls in spiritually. You're swimming in cold water, emotionally exhausted, maybe feeling like giving up. But hope—hope in God's promises—is like the shoreline. You may not always see it, but it's there. And if you believe it's there—even through the fog—you'll keep going.

God has promised us a shore. And unlike Florence, we can be certain: it's closer than we think. Don't quit in the fog. God keeps His promises.

(2) It was the mid-1800s, and **David Livingstone** had vanished into the heart of Africa. A missionary, doctor, and explorer, he was driven by a conviction that the promise of the gospel must reach every tribe and tongue. He wasn't just exploring—he was fulfilling what he saw as God's promise: *"Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance."* (Psalm 2:8)

Livingstone had been gone so long that people in Britain thought he was dead. But in reality, he was alive—barely—battling malaria, dysentery, and loneliness in the interior of Africa.

Amazingly, in his letters and journals, Livingstone never blamed God. Instead, he wrote things like, *"I am immortal till my work is accomplished."* He truly believed that because God had called him, God would sustain him.

Eventually, Henry Stanley was sent by a newspaper to find him. After an arduous search, Stanley finally encountered the gaunt, weathered man deep in the jungle. His famous words? *“Dr. Livingstone, I presume?”* When Stanley offered to take him home, Livingstone refused. He believed God’s promise to be with him had not expired. His mission wasn’t done.

He died in a small hut, kneeling beside his bed in prayer. The African believers who loved him cut out his heart and buried it beneath a tree, saying, *“His heart belongs to Africa.”* David Livingstone's hope wasn't in outcomes—it was in God's promises. In one of his final letters, he wrote, *“I am prepared to go anywhere, provided it be forward.”*

That’s what hope in God’s faithfulness looks like. Not the absence of pain or isolation—but the unwavering belief that God finishes what He starts.

When everything looks bleak...when it seems like nothing makes sense, and it feels like God’s promises will never come to pass in our lives, hope is our anchor that pulls us back and says, “Hold on! Your help is on the way!”

So what should I do when I’m in the fog?

1. Don’t Quit

Never give up! Fight the temptation to think there’s no way out of your situation. Jesus is the Way. This is your time to draw close and follow Him.

Philippians 4:13- (NLT) “For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.”

2. Remember God is working for your good.

Avoid blaming God or thinking He is punishing you for some sin. He is just using the situation to work in your life. And while it may not always feel good, His purpose will always be for your good

Romans 8:28-30- (NLT)- “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them,

he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.”

3. Do Good to Others

Do what’s right even when you’re hurting, when it doesn’t feel right or when others treat you badly. Do something good for as many people as you can as often as you can.

Galatians 6:9-10- (NLT)- “So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.”

4. Don’t Isolate Yourself

Don’t withdraw and sulk or isolate yourself from others. Remember, you can be pitiful or powerful, but you can’t be both! Many times, God may use others to encourage you in this time.

Joshua 1:9- (NLT)- “This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

5. Remember, God is more concerned about your character than your comfort.

Keep your word and honor your commitments. This is a character-building time, and you are being prepared for God’s perfect plan for your life!

Romans 5:3-5- (NLT) -We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.”

6. Don’t stop believing!

Don’t give up hope that God can and will improve your situation!

Jeremiah 29:11-14- (NLT)- “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be

found by you,” says the Lord. “I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land.”

Conclusion: Hope is only as strong as its source. That’s why the foundation of our hope must be God and the promises found in His Word.

If God is not the source, hope is just a wishful thought.

The hope I’m urging you to have is very different from what the world might call hope. It is found in the unshakable, all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present one true God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:18-25 (NLT)—“Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb. Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.”