

The Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less

It's Up to You (Week 8) - How can I maintain or regain hope?:



- 1) Hope is indivisible from human beings, though only 1/2 of adults are hopeful at any given time: we might try to let go of hope, but hope never lets go of us.
- 2) In the extensive psychological research on hope, you often find a distinction between "bad hope" (which eventually leads to hopelessness) and "good hope" (which is sustainable).
- 3) You know you're beginning to understand hope (good hope, that is) correctly when it is as applicable to someone who is chronically or terminally ill as it is to you.
- 4) Bad hope tends to focus on avoiding difficulty or pain, and as such, can be overwhelmed easily when hardship is encountered or lingers.
- 5) In contrast, good hope accepts suffering as inevitable, and in fact allows both hope and hopelessness to coexist in the same person at the same time.
- 6) Good hope is also bigger than just the present tense: it sees your life as a narrative, past, present, and the unknown future all connected, and for the Christian it acknowledges that your life is as much God's story as yours.
- 7) Bad hope is really more like a wish or fantasy: it is vague, tends to disempower, and emphasizes what's not within your own control.
- 8) Alternatively, good hope asks these two complementary questions: "What do I hope God does in this situation?," and, "What does God hope I will do in this situation?"
- 9) Good hope, then, is more like wise hope, equal parts head and heart, reason and feeling.
- 10) In sum, good hope helps, bad hope hinders; good hope is constructive, bad hope erodes; good hope is a redwood, bad hope is a tumbleweed.

Two Quotes to Chew On

"Hope" is the thing with feathers (by Emily Dickinson):

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Hope Nonetheless – Inspired by Romans 4.18 (Jan L. Richardson, The Painted Prayerbook):

Hope nonetheless. Hope despite. Hope regardless. Hope still.

Hope where we have ceased to hope. Hope amid what threatens hope. Hope with those who feed our hope. Hope beyond what we had ever hoped.

Hope that draws us past our limits. Hope that defies expectations. Hope that questions what we have known. Hope that makes a way where there is none.

Hope that takes us past our fear. Hope that calls us into new life. Hope that holds us beyond death. Hope that blesses those to come.

Hope in the Lord, amen.

Go Deeper This Week

1) Scripture reading this week: No other part of scripture uses the verbiage of "hope" as often as the Psalms. Read some psalms of hope this week, one every couple of days:

Psalm 33 - [Psalm 33 NRSVA](#)

Psalm 42 - [Psalm 42 NRSVA](#)

Psalm 62 - [Psalm 62 NRSVA](#)

Psalm 71 - [Psalm 71 NRSVA](#)

2) Spend some time this week reflecting on or journaling about your own "bad" and "good" hope. You can use the bullet points in section A., specifically #3-#10 to as a guide. This would also make for a great conversation with a trusted friend.

3) Three of the best, more brief articles on the psychology of good and bad hope:

- On the differentiation between good and bad hope:

[Good Hope and Bad Hope](#)

- Some steps to change hopelessness to hope:

[How to Overcome Hopelessness](#)

- On some downsides to "bad hope":

[7 Downsides of Hope](#)

4) Perhaps no one in the 20th-century has spoken as eloquently and knowledgeably about hope and meaning transcending suffering than Viktor Frankl. The first link below is a great overview of his life - his suffering at a WW2 concentration camp, and how it shaped his understanding of meaning in life. The 2nd video is a five minute recitation of his book's most well-known quotes - great to use for a devotional or reflection time.

[Viktor Frankl Biography: A Search for Meaning](#)

[Viktor Frankl: Life Changing Quotes \(Man's Search For Meaning\)](#)

5) For those interested in the Good Will Hunting reference at the end of the sermon, the first link is the scene in which the painting is described, and the second happens a week later, in effect it's the psychologist's response. Warning - lots of profanity:

[Good Will Hunting \(3/12\) Movie CLIP - The Painting \(1997\)](#)

[Good Will Hunting | 'Your Move Chief'](#)