**God's GIFT OF HOPE FOR YOU**

*And his name will be the hope of all the world.” Matthew 12:21*

Hope you had a good Christmas  
It’s a wonderful life …And Clarence says, “What is it? Is he sick?” And I love the response that he gets. “No it’s worse than that. He’s discouraged.”   
discouragement – the lack of hope – can be worse than physical illness.   
There’s a guy by the name of Major Harold Cushner who was a POW in Vietnam. He talks about the devastating effect of hopelessness on human beings. He describes one 24 year old American Marine who was a POW in Vietnam. This Marine decided to cooperate with the Vietcong who had captured him. He said, If you promise to let me go I’ll do whatever I can to cooperate with you. They said great. It’s a deal. So he did everything to cooperate. He was a model prisoner. He was even a leader of the camp’s thought reform group. But after a while it became clear to him they were lying to him. They weren’t going to let him go. And when that realization took hold... this is how Major Cushner described what happened to him, “He became a zombie. He refused to do any work and he rejected all offers of food and encouragement. He simply lay in his cot, sucking his thumb. In a matter of weeks he was dead.”   
the human spirit needs hope to survive and to thrive.  
the God of the Bible is that source of hope

# Poor Substitutes for Hope

* Wishful thinking

Wishing the Lakers can win, wishing for a baby boy, it’s a girl, having no power over the situation

* Blind optimism

see everything through rose colored glasses. Sort of like the sign on the bulletin board at the grocery store. “Lost: Dog with three legs, blind in left eye, missing right ear, tail broken and recently castrated. Answers to the name Lucky.” You can call that dog Lucky all you want. That is not a lucky dog.

* Ambitious dreams  
  The problem is that often we are restricted by our own limitations or by things that are outside of our control.

For most people, hope is something they do, but the Bible talks about hope as something we can HAVE.

Hope is the confident expectation that God is willing and able to fulfill His promises to us.

*This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary.* Hebrews 6:19 NLT

Our hope is only as good as what it is attached to

**1. Accept the fact that we’re absolved of our past.**And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21 NLT  
HOPE KILLERS1.Bitterness and Resentment  
“Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many” (Hebrews 12:15 nlt)

2.Worry and Anxiety  
“Most Christians are being crucified on a cross between two thieves: yesterday’s regrets and tomorrow’s worries.” WARREN WIERSBE  
“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7)  
3.Looking Back and Comparing  
4.Guilt  
5.Past Failures

Every hope-filled, thriving, successful person has two things in common:  
**1. They have a lot of past failures  
2. They never let those past failures stop them**

“Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,” the apostle, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us” (Philippians 3:13–14 nlt)

**PRACTICAL STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR DEFENSE**

**Life Strategy #1—Never Make Decisions When You’re Down**This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:18

**Life Strategy #2—Respond to Bad News in Great Ways** Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement[h] quietly. Matthew 1:19

**Life Strategy #3—Shake It Off and Step Up**When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus. Matthew 1:24-25

Credit Card Debt Cancelled – gone

Etch-a-sketch  
Jesus didn’t come to rub it in, but to rub it out

*“This I call to mind and therefore I have hope: because of the Lord’s great love, we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning.”* Lamentations 3:22-24

even though we may fail God (which we all do) and even though we may fail our children in some way (which we all do) and even though we may fail our spouse in some way (which we all do) even so God's compassion, His forgiveness, His absolution for those wrongs we’ve done in our past is a renewable resource. It never is exhausted. It is fresh and it is available every single day.

I got a letter from a woman a while back. She said, “I was living with this guy and I got pregnant. I wanted to keep the baby. I wanted to raise the baby. He didn’t want me to and he’s a very controlling kind of a guy and he coerced me and convinced me that I should have an abortion. So I did. Then afterwards he left me any way. For years I was miserable. I was so utterly ashamed of myself for not being strong enough to stand up for myself or stand up for my baby.”

a new year is the perfect time to ask God for a Do Over? If you feel weighed down by guilt in your life over something – the way that you treated your kids as they were growing up, a marriage that fell apart, whatever it is, why would you want to lug this backpack of guilt into a whole new year – 365 more days of feeling weighed down by guilt when God is saying, *“My mercies are fresh everyday.”* 1 John 1:9 says, *“You don’t have to wonder if I’ll forgive you. Just ask Me. Confess your sins and I will forgive you.”* The question is are you going to ask?

*“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”* 1 Timothy 6:17

**2. Trust Him to manage your Life**

But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.[b] 6 And because we[c] are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.”[d] 7 Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child.[e]And since you are his child, God has made you his heir Galatians 4:4-7

**Right Emperor**

Caesar Augustus real name Gaius Octavius, known as Octavian, "Caesar" is a term like king, or emperor, or Pharaoh

"Augustus meaning revered one, or honored one, or majestic one. given to him in 27 B.C. by the Roman Senate. He was a brilliant man. He was a formidable ruler. Fought Mark Antony, Cleopatra. They committed suicide. He ruled Peace that stretched over the whole Roman Empire, He was a gifted, gifted ruler and leader. He was such a remarkable man that he was called, and it's inscribed in stone, "the savior of the world." That's how highly he was revered. He was worshiped as a god and as a deity.So after the battles, at the right time, he calls for a tax of all the empire around 8 BC

**Right Governor**

Quirinius was governor of Syria, every 14 years a census. Jews didn’t comply right away, but Herod finally had the Jews comply and they had a time to comply. Kinda like our April 15 date. They had to go to their ancestral home.

Micah 5:2 Bethlehem and ruler would be born.

**Right Parents**

both had royal blood. Joseph the legal right to the throne Mary (Jesus' blood line) both go back to David

Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before Me” (2 Samuel 7:16).

**Right Town**

Bethlehem, traveling during 9th month. Leave her come back. Gossip, rumors. Not leaving her alone.

**5 ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS TO HELP YOU BECOME A PERSON WHO EXPECTS GREAT THINGS**

**Trait #1 – Believe Impossible Things Are Possible**

**Trait #2 – Believe God Has Better Days Ahead**

**Trait #3—Realize the Power of Perspective**

**“But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” GENESIS 50:19-21**

**Trait #4—Replace FEAR with FAITH**

**“The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus...’ ‘How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. …no word from God will ever fail.’ ‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May your word to me be fulfilled.’” LUKE 1:30-38**

**Trait #5—Replace “What If?” with “Why Not?”**

“I think there is a world market for maybe 5 computers”

Thomas Watson IBM Chairman of the Board, 1943

“Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value”

Marshal Foch; military strategist, 1904

“The Japenese auto industry isn’t likely to carve out a big slice of the US market.” Businessweek, 1958

“Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau.” Irving Fisher, Economist. October 16, 1929

“We don’t think the Beatles will do anything in their market. Guitar groups are on their way out.” Recording Company Expert 1962

**3. Firmly stand on the fact that we’re Assured of our future.**

Girl stole book, cost $5 penalty $20, pastor paid it  
plane crash, man had peace  
and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” Luke 1:33

He is “preparing a place for you” John 14:2

Eternal Heaven

- Restored Heaven and Earth

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare 2 Peter 3:10

We don’t like things foreign to us but familiar…a new car, a new house, new book, new movie, new song, etc…

19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that[h] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. Romans 8;18-21

No mosquito’s snakes. Pain, killing…..

City of God no crime, selfishness, destruction, rudeness,

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Rev. 21:2-4

- Resurrected Bodies

eat, sleep, laugh, learn,

“Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish John 21:12-14

Jesus – slightly different, didn’t recognize Luke 24 /Maybe ideal age of 30

disappear, transport to heaven /Jesus was still a man

- Renewed Relationships

I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:25-27

Animals speak? Perhaps Balaam’s donkey did, serpent did

Then the LORD opened the donkey’s mouth, and it said to Balaam, “What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?” Number 22:28

- Rekinded Adventure

Magnificent city….

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Rev 21:2

1500 miles wide and high….

Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities Luke 19:17

lots of jobs…but no police, dentist, doctors, funeral directors, insurance salespeople….

we will not be omniscient, but like Adam, a huge capacity to learn

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known 1 Cor. 13:12

A New Year’s Prayer for You

In the words of the Apostle Paul

*“This is my prayer: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the all-glorious Father, will give you spiritual wisdom and the insight to know more of Him that you may receive that inner illumination of the Spirit which will make you realize how great is the hope to which He is calling you – the magnificence and splendor of the inheritance promised to Christians – and how tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God. That power is the same divine energy which was demonstrated in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and gave Him the place of highest honor in heaven – a place that is infinitely superior to any command, authority, power or control, and which carries with it a name far beyond any name that could ever be used in this world or the world to come.”* Ephesians 1:16-20

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Matthew 12:21*

For most people, hope is something they do, but the Bible talks about hope as something we can \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Hope is the confident \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_that God is willing and able to fulfill His promises to us.

**1. Accept the fact that we’re \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of our past.**And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21 NLT

**2. Trust Him to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your Life**

But when the right time came, God sent his Son Galatians 4:4

**3. Firmly stand on the fact that we’re \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of our future.**

“to prepare a place for you…” John 14:3

I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.  
Ephesians 1:16-20 (NLT)