

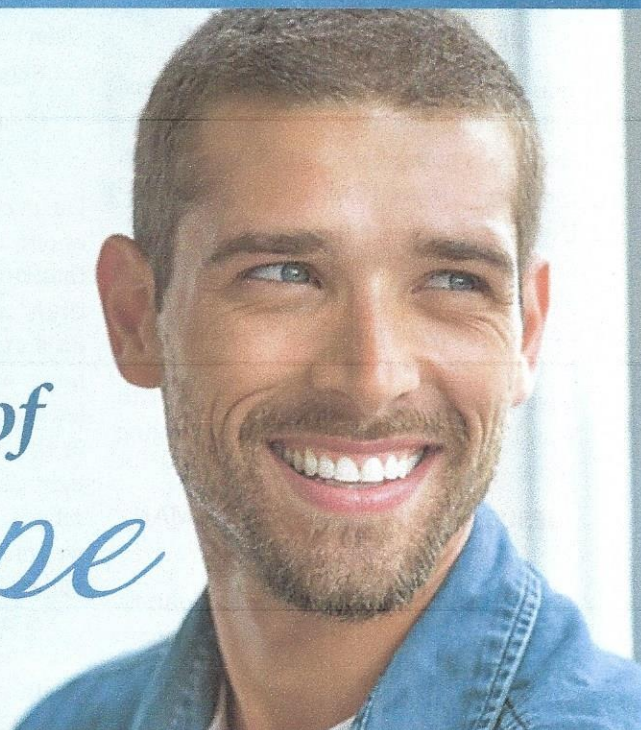


www.housetohouse.com

House to House Heart to Heart

In Pursuit of Hope

Allen Webster



An S-4 submarine crew became trapped after they were rammed by a ship off the coast of Massachusetts and sank immediately. Rescue efforts failed. Near the end, a diver heard tapping and placed his helmeted ear to the side of the vessel. He recognized Morse Code and deciphered a question:

“Is. There. Any. Hope?”¹

We all need hope. Perhaps two of the saddest words in any language are “No hope.” We sometimes feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and stressed. School can make young people feel hopeless. Relationships can cause some serious headaches. Work strain can drive our blood pressure up and our patience down.

Jesus puts life back into people. Like an old photo left in the sun, a life of sin soon loses its color. Like week-old bread, it gets stale. Like a game played too often, it loses its appeal. Those on the other side of sin need to be invigorated and renewed. When the long-missed prodigal returned, his fa-

ther urged his older brother to accept him, reasoning that it was appropriate that “we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (Luke 15:32). Paul said that those who had been dead in sins are made alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:5).

Not every church has learned to sing in the chord of hope. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in his journal, “Wonders of wonders! I have been to church today and am not depressed.”² While we all need lessons on the dangers of sin, preachers should not send hearers away on flat tires. Shakespeare might say this:

Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis
something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to
thousands;
But he who filches from me my courage,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

Jesus gives hope to people who feel hopeless.

JESUS GAVE HOPE TO THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). She had had five previous husbands and was now living with a man. Therefore, she was an outcast in her own community. Jesus did not ignore such sin, but He taught her a better way.

JESUS GAVE HOPE TO PETER

The angel said to the women at Jesus' tomb, "Tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you" (Mark 16:7). Why did he say, "and Peter," since Peter was included in the disciples? This carries the force of "especially Peter." Peter had denied Jesus, but later repented, so Jesus wanted to convey to Peter, "I still have a place for you. I am not upset with you. I care about you." How encouraging those words must have been to Peter!

JESUS GAVE HOPE TO THE WOMAN ACCUSED OF ADULTERY

Jesus gave hope to an adulteress (John 8). Put yourself in the shoes of the woman caught in the act of adultery. She was dragged from her bed and brought before Christ. Though disappointed by her sin, we cannot help but feel a little sorry for her. How embarrassed she must have been! How her face must have burned and her heart ached as she stood expecting condemnation from Jesus like she had experienced from the other men!

Her accusers asked Him what to do, trying to trap Him in His words. He stooped and wrote on the ground, saying nothing. They pushed for a decision. He finally stopped writing long enough to say, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (8:7). Then He stooped and wrote some more. One by one, the accusers, convicted by their own consciences, beginning with the oldest, quietly slipped away.

When they were all gone, Jesus asked her, "Where are those accusers of yours?" (8:10). She answered that they were gone. He said, "Neither do I condemn you" (8:11). What a relief that must have been! Her "flight or fight" adrenaline must have triggered emotional tears. Perhaps she looked down

at the stones her accusers had dropped as they exited. Had it not been for Jesus, those stones could easily have been stained with her blood and gathered to lay atop her grave.

Jesus did not condemn her to death. Neither did He condone her behavior. He called it a sin and told her to stop it: "Go and sin no more" (8:11). She had been given a second chance. She left Jesus with a different perspective.

JESUS STILL GIVES HOPE TO PEOPLE TODAY

Do people need hope today? The spirit of our age is more like "been there, done that, now what?" than "a great, big, beautiful tomorrow." Benjamin Franklin, on a cynical day, said, "He who lives on hope, will die starving."³ Abraham Cowley said, "Hope is the most hopeless thing in the world."⁴ Years ago, Harvard president Charles Eliot (1834–1926) said of the school, "Things seem to be going fairly well now that a spirit of pessimism prevails in all departments."⁵

Yet most of us do not want to live in pessimism and hopelessness. Instinctively, we seek something better from God. Our loving Father understands us. Being "the God of hope" (Romans 15:13), He wants us to have joy and peace, even when the world tells us there is no hope. God made a "hope chest" and filled it with reasons to live and rejoice. God's hope chest is His church. In it, one lives in hope (Titus 1:2); outside of it, one is without hope (Ephesians 2:12).

The church of Christ is the right place to look for hope. The word *hope* is found 130 times in Scripture.⁶ Hope was laid in a manger, and Hope came out of the tomb on the third day. Hope is in both God (1 Peter 1:21) and us (1 Peter 3:15). It is alive and enduring (1 Peter 1:3, 13), even to death (Proverbs 14:32).

An air of hope surrounds those who believe their past is perfect (not flawless, but forgiven), their present is purposeful, and their future is paradise! On any given Sunday where Christians gather, there is joy, laughter, and excited chatter. Genuine friendships recharge in the shared fellowship. That experience is a sanctuary from the world for a little while.

In a world that seems hopeless, we can live "in hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2). Christ has "begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3–4).

Like Jesus, through Jesus, and for Jesus, the church offers hope to sinners.

A preacher visited a woman named Esther—a God-fearing, Bible-loving, aged saint—shortly before her death. She told him that her son-in-law had invited her to visit him in Washington, but she had said, "I can't. I have to stay near the cemetery." She added, "I went out this week and bought me a bright, shining casket. I'm so excited!"

Vance Havner said, "I'm homesick for heaven. It's the hope of dying that's kept me alive this long."⁷

Endnotes:

¹ <http://www.moreillustrations.com/Illustrations/hope%202.html>.

² http://www.helwys.com/learningmatters/lm_pages/minarchives/minarchv_negotiationparadox.html.

³ https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/benjamin_franklin_122387.

⁴ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/714864-hope-is-the-most-hopeless-thing-of-all>.

⁵ Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Harry S. Truman: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President. 1946.

⁶ Blue Letter Bible

⁷ <http://www.thegospelgreats.com/ggnlarchive/epistle20180116.htm>.





What It Means to TRUST GOD

We live in unique times. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we are facing challenges most of us have never seen in our lifetime.

Such challenges should encourage us to trust in God. Consider these passages:

- The individual who trusts God is blessed (Jeremiah 17:7–8).
- Trust God instead of leaning on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5–6).
- When we are afraid, we need to trust God (Psalm 56:3).
- We are to trust in the Lord and do good (Psalm 37:3).
- God knows those who take refuge in Him (Nahum 1:7).
- It is better to trust in the Lord than to trust man (Psalm 118:8).
- God keeps those who trust in Him in perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3).

It is easy to say, “I trust God” when all is well, but in times of uncertainty or hardship, we will show what we truly believe (Proverbs 24:10). Even when the world panics, Christians can be joyful and sensible because we see the One who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27).



That's Confidence

It is recorded in Roman history that, when the Gauls were encamped around Rome, the Romans continued to buy and sell the very lands on which the Gauls had erected their tents—a great proof of their confidence in the future destiny of Rome (cf. Jeremiah 32:1–25; Luke 12:33; Colossians 1:5). —William Kelly

If we truly believe in the God who runs the universe, we cannot be as fearful and faithless as our contemporaries who do not know God. The world is always watching (Philippians 1:28).

Although we do not know exactly how things will turn out, we know that eventually they will improve. When Paul was in prison and his future was unknown, he spoke in positive terms of his release and was optimistic about his future (Philippians 1:19; 2:24). We should preface all our plans with “if the Lord wills,” and we must reject the pessimism that makes it seem as if we live under a perpetual gray cloud (James 4:15).

In the present moment, we may think we are suffering more than anyone else ever has. This attitude can cloud our vision about God. We are reminded that we can trust God when we look back at all He has done in the past and trust Him for the future (2 Corinthians 1:9–11). In both the Old and New Testaments, God delivered His people from terrible things.

Also, in our own lives we know of valleys from which God has rescued us, and we can lean on those memories for hope. All things work together for God's ultimate good for His people (Romans 8:28)—we need to remember that.

Jesus told His disciples that they would have trouble in the world, but because He overcame, so could they (John 16:33). I know it is cliché, but remember to trust in God. “Trust in Him at all times” (Psalm 62:8).

—Hiram Kemp, Lakeland, Florida

The Emptiness of Unbelief

Sometimes it is helpful to see what life looks like from another's viewpoint. Bertrand Russell, a renowned philosopher and avowed atheist, said this about humanity:

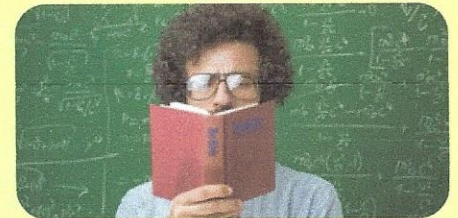
“His origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms. . . . No fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve individual life beyond the grave. . . .

“All the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noon-day brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system. . . . The whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins.”

For those who choose to believe we are merely a collection of atoms, this is the stark reality of life: once it is over, it is over. —Bertrand Russell, “A Free Man's Worship” in *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, eds., Robert E. Egner and Lester E. Denonn, Simon and Schuster

The righteous has a refuge in his death.

PROVERBS 14:32



God's Plan for Saving Man

Divine Love: John 3:16

God's Grace: Ephesians 2:8

Christ's Blood: Romans 5:9

Holy Spirit's Word: Romans 1:16

Sinner's Faith: Acts 16:31

Sinner's Repentance: Luke 13:3

Sinner's Confession: Romans 10:10

Sinner's Baptism: Acts 22:16

Christian's Love: Matthew 22:37

Christian's Work: James 2:24

Christian's Hope: Romans 8:24

Christian's Endurance: Revelation 2:10

A Lot Can Happen

A man sentenced to death obtained a reprieve by assuring the king he would teach his majesty's horse to fly within the year—on the condition that if he did not succeed, he would be put to death at the end of the year. "Within a year," the man explained later, "the king may die, or I may die, or the horse may die. Furthermore, in a year, who knows? Maybe the horse will learn to fly."

—Bernard M. Baruch

*The hope of the righteous
will be gladness.*

PROVERBS 10:28

Now That's Optimism

A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon. He asked a boy in the dugout what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing—we're behind."

"Boy," said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged."

"Why should I be discouraged?" replied the little boy. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!" —Author Unknown

*Happy is he that has the God
of Jacob for his help, whose
hope is in the Lord his God.*

PSALM 146:5

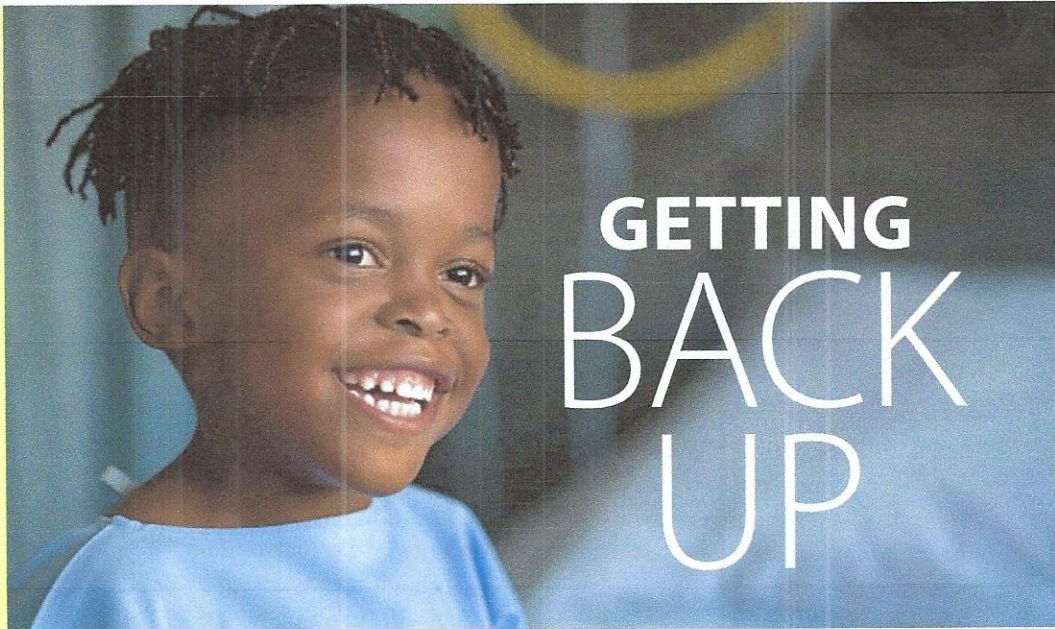
Hope Versus Optimism

Czech playwright Vaclav Havel contemplated, "Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense regardless of how it turns out."

*For we were saved in this hope, but
hope that is seen is not hope; for why
does one still hope for what he sees?*

ROMANS 8:24

For more material on the home and family, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents, and family finances, go to www.housetohouse.com.



GETTING BACK UP

A large city school system had a program to help children keep up with schoolwork during stays in the city's hospitals.

A teacher assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a child. She took his name and room number and talked briefly with his regular teacher. "We are studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," she said. "I'd be grateful if you could help him so he does not fall too far behind."

The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one told her that he had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy's suffering, she stammered, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she had not accomplished much.

But the next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to him?" The teacher felt she had done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "That's not what I mean. We've been worried about that boy, but ever since yesterday, his attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live."

Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization. He expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?" —Bits & Pieces, July 1991

*Hope in the Lord from this
time forth and forever.*

PSALM 131:3

Free College for Everyone

Self-made millionaire Eugene Lang, greatly changed the lives of a sixth-grade class in East Harlem.

Mr. Lang had been asked to speak to a class of 59 sixth-graders. What could he say to inspire these students, most of whom would drop out of school? He wondered how he could get these children from tough neighborhoods even to look at him.

Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak from his heart. "Stay in school," he admonished, "and I'll help pay the college tuition for every one of you."

At that moment the lives of these students changed. For the first time they had

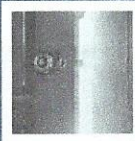
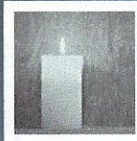
hope. One student said, "I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling."

Nearly 90 percent of that class went on to graduate from high school. —Parade Magazine

Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.

PSALM 39:7





5 BIBLE PICTURES OF

Hope

The Bible uses five pictures to help us understand hope. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then five pictures are worth a whole sermon full of words.

Hope is light—to help us see through the darkness of sin.¹ God said, “I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed” (Psalm 132:17). As the lamp of the tabernacle was never to go out (Exodus 27:20–21), so the hope of the gospel shines through the church as a beacon drawing us to salvation. Hope does not deny the reality of dark and painful circumstances. However, it does shine a bright light into these valleys and points to the sunrise at the end of them.

Hope is a nail—to hold things together when the world is falling apart. “Grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg [nail] in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage”

(Ezra 9:8). We all have those days when one bad thing after another happens to us (cf. Job 1:13–19). Sometimes that “day” stretches into weeks in a hospital bed or waiting room, and months in therapy or grief (cf. Job 7:3). How does one keep going? He hopes that tomorrow will be better, if not in this world, then in the next.

Hope is a door—a way out of despair (Hosea 2:15). The meaning of hope in Scripture is almost the opposite of ordinary usage now. When we say we “hope” for something, we express uncertainty. Biblical hope not only desires something, it also expects it. It is confident that it will happen.

Scriptural hope does not mean “Cross your fingers.” It is not the lip-biting gaze as you watch the place kicker go for a field goal in the last ten seconds when you are down by two points. The confidence of hope is not mathematical or logical; it is a moral certainty.

Hope is a helmet—to shield us from the harsh blows of life. “As a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:8). A helmet protects a soldier’s head in battle (1 Samuel 17:5, 38), a player’s head in a game, or a worker’s head in a construction zone. The gospel blocks Satan’s vicious blows (Ephesians 6:10–17).

Hope is an anchor—to hold us in place in life’s storms. There are sixty-six drawings of anchors in the catacombs, the caves and tunnels where persecuted Christians hid during Roman persecutions. Hope was their anchor during those dark and stormy days (Hebrews 6:19; 10:34).

Rejoice! Christians have strong consolation (Hebrews 6:13, 17). —Allen Webster

Endnote:

¹ Wade Webster is the first person I heard make these points, and I assume they are original with him.

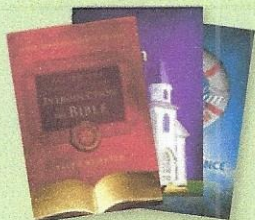
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Bible Quiz

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Facing Trials" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited)

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State: _____
Phone: _____



We would love for you to learn more about the Bible!

- ☐ Please send me a free Bible Course
- ☐ I would be interested in a personal Bible study



The Bible and Hope

Directions: Find your answers in Psalm 16:9; 42:5; 71:14; 119:114; Romans 5:3–4; 8:25; 12:12; 15:4, 13; Philippians 1:20; 1 Timothy 6:17; Hebrews 6:11; 10:23. Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

- We glory in _____, knowing that tribulations produce _____.
- "I will hope _____, and will praise You yet _____ and more."
- If we hope for what we do not see, we _____ for it with _____.
- "With all _____, as always, so now also Christ will be _____ in my body, whether by life or by death."
- "Why are you _____ down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? _____ in God, for I shall yet praise Him."
- "Rejoicing in hope, patient in _____, continuing _____."
- "Let us _____ the confession of our hope without wavering."
- Through the patience and the _____ of the Scriptures we might have _____.
- "May the God of hope fill you with all _____ and _____ in believing."
- "My heart is _____, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will _____ in hope."
- Tribulation produces _____; character produces _____.
- "He who promised is _____."
- "Nor to _____ in _____ riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy."
- "Show the same diligence to the _____ of hope until the end."
- "You are my hiding place and my _____; I hope in Your _____."

The Anchor of the Soul

No one who knows what can happen at sea would go to sea in a vessel that carried no anchor, even if it were the greatest and most modern ocean liner afloat. Circumstances might arise when the hope of the ship and all her company would depend, not on the captain or the crew, the engines, the compass, or the steering gear, but on the anchor. When all else has failed, there is hope in the anchor.

Come with me, and pass into that silent and forgotten world of the Roman catacombs, where the early Christians buried their dead. Follow the flickering candle, descend the steps cut out of the soil, and find yourself in one of the almost innumerable narrow passages which undermine the Roman Campagna for miles in every direction.

On either side of these narrow passages are the niches into which the bodies of the dead were pushed. On the stone which nearly two millennia ago sealed the bodies, we read in Latin and Greek their names

and the sentiments of faith inscribed with the point of the trowel upon the mortar.

Among the inscriptions are: "Alexander is not dead, but lives above the stars"; "To dear Serichas, sweetest son, mayest thou live in the Holy Spirit"; "Victoria, in peace and Christ"; "Gordian, the courier from Gaul, strangled for the faith. Rests in peace."

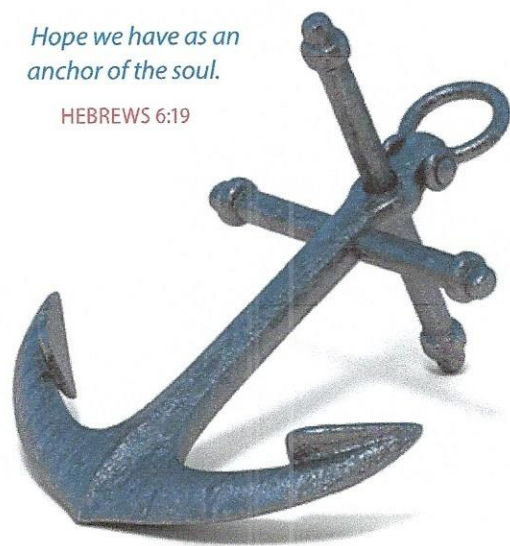
We come to a chamber where services for the dead were held. Inscribed on the walls and ceilings are scenes from the Bible. Among the most frequent are Noah and the ark, Jonah and the big fish, the sacrifice of Isaac, and Christ the Good Shepherd, with the lamb in His arms. There are also ancient symbols of Christianity—the cock, reminiscent of Peter's fall, admonishing believers to watch and pray; the phoenix, as a symbol of the resurrection of the body; the vine, the symbol of the believer's union with Christ; the palm branch, the symbol of the Christian's victory through faith which overcomes the world; the fish, because the

first three letters of the Greek word for fish formed an acrostic for Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and one of the favorite symbols, the anchor, the symbol of hope.

There were times when the anchor was the last resource for the storm-tossed sailor. Christians took this ancient symbol as their own. —Author unknown

Hope we have as an anchor of the soul.

HEBREWS 6:19



Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Recommended Resource



Where is the Creator in times of Crisis? How does pain and suffering in our world reflect on God's goodness? In this online video program, these topics will be presented, addressed, and considered in light of what the Bible has to say.

video.wvbs.org/crisis

I want to learn more about the Bible!

If you knew for sure that the religious path you are on would not get you to heaven, would you change? If there was the possibility of a doubt, would you investigate? Why not request a personal Bible study today?



☐ In-Home Bible Study



☐ Online Bible Study (go to biblestudy.housetohouse.com)



☐ Bible Correspondence Course



☐ DVD Bible Study

Featured Tracts!

- ☐ Five Pictures of Hope
- ☐ I Have This Nagging Fear that I Am Not Saved
- ☐ Why Doesn't God Do Something?
- ☐ Don't Give Up. Don't Ever Give Up



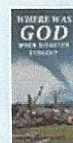
More subjects:



☐ How to Stop Worrying



☐ How Good are you at Rejoicing?



☐ Where Was God When Disaster Struck?



☐ The Advantage of Disadvantage



☐ Why Do Bad Things Happen?



☐ Happiness Guaranteed



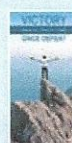
☐ I'm Looking for a Church that is Not So Negative



☐ Where to Turn When There's Nowhere to Turn



☐ What Does the Church Have to Offer Me?



☐ Victory Where There Was Once Defeat

Don't see the topic you need? Visit www.housetohouse.com for more subjects.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Prayer requests or comments: _____



Infographic

God is there in times of trouble



Bounce Back

What is the difference between people who thrive and people who decline over a long period of time?

It is not that they do not get knocked down; it is that they bounce back up. Every successful person I can think of has had to come back from discouraging circumstances. That is true of people I know personally and those I read about in the Bible. As a matter of fact, many people in the Bible have a comeback story from something.

Joseph endured mistreatment from a dysfunctional family. There is probably not anyone who does not have some relative the others try not to sit next to at Christmas dinner.

David bounced back from several devastating failures in his morals, leadership, and career.

Elijah suffered personal criticism.

Nehemiah was discouraged by harsh political, legal, and social circumstances.

John Mark was rejected by a respected Christian leader. Some people are marked for life with one negative comment from an authority figure.

Peter was disappointed with his inability to withstand pressure. My number one source of discouragement is, unfortunately, myself.

Jesus was let down by friends, relatives, and religious leaders. At His hour of greatest need, He took three guys and said, "I need your support." When He came back, they were fast asleep.

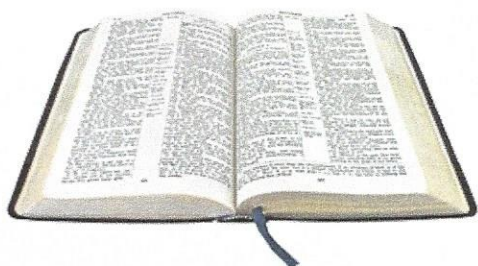
—Adapted from Ray Johnston

*Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation,
continuing steadfastly in prayer.*

ROMANS 12:12



House to House
Heart to Heart



How Can We Help?

Feel like praying? Call to pray with someone (number on the front).

Need spiritual guidance or physical help? That's what we are here for. Let us help!

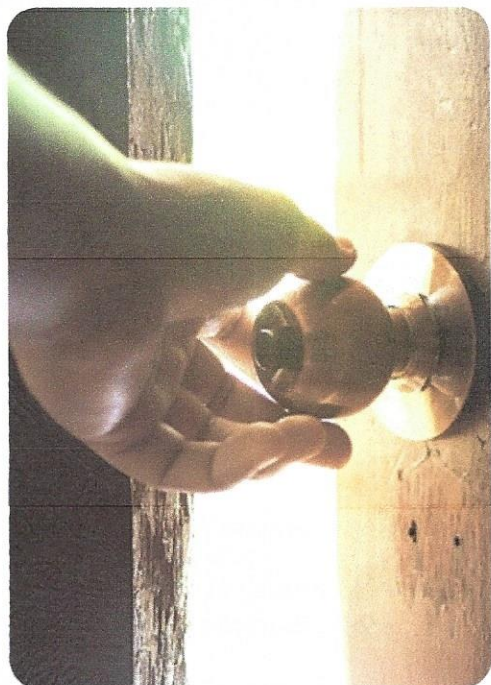
Can't leave the house? Extra time? Three good options:

- Study online (hth.onlineBiblestudy.org).
- Let us mail you a free study course through the mail.
- Join us via livestream.

Back to the Bible

We will study in person or at a "social distance." We can mail or drop off a study; then we can study over the phone or through video chat.

Let God use this slowdown to help you come to Him.



Please recycle House to House by giving this copy to your family or friends.

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