

ENTRUSTED

STEWARDS OF HOPE

God is the God of hope, and He entrusts hope to us so that we can carry it, protect it and impart it to others. Hope is not merely something God wants you to **have**. Hope is something He wants you to **steward**. There are people whose hope will increase because they encountered you. And there are people whose hope can diminish because they encountered you. The question is: **What are you doing with the hope God has entrusted to you?** It's the word *Elpis* in the Greek Language and in essence **Biblical hope is a confident expectation of a future good based on the character, promises and faithfulness of God.** In everyday English, "I hope" can mean "I wish this might happen." In the New Testament, *elpis* often carries a much firmer sense of expectation because its object is God. Our culture often uses hope weakly. "I hope things work out." "I hope I get the job." "I hope the economy improves." Biblical hope is stronger than that. It is **confident expectation grounded in God.**

Optimism says: "Things will probably get better." Biblical hope says: "Whatever happens, God remains faithful."

1. GOD IS THE GOD OF HOPE

Romans 15:13 *"May the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may **overflow with hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

A. Hope has a source

Paul does not merely say that God **gives** hope. He calls Him: **"The God of hope."**

Hope originates in the nature and character of God. Our hope is not fundamentally rooted in: circumstances, economics, politics, people, our own ability, predictability or favourable outcomes. Our hope is rooted in **God Himself.**

Psalms 62:5 *"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him."*

The source of biblical hope is God.

B. Hope grows through trust

Romans 15:13 says: "...as you trust in him..." There is a direct relationship between **trust and hope.**

When trust in God decreases, hope often decreases. When our revelation of God increases, hope increases. Sometimes the problem is not that we have lost hope. The deeper problem is that we have misplaced trust. This is subtle. We tend to drift.

C. Hope is designed to overflow

Romans 15:13 says: "...so that you may **overflow with hope...**" God does not merely want enough hope in you for you. He wants so much hope in you that it begins affecting the people around you. That is stewardship. **God pours hope into us, and we become carriers of hope to others.**

You should be able to ask: **When people spend time with me, do they leave with more hope or less hope?**

2. HOPE IS CENTRAL TO CHRISTIAN FAITH

Hope is not a peripheral Christian idea. It is woven throughout the Word. Paul repeatedly speaks about three great Christian virtues:

1 Corinthians 13:13 *“And now these three remain: **faith, hope and love**. But the greatest of these is love.”*

Faith, Hope, and Love. Hope belongs in that company.

Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

Faith and hope are intimately connected. **Faith gives substance to hope.** If there is nothing hoped for, what is faith reaching toward? Hope gives faith a future orientation. **Hope says, tomorrow can be different.**

Hebrews 6:19 “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” Notice the metaphor.

Hope is an anchor. An anchor does not stop the storm. It stops the storm from carrying the ship wherever it wants. Christian hope does not mean: “There will be no storms.” Christian hope says:

“The storm does not get to determine where I end up.”

Romans 8:24–25 *“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”*

Hope operates precisely in the space between what God has promised and what we are presently experiencing. If you already possess it, you do not need hope. Hope becomes necessary when there is a gap.

A gap between:

- **promise and fulfilment**
- **prayer and answer**
- **calling and manifestation**
- **seed and harvest**
- **prophecy and fulfilment**
- **where you are and where God says you are going**

That gap is where hope must be stewarded.

3. RESEARCH ON HOPE

When hope is present	When hope is depleted
Perseverance	Giving up
Resilience	Helplessness
Engagement	Disengagement
Psychological energy	Emotional exhaustion

When hope is present	When hope is depleted
Problem-solving	Feeling trapped
Greater well-being	Psychological distress
Lower burnout risk	Greater burnout risk
Lower depressive symptoms	Greater depressive symptoms
Lower anxiety	Greater anxiety
Sense of agency	“Why bother?”

4. THE H.O.P.E. FRAMEWORK

H = Honest Reality

Hope is not denial. Hope can look directly at the problem.

Lamentations 3:19–21 “I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope...”

Jeremiah does not pretend everything is fine. He remembers the pain. He names the pain.

But then he says: **“Yet...”** That may be one of the most important words in the language of hope.

Things are difficult... **yet God is faithful.** I am grieving...**yet God is with me.** I do not understand...

yet I trust Him. Hope has a **“yet.”**

Hope begins with truth, not denial. Not pretending. Not spiritual clichés.

John 8:32 “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Psalms 42:5 “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God...”

The Psalmist acknowledges: I am downcast. Then he speaks to his soul. Put your hope in God. Hope is not pretending the soul is not downcast.

Hope is determining where the downcast soul will look.

O = OUTCOME

There must be something ahead of us. God constantly gives His people pictures of a preferred future.

Jeremiah 29:11 *“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.**”*

The context is important. These words were spoken to people in exile. This was not cheap encouragement to comfortable people. They were displaced. They were living in Babylon.

And God says: **There is still a future.** Sometimes the greatest gift you can give someone is helping them believe: **“My present condition is not necessarily my permanent condition.”**

Proverbs 23:18 “There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.”

Hope requires an outcome. God repeatedly calls us to lift our eyes beyond the present.

Hebrews 12:2 “For the joy set before him he endured the cross...”

Even Jesus endured present suffering in light of a future outcome. **Hope gives present pain a future context.**

P = PATHWAY

It is one thing to believe there is a future. It is another thing to believe there is a way forward. **Hope dies when people see no route forward.** But Scripture repeatedly reveals God as the One who **makes a way.**

Isaiah 43:18–19 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!... I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

God specialises in pathways. The Red Sea looks like no pathway. Until God opens one. The wilderness looks like no pathway. Until God leads with cloud and fire. Jericho looks like no pathway. Until God gives Joshua instructions. Five thousand hungry people look like no pathway. Until Jesus says: **“What do you have?”** The cross looks like the end of the pathway. Until Sunday morning.

Psalms 32:8 “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”

Sometimes God gives us the whole map. Often He gives us the next step.

Psalms 119:105 “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”

Notice: A lamp for my **feet**. God does not always floodlight the next ten years. Sometimes He illuminates the next ten metres. You do not need to see the entire journey to have hope.

Sometimes hope is simply: “I know what obedience looks like today.”

E = EMPOWERED

This is agency. **“I believe we have what it takes.”** This is self-efficacy which is a pillar of self-esteem. Having said that, Christian hope does not ultimately: **“I have what it takes.”** Christian hope says: **“God will give me what I need, to do what He has called me to do.”**

Philippians 4:13 “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

2 Corinthians 3:5 “Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.”

Our agency is not independence from God; It is confidence in God's enabling power.

2 Corinthians 4:7 — “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

Remember David. Goliath says: Look at my size. David says: Look at my God.

1 Samuel 17:37 “The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.”

David remembers previous victories. **Reminding people of previous victories increases confidence.**

Sometimes you need to look backwards in order to have hope looking forwards. If God carried me then, He can carry me now.

God gives strength for the journey.

Isaiah 40:31 “But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Notice what hope does. Hope renews strength. When hope returns, energy often returns, as stated in hope research. When hope disappears, even small things feel exhausting. **God does not merely show you a future. He strengthens you for the journey toward it.**

5. WE ARE STEWARDS OF OTHER PEOPLE'S HOPE

Hebrews 10:23–25 “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds...”

Notice the movement. First: **Hold onto your hope.** Then: **Strengthen others. There is hope I carry that’s for you. There is hope you carry that’s for me.** We have each experienced God’s character in diverse ways and we are able to strengthen others based on this.

Your hope was never intended to remain private.

1 Peter 3:15 “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

People should encounter something in us that makes them ask: **“Why do you still have hope?”**

Barnabas is a beautiful example. *Acts 4:36 “Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’)...”* Imagine having such a consistent effect on people that the church changes your name.

Your presence says: **Try again. Believe again. Get up again.** That is a steward of hope.

6. HOPE BUILDERS AND HOPE KILLERS

We have to recognise that our words and behaviour can either build hope or destroy it.

Biblically, these contrasts are everywhere.

HOPE BUILDER — CLEAR VISION

HOPE KILLER — CONSTANT CONFUSION

Habakkuk 2:2 “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.”

Clarity creates movement. Confusion drains hope.

1 Corinthians 14:33 “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace...”

Ask yourself: **Do people know where we are going?**

HOPE BUILDER — ENCOURAGEMENT

HOPE KILLER — CONSTANT CRITICISM

1 Thessalonians 5:11 “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up...”

Proverbs 12:18 “The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

Every conversation is building something or breaking something.

Some people call themselves “realists,” but they have actually become professional discouragers.

Biblical truth is never an excuse to crush people.

HOPE BUILDER — EMPOWERMENT

HOPE KILLER — HELPLESSNESS

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works...”

People need to know: **God can work through me.**

2 Timothy 1:6 “Fan into flame the gift of God...”

Good stewardship does not merely point out what is wrong with people. It calls forth what God has placed inside them.

HOPE BUILDER — SMALL WINS

HOPE KILLER — IMPOSSIBLE EXPECTATIONS

Zechariah 4:10 “Who dares despise the day of small things...”

We often destroy our own hope because we only celebrate completion.

God celebrates beginnings. The first prayer. The first day sober. The first apology. The first application.

The first customer. The first chapter. The first step back toward God.

Do not despise small beginnings.

HOPE BUILDER — HONESTY

HOPE KILLER — FALSE PROMISES

Proverbs 12:22 “The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.”

We do not give people hope by making promises God never made.

False hope eventually creates cynicism. There are things Scripture promises. And there are things Christians sometimes promise that Scripture never promised.

God never promised: “You will never suffer.” Jesus actually said: *John 16:33* “*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*”

That is Christian hope. **Trouble is real. Christ's victory is more real.**

HOPE BUILDER — CALM

HOPE KILLER — PANIC

Think about Jesus asleep in the boat. The disciples are panicking.

Jesus is at peace. *Mark 4:39–40* “*He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’... He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’*”

Fear is contagious. But so is faith. Panic is contagious. But so is peace. **Sometimes your greatest contribution in a crisis is not immediately solving the problem. It is refusing to multiply the panic.**

HOPE BUILDER — REMEMBERING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

HOPE KILLER — FORGETTING

Psalms 77:11 “*I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.*”

Israel repeatedly lost hope when they forgot. They forgot God's wonders in Egypt. Forgot the Red Sea. Forgot manna. Forgot water from the rock. Forgot previous deliverance.

One of the disciplines of hope is remembering. Yesterday's testimony can become today's hope.

7. BEWARE THE OVERUSE OF HOPE

Hope itself is good. But what sometimes masquerades as hope can become unhealthy. For example, false hope, toxic positivity, ignoring grief and fear, vision without execution, encouragement without accountability and over-promising as distortions of genuine hope.

The Bible does not teach fantasy., Biblical hope can sit in a funeral and weep.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 “*...so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.*”

Notice Paul does not say:

“Do not grieve.” He says: Do not grieve **without hope.**

Christians grieve, but we grieve differently. We cry, but not without hope. We acknowledge disappointment, but not without hope. We bury people we love, but not without hope. We walk through uncertainty, but not without hope.

Hope without truth becomes denial. Hope without pathways becomes fantasy. Hope without responsibility becomes passivity. Hope without God becomes wishful thinking. But biblical hope is anchored in the faithfulness of God.

8. WHEN DO PEOPLE MOST NEED US TO STEWARD HOPE?

In the corporate world, moments of change, crisis, ambiguity, repeated setbacks and even periods of ambitious growth are all times when hope becomes especially important. The same principle appears throughout Scripture.

A great skill to have is an appropriate word of hope when people are facing challenges. People need hope:

When they are grieving

Psalm 34:18 "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted..."

When they have failed

Micah 7:8 "Though I have fallen, I will rise..."

When they are waiting

Psalm 130:5 "I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope."

When circumstances seem impossible

Romans 4:18 "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed..."

When they are exhausted

Isaiah 40:31 "Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength."

When they cannot see the future

2 Corinthians 5:7 "For we live by faith, not by sight."

When they have suffered repeated setbacks

Romans 5:3-5 "...suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame..."

Somebody around you right now is in one of those seasons. And God may have placed you there partly because He has entrusted you with hope for them.

9. JESUS IS OUR ULTIMATE HOPE

Christian hope is ultimately not an idea.

Christian hope is a Person.

Colossians 1:27 "...Christ in you, the hope of glory."

1 Timothy 1:1 Paul describes: "...Christ Jesus our hope..." Our hope is Jesus. That changes everything. Because circumstances can change. Economies can change. Relationships can change. Health can change. People can disappoint us. Plans can fail. But:

Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

This is why Christian hope can survive circumstances that would ordinarily destroy hope. Our anchor is not attached to the weather. Our anchor is attached to Christ.

CONCLUSION — WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THE HOPE ENTRUSTED TO YOU?

Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Maybe there are two groups of people here today.

First, some of you need hope restored.

You have been disappointed. You have prayed. You have waited. Something has not happened the way you expected. You have become tired. Maybe somewhere along the way you stopped asking:

“How?” and started asking: “Why bother?” God wants to restore hope.

Psalm 42:11 “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? **Put your hope in God,** for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”

Notice the word: **Yet.** I do not see it yet. I do not understand it yet. I do not feel it yet. But: **I will yet praise Him.**

Second, some of us need to repent for poor stewardship of hope.

Perhaps your home has become a place of constant criticism. Perhaps your team experiences confusion whenever you speak. Perhaps your children mostly hear what they have done wrong.

Perhaps every conversation with you is about what is broken. Perhaps cynicism has started masquerading as wisdom. Perhaps because you have been disappointed, you have unconsciously become a hope killer. God is calling us back.

Ephesians 4:29 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

What if part of our stewardship is asking: **What does this person need to hear from me that will help them see God, see a future and take their next faithful step?**

FINAL CHALLENGE

When your spouse finishes talking to you...do they have more hope?

When your children leave your presence...do they have more hope?

When your employees leave your office...do they have more hope?

When someone who is struggling talks to you...do they have more hope?

When people leave this church...do they believe more deeply that God is faithful, that there is a future, that there is a pathway and that through God's strength they can take the next step?

Perhaps one of the clearest indications of good stewardship is this: People leave our presence carrying more hope than when they arrived.

We are not the source of hope. **God is the God of hope.** But He has entrusted us with it. So let us steward hope well. Let us speak hope. Let us model hope. Let us protect hope. Let us restore hope.

Let us point people toward Christ, our hope. And may we become a people who do not merely possess hope— **but overflow with it.**