

Hope

By Jean LaRosa

What does hope mean to you? To hope for something means more than simply to wish for it. It's not like hoping that the teacher doesn't call on you or hoping the police car you just passed doesn't pull you over. A friend of mine once gave me a card with a quotation from an Emily Dickinson poem - *"Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without words and never stops at all."* That's a great image, but doesn't really work as a definition. For years my husband and I have sponsored a child through a charity called Project Have Hope, which educates students in Uganda. It's a great name, and conveys an idea of hope that has a factual basis. In this case, the hope is that these children will have better prospects in life due to receiving an education.

Our world is desperate for hope. That seems truer than ever in January, after the lights of Christmas have been taken down and we still have two or three months of cold dark nights to get through before winter is over. We hope for the sight of that first crocus or green leaf poking through the soil. Life can be hard and full of trials, and we look for something to sustain us as we go through difficult circumstances.

Biblical hope means holding on to a positive expectation during a time of waiting – an expectation based on God's character. It's more than mere optimism. It doesn't depend on one's circumstances. John Piper has described Christian hope as *"a strong confidence in God which has power to produce changes in how we live."* Hope alters our perspective, allowing us to live with eternity in view.

I've been studying Genesis with the youth
Continued on page 2...

Family Christmas Dinner



"Hope," continued...

class during 11th hour, and found it mind-boggling to think about how long Noah and his family had to wait before they could leave the ark. The rain started on the seventeenth day of the second month. It ended after forty days and nights, but that wasn't the end of their confinement. It wasn't until the 27th day of the second month of the following year that the earth was completely dry, and God gave Noah and his family the command to leave the ark (Genesis 8:14-16). They and the animals were on that ark for over a year. We can only imagine that Noah kept his hope fixed on God during that long wait, because the first thing he did when he got off the ark was build an altar to the Lord and offer a sacrifice.

Abraham had to hope in God's incredible promise of a son when he and his wife were very old. Later, he had to hope that God would provide some kind of last minute reprieve when God commanded Abraham to offer his promised son Isaac as a sacrifice. It took Abraham and Isaac three days to reach the appointed spot, and Abraham's heart must have been heavy as they walked together. Yet when Isaac asked him where the lamb for the burnt offering was, Abraham told him that God would provide the lamb for the offering (Genesis 22:8). Abraham was able to keep that hope alive because of everything he had learned about God's character and His faithfulness during many years of walking with Him.

Our hope as Christ followers is based on God's character and His faithfulness. When it comes to the stock market, we are warned that "past performance is no guarantee of future results." But when it comes to God, His past actions are a reliable indication of future results. God's actions will always be consistent with His character. God's Word reveals His character to us, and provides a foundation for hope that is based on His unchanging nature.

Hebrews 10:23 reminds us:

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

***"We wait in hope for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
For we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
Even as we put our hope in you."***
Psalm 33:20-22

2018 Congregational Meetings

Budget Planning Meeting **Sunday, January 14, 11th Hour**

Please attend the Budget Planning Meeting on Sunday, January 17, during the 11th Hour to hear about the Chapel's finances and the proposed budget for 2018. This will be the time to ask questions in preparation for the vote on the budget at the Annual Meeting.

Annual Meeting **Sunday, January 28, 11th Hour**

This will be a time to hear and celebrate in retrospect the events and activities of 2017, and to vote on the 2018 budget and leaders. Since a quorum of 50% of members is required, please plan to attend.

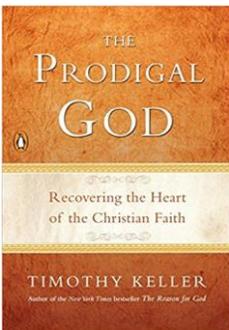


Perisseia

Our women's growth group will resume meeting on Thursday evening, January 25, 7:00-8:30, in the Chapel House to begin an eight-week series on *Godliness in the 21st Century*. Women today often live with a "never good enough" mindset and serve a cultural expectation of "Superwoman." Christian women find those expectations magnified rather than diminished in the church and it is all too easy to wonder about the "light burden" that Christ promised.

All women are invited as we come to learn and grow together and explore what it means to be a godly woman and what it looks like to live as a godly woman in our world today. For more information, please contact Cindy Bills (clbills@verizon.net; (609) 275-8557.

Men's Breakfast



Join us on Monday mornings (please note the schedule change from Tuesdays), from 7:00 to 8:00, at the McDonald's on Brunswick Circle. We are reading *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith*, by Timothy Keller, a New York Pastor and author of many best sellers.

This short but powerful book is a reminder to the faithful, an explanation to the seeker, and finally an invitation to all to embrace the Gospel of grace, hope and salvation. Call Scott Bruno (609-213-9545) for more information. The food, fellowship and study are great!

More Family Christmas Dinner Pictures



Let's Keep in Touch!



We'll be printing a Chapel Directory with our new chapel family members' info and all the latest updates. Please

assist us by **printing your name** at the top of the chapel card in Sunday's bulletin and **include only new information** (changes in email or mailing address, cell or work phone numbers, etc., and complete information for newcomers). Kindly drop it in the offering plate, and we'll update our records. (for newcomers). Kindly drop it in the offering plate, and we'll update our records. You may also email new information to chapel@windsorchapel.org.



Good News Club

The Good News Club will resume meeting at the Dutch Neck Elementary School on Tuesday afternoons from 3:30 – 4:30 this month. If you would like to help in this rewarding ministry on a rotating basis, please contact Pastor Andy at 484-354-8813 or andrew.straubel@gmail.com.

Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes are available in the chapel foyer. Please remember to pick them up after Sunday's service. If you have not received offering envelopes in the past and would like to receive them, please contact Helen Cull (551-486-8096) or Tom Taylor (908-406-4790).



The congregation said goodbye to long time members Rick and Kathy MacDonald before their move to North Carolina in December.

11th Hour Classes

Our 11th Hour Adult Class will resume in early February. Men will meet in the sanctuary basement while the women meet in the Chapel House.

The women will be enjoying an informal inductive Bible study together, working through the epistles of the Apostle John. Please join us as we learn from the disciple whom Jesus loved. Teachers: Janet Berrill, Cindy Bills.

Giving Envelopes for Cash Donations

If you forget to bring your giving envelope or do not have one assigned to you, blank giving envelopes are available on the table in the lobby for cash donations. Please print your name clearly on the envelope.

Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

2018: A Year of the Lord

2018! We find ourselves here, ready or not. I am not a fan of New Year's Resolutions, because they are generally misguided attempts to fix ourselves. But it is not unhelpful to take a moment, before rushing headlong into new year, to come before the Lord. The seasons and years of our lives reflect a God who works His redemptive purposes in us and through us, across time and space, to prepare us for heaven.

If we come before the Lord as King David did, we will ask the Lord to search and know us, to try us, to know our hearts and anxious thoughts, and to reveal any hurtful way in us. And then we are likely—certain, really—to come face to face with failure. It is what we do with this encounter with failure that will largely determine the course of our 2018. We can choose the route of self-improvement, grit our teeth, and determine to be better and do better. Or we can rejoice in the truth that the Lord is the God of do-overs and invite Him into 2018 to do His redemptive work.

An encounter with failure is an incredibly rich opportunity for God to enter deeply into our souls. First and foremost, failure is an efficient reminder that our hope is in the Lord: we cannot do life ourselves. In an old song popularized by DC Talk, Charlie Peacock makes this observation: "...I'm still a man in need of a Savior." To put this truth in the terms of the well-known 12-step recovery program (even if we don't have a substance abuse or

other addiction issue, each of us bears the burden of addiction to pride), our failure can bring us back to Step 1: "I have a problem, and I am powerless to overcome it on my own." Keeping this date with humility and exercising a renewed focus on dependence on our Lord rather than reliance on ourselves enables us to participate in God's glorious work in us.

Humility, though, is not the only virtue we need if we are to work out our salvation as the Lord does His work in us. God's ways are not our ways, and His time is not our time. It is a common human experience that God does not work at the pace at which we would have Him work. And so we must add patience and perseverance to humility if we are to experience genuine, God-driven change.

But before we consider giving up—change is hard!—it is critical to remember that it is God who is at work in us. The Holy Spirit does the "heavy lifting;" we get to participate. We can gratefully rejoice that God does not leave us as we are but faithfully works to make us fit for heaven. A new year finds us "in process" and gives us the opportunity to invite the Lord to join us as we step into 2018. Better yet, we can accept last year's reminders that we are still in need of a savior and ask the Lord to enable and empower us to accept and embrace His invitation to join Him in this new year.

Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557 or cbills@verizon.net) to continue the dialogue....

Devotionals

Pick up a copy of the latest "Our Daily Bread," a wonderful booklet for personal and family devotions. They are located on the table in the foyer along with the "Gospel of John" booklets.

New Year Wishes

By Janet Berrill

Happy New Year! Blessings to you in 2018! May 2018 bring you only good things! Peace and joy to you in the new year! Prospero año y felicidad! May 2018 be the year your dreams come true! 2018 is a new beginning; may it bring you much success! Health and happiness in 2018!

It's a new year and with the taking down of the old calendar and the putting up of a new one, we take the time to wish family, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, store clerks, etc. a happy new year. To summarize the general sentiment in all New Year greetings, basically we are hoping for them that they have a year with no problems. We wish them health, happiness, joy, peace, success, etc. "May your life go smoothly in the new year, and may you get everything you want."

From the world's perspective a life of ease is the most desirable. We want as many good things as we can have with the smallest required effort. But from a spiritual perspective, I say this life is not desirable for if everything goes our way, we can too easily lose sight of our need for God.

For me personally, the time I grew the most spiritually was when my children were young. I had to rely on the Lord each day to help me be patient, kind, and loving and not go crazy! I would get up each morning before the boys and have my quiet time and that would prepare me for the day ahead. If I ever missed my quiet time, I felt it throughout the day. The difficult situation I was in made me dependent on God and helped me to know Him better.

Hardship is not a bad thing! When we are put in a difficult situation, it is then that we are reminded of our dependence on God, we see

Him work, and we grow spiritually. James 1:2-4 says, "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*"

Trials result in maturity, and spiritual maturity is what we should desire the most. It is through the difficult times that we experience the most spiritual growth and maturity. How many times have you heard someone say, "Yes, it was a very difficult time, but if I could go back and do it over again, I wouldn't change a thing because of what I learned from it."?

So rather than wish you smooth sailing in the new year, my wish for you is that in 2018 God would allow circumstances in your life that would enable you to "*grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and that you would know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God*" (Ephesians 3:18-19) and that that would result in you having a truly happy 2018.

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. Romans 5:3-5

If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter please e-mail:

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