WE ALL NEED Hope
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Life can be hard. Sometimes, we have to endure a bad day. Other times, we face unrelenting heartache. No amount of tears can bring it to an end. Most of us face difficult times more often than we would like. Yet as difficult as life can be, hope guides us and gets us through the storms of life. Take away hope, and even the small things crush us.

The Big Picture
As we look at the big picture in our world, we see hopeless situations. The news regularly bombards us with stories
Is there any hope?
of the harmful and even evil situations people endure. Abuse, divorce, murder, war, famine, rape, and natural disasters torment our lives and shred our broken world. Beyond the unexpected disasters that make the news, we’re wounded by the daily actions of others who never get headlines—but hurt us deeply. We begin to wonder how God can allow bad things to happen to good people.

Is this how God intended us to live? Is this the kind of life He created us for?

Thankfully, the answer is, no. The Bible tells us the true story of how God
created us and our world, how we fell away from His original design, and what He did to heal our brokenness. It offers hope because we discover that God is in the business of restoring us to His beautiful original intentions.

**IN THE BEGINNING**

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, tells us that God created everything—plants, trees, birds, animals—and you and me. God created the first man and woman—Adam and Eve—in His own image and declared that all He made was “very good” (Genesis 1:27, 31).
God created us and our world.
What happened to us and our world?
Look around you. What happened? How did things go from “very good” to “very bad”? How did the relationship between God, His creation and people get so messed up?

The answer, in a word, is “sin.”

Sin is any action, thought or word that violates God’s loving standard. Because God is all-loving and all good, we can say that sin is simply being “not like God.”

God loves us so much that He wants us to freely choose to love and follow
They let their pride override their desire to obey God.
Him. Genuine love can’t be forced. So, God created humanity with the ability to choose not to love or follow Him. And sad to say, that’s what we’ve done.

In the beginning, He gave Adam and Eve clear instructions about a simple matter—a fruit tree to avoid. But, they let their pride override their desire to obey, crossing a boundary God had set. By choosing to disobey God, they traded His design of perfect community for death and separation from Him forever. Sin entered their souls and spread to their descendants.
You and I have the same spiritual disease—as we can see by our ongoing choices that disregard God’s desire to lead and direct us. Our universal condition is that we no longer trust God. Instead, we live life on our own terms, hoping everything will turn out as we imagine it should be.

Although God stamped His image in us, sin distorts the image. Our thoughts, feelings and actions often go against how God created us to live because sin corrupts our desire to do the right
Although God stamped His image in us, sin distorts that image.
thing. In our broken condition, where do we find hope?

WE ALL FALL SHORT
The Bible makes it clear that everyone falls short of God’s perfect standard for living—including great people like Mother Teresa and Billy Graham. No matter what list of rules we follow, including the Ten Commandments that God gave us, we keep missing the mark. It seems the more we try to be good and do right, the more we fail. We can’t meet God’s standard or overcome the effect of our sin condition.
Everyone falls short of God's perfect standard for living.
Our situation: Physical death and...

Eternal separation from God
Since the beginning, the death rate for humanity has been 100 percent. The Bible explains our situation. Physical death and eternal separation from God is the payment for not living up to God’s perfect standard (Romans 6:23).

**The Gift of Life**

Adam and Eve didn’t instantly die. But spiritual death—spiritual separation from God—did occur when they sinned. That delay between spiritual death and a later physical death gives us hope. It means that we have been given a second chance. We have our lifetime
to come to a new understanding and experience of God.

God loves us so much that He couldn’t just let us stay in our broken condition in a life of misery and frustration. Because the wages of sin is death, the only way to pay for it once and for all would be through the death of someone else. And Christianity says that it was God Himself—the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ—who did that for us.

Jesus came to earth as fully human and fully God. He experienced all of the
hardships and suffering of living in a damaged world filled with broken people, just like us. But, He never sinned. This qualified Jesus to pay for all the wrongs of everyone throughout history. Through His perfect life, death and resurrection, God demonstrated His grace and love to His creation. We can’t add to that perfect gift. Jesus erased our sin debt completely—past, present and future. However, we must choose to bring our broken image to the “repair shop” to be fixed.

Not only did Jesus pay the price on
Jesus paid for all the wrongs of everyone throughout history
our behalf, but He did so willingly. Romans 5:6-8 tells us that people might be willing to lay down their lives for a good person, but it is highly unusual for anyone to die for a scoundrel. Yet this is exactly what Jesus did on the cross for us. He died, not while we were “very good”—like we were at creation, but while we were “very bad”—like we are right now.

Even though there’s nothing we can do to earn God’s love or save ourselves from sin and death, we still have a choice. We can give into our pride,
He died, not while we were “very good,” but while we were “very bad”
We still have a choice to make while there is time...
staying distant from God. This means that our sin will separate us from God forever in hell. Or, we can choose to accept what Jesus did for us and begin living free from the consequences of sin. This means we will spend eternity with Him in heaven. We can rely on our own performance plan, or we can trust Jesus to do what we can’t do for ourselves. The choice is up to us.

Belief That Makes a Difference

Does believing—trusting—in Jesus really overturn the hopelessness we
Accepting Christ means agreeing with Him about your sin and asking Him for forgiveness.
experience in our world? What really happens when we discard our self-improvement plan and instead give control of our life to Christ?

When you accept something as true, it changes what you do. Accepting Christ means agreeing with Him about your sin, asking Him for forgiveness and inviting Him to be the new leader of your life. A decision to trust Jesus for your salvation means abandoning all attempts to earn His love and spending every day living in that love.

Does it mean we’ll be perfect? No.
Will we still sin? Yes. Our old sin nature still exists in us. But, we also have the Holy Spirit. He helps us grow in Christ and live a life that pleases God. And when we fail, He forgives us and helps us start again.

The good news is that it’s all about what God does in you. Salvation is God’s free gift to anyone who wants to receive it. Regardless of how badly you’re damaged, no matter how many awful choices you’ve made, even if you’ve totally rejected God and never believed before now, Jesus paid the
Salvation is God’s free gift to anyone who wants to receive it.
price and can forgive you. The choice to accept or reject this gift is up to you.

His free gift of salvation is available to everyone at anytime. In fact, you can take God up on His offer right now. Tell Him you want to be in a relationship with Him, that you’re sorry for the sins you’ve committed, and that you accept His free gift of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Invite Him to guide you as you seek to get to know Him and learn to love other people like Jesus does. There’s no mystery to talking to God. It’s simple:
Jesus paid the price and can forgive you.
Salvation simply comes by saying:

“Yes, Jesus, I trust You.”
Share what’s on your mind and in your heart. He doesn’t really care what words you use, as long as you’re being real.

**OUR HOPE RESTS ON TRUSTING GOD**

Salvation has nothing to do with obeying the right set of rules, doing the right type of good works or feeling a certain way. Salvation comes by simply saying, “Yes, Jesus, I trust You.” When you accept Jesus’ terms for salvation, you can trust that God will honor His agreement forever. Your salvation is secure. The restoration process has
God will never stop loving us...
His love is like no other.
begun and God will complete it.

Our hope rests on God’s promise that even though we experience pain while we are “in process,” one day we will be fully restored. These experiences will be gone. He will never change the terms of His agreement to finish the work He started in us. The end of the story is certain, and God will never stop loving us as it unfolds.

A Life Touched by Hope
There is no hope like the hope God offers through Jesus Christ. Whoever or whatever let you down in the past, Jesus
is not like them. In Him, you will find your greatest dreams fulfilled. His love is like no other. His forgiveness frees us to be all He created us to be. His power is without limit and your future with Him is the best thing that could ever happen to you.

Some Tools For Spiritual Growth

1. Read the Bible
The Bible helps us understand who God is, what it means to love and obey Him, and what His plans are for His people and this world. There are a variety of good Bibles available. We recommend
the Journey Bible, the Quest Study Bible and The Life Application Bible. You can find all of them at a local Christian bookstore or online. Online, you can visit www.biblegateway.com which offers many Bible translations and study tools. You will find many helpful tools for reading and understanding the Bible at the RBC Ministries website: www.rbc.org. We suggest you start by reading about Jesus in the New Testament (the Gospel of John).

2. Pray
Talk to God in prayer about what you
read. Ask Him to show you how to respond to Jesus’ teachings.

3. Participate in a Local Church
Most likely there is a church near you. Be sure the church you attend teaches from the Bible rather than something based on human speculation or other traditions. Look for genuine worship of God. Make certain the church is helping people love God fully and love others the way Jesus did. A Christ-centered community is a great place to deepen your relationship with God and serve people with the same love and hope.
you received from Christ. In addition to visiting churches before you decide which one to join, you may want to go to www.willowcreek.com/wca_info/find_a_church/ProfileSearch.asp to get some ideas.

4. Books
There are many Christian books that will help you on your journey. Here are some we find very helpful:

a. The Purpose Driven Life – Rick Warren
b. The Ragamuffin Gospel – Brennan Manning

c. The Jesus I Never Knew – Philip Yancy

d. What’s So Amazing About Grace – Philip Yancy

e. Basic Christianity – John Stott

f. The Case For Christ – Lee Strobel

g. The Case For Faith – Lee Strobel

h. Experiencing God – Henry Blackaby

i. Know What You Believe – Paul Little

You can find these books at your

Writing Credits
Greg Buick
Deborah Christensen
Judson Poling (www.cambiaresources.com)

Editors
Judson Poling (www.cambiaresources.com)
Deborah Christensen
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