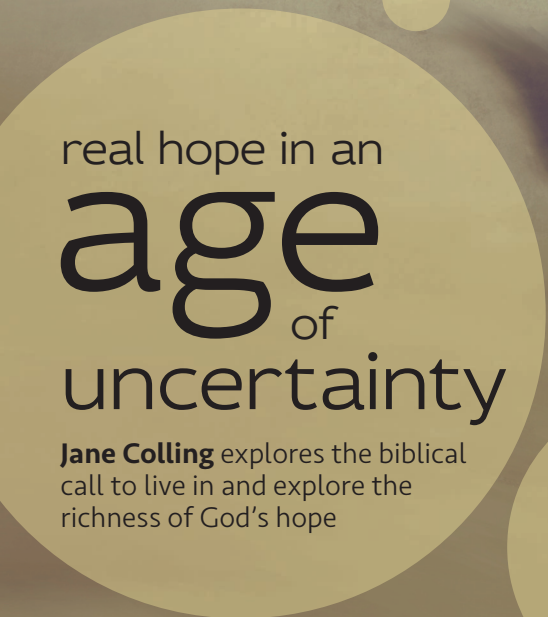




Bible



real hope in an
age
of
uncertainty

Jane Colling explores the biblical call to live in and explore the richness of God's hope



With the start of a new year with new challenges, I was prompted to think about hope. What is hope for us as Christian believers? Hope is confident expectation and a desire for something good in the future.

Hope is never negative – it is profoundly positive and expectant. If we were to paint a picture of a hopeful person, they would most likely be looking upward and outward with arms outstretched in expectation that they are about to receive something good. So it is with Christians – we can put our hope in a God who is steadfast and reliable, who does not change like shifting shadows,¹ but who is constant and faithful.

what did you first hope for when you came to Christ?

Hope of salvation and forgiveness. Hope of eternal life and a life lived in right relationship to God. Maybe we hoped that God would speak to us and that he would listen to us. Though we may have seen some of these hopes fulfilled in our Christian journey so far, there is still much more to be fulfilled. Hope is a journey. Hope is dynamic and active, always moving on. Hope is intentional. In Hebrews 6:18 the author talks of Christians being those

'...who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us...' Hebrews 6:19-20 goes on to assure us that, *'We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf.'*

Many Christian songs express this hope: *'My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.'*²

hope in God is worth sharing

If we are convinced by this hope, shouldn't we share this hope with others? Especially in a world that seems quite lacking in tangible hope. In 1 Peter 3:15, we are challenged: *'But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...'*

If we find it hard to share our hope in Christ, it may be helpful to think back to the reason you first put your hope in Christ. What first made you turn to Christ? How is life different for you now that you have a secure hope in an eternal and loving Father God?

In speaking out your experience of the ways in which God has fulfilled his promises to you,

hope means taking risks – entering upon a path of which we do not see the end

his Word will be powerful and meaningful to those you share with. As we speak out with confidence what we know to be true, God will make his Word effective. Isaiah 55:11 reminds us, *'so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it'.*

hope in God is secure

Our hope can be feeble at times, it can wax and wane. The psalmist cries out in desperation, *'Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God!'* (Psalm 43:5) It is good to remind ourselves that God's relentless purpose moves on with or without our hope. A little like a storm-tossed boat in the harbour, anchored and secure, but still moved by the tides and

buffeted by the winds. Yet because our anchor is secure, no amount of buffeting can loosen the anchor. Another hymn comes to mind: *'Will your anchor hold in the storms of life ... We have an anchor that keeps the soul, steadfast and sure when the billows roll, fastened to the Rock that cannot move, ground firm and deep in the Saviour's love'.*³

Using the concepts of faith and hope interchangeably, Hebrews 11:1 states, *'Now faith is confidence of what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see'.* Hope means taking risks – entering upon a path of which we do not see the end. As Evelyn Underhill wrote *'Hope believes in the God of the future, as well as the past'.*⁴

Think of hope as a bird taking wing, setting out in the wind, trusting it will be held up by the air, and safely landing upon the distant branch. Watch the bird take off in utter freedom and self-abandoned trust that their wings of hope and the air God provides will work perfectly together to deliver them to a place of safety.

hope is relational

God has placed his hope in us – and in turn, we may place our hope in him. Are we willing and

expectant to see the fulfilment of God's promises in the world because his hope is in us? *'See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.'* (Isaiah 43:19) God makes the impossible, possible as we put our hope in him.

God makes the impossible, possible

Finally, in Romans 5:5, Paul says, *'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'*.

in summary:

- Our Christian hope is secure because it is fixed on the unchangeable, faithful character of God.
- Our Christian hope is worth sharing, so be ready, be gentle, be respectful.
- Our Christian hope is relational – God has invested his hope in us. In turn we may place our hope in him.

- Our Christian hope should be proactive, intentional, and dynamic – we can be in the 'business' of hope with God and his eternal purposes for a hopeless world.

prayer

Lord you are all love – and you love me.
Fill me with godly hope, I pray.

Thank you for your faithfulness, your steadfastness, Lord, for your promises, and for your Word.

Most of all Lord, thank you for Jesus, the Hope for the World. Teach us to walk daily with our hope unashamedly in him. Amen 🌸

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references

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2. Mote E. *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*. 1834 – Public Domain
3. Owens P. *We Have an Anchor* – Public Domain
4. Wrigley-Carr R. *The Spiritual Formation of Evelyn Underhill*. London: SPCK. 2020.