



Intro

“When an infinite God chooses to express himself finitely, the expression is different every time!”
- *Winkey Pratney*

You express God in a way that no one else can. You carry a facet of him that no one else can display. God through you is the most incredible combination that world will see, and God is full of hope about your future.

God wants to take you on a “relentless pursuit of hope,” but not the world’s kind.

“Mine” the scriptures for my hope – it’s never–ending and you can’t exhaust it.

The world would have us believe that hope is something that comes and goes, at best it raises our spirits through a difficult time, and at worst it can be dashed and completely lost. But Biblical hope is completely different. Hope in the Bible isn’t a vague idea that something good might happen in the future. It’s a rock solid promise that God is going to come through for you!

Biblical hope is strong, it’s certain; it’s designed to be held on to; it will pull you out of a mess and it will never, ever let you down.

You don’t usually find hope in a sunny situation. You find it in the dirt, you find it in the mess, and you find it when things are really tough. That’s where hope is at its strongest, because that’s where God knows that you need it the most.

So, if your situation looks dirty, messy, or tough, I want you to know that you are perfectly-positioned to discover the most glorious hope in your present and for your future.

Take hold of the kind of hope that I am talking about, because it can be yours too. Jesus is described as our living hope. Taking hold of something that God has for us is as simple as us saying in our heart:

“Jesus, I need you, and I want to know this kind of hope in my life too. Would you come and be with me and give me your hope.” And he really will!

Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11

Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 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.”

Declarations to make: *(our words are powerful, when we declare God’s Word, we shift the atmosphere around us and we are standing on His promises)*

- *God has a plan for me*
- *He will prosper me*
- *My future is full of hope*
- *You’ve just stood on a promise.*

It’s no accident that we talk about holding on to hope, because ...

Hope is a rope



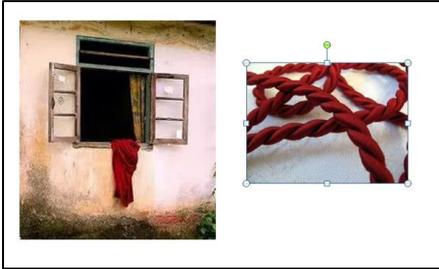
The Hebrew word for ‘hope’ used here in the verses that we have just read in Jeremiah and throughout the OT is the Hebrew word ‘tiqvah.’ This same word also means ‘a rope.’

- *‘Hope is a rope.’*

The Hebrew word for ‘hope’ means *‘to twist or weave as strands of rope, making a tool capable of holding a heavy load.’*

Rahab

Lots of you will know the story of Rahab in the book of Joshua in the Bible.



Rahab was the woman who helped the two Israelites spies when they came to scout out the land of Jericho. When the king heard that their city had had been infiltrated, he sent his men to come after and arrest the spies. It was Rahab who hid them on her roof when the soldiers came so that their lives would be spared. And when the coast was clear, it was Rahab who let the spies down from her window by a 'scarlet rope'

The Hebrew word used for 'rope' in this story is 'tiqvah', it's this same Hebrew word used for 'hope' in our verses in Jeremiah.

It was actually a scarlet piece of 'hope' that Rahab tied in her window, it was hope that the spies held on to as they escaped.

And it was hope that the spies told Rahab to keep tied in her window, so that when the armies returned to destroy her city, the scarlet rope would be a sign that she and her family would be spared.

Biblical hope is powerful, it's capable of holding a very heavy load, it is something that you can tangibly hold on to, it has the ability to pull you out of the most difficult of situations, it won't let you down and it flies in the face of adversity.

As Rahab watched the armies come into Jericho and her city being taken over – what was flying in her window? A piece of hope. It was a sign for everyone to see, it was a sign of her salvation.

So, if it feels like the armies are closing in, tie hope in your window! Hold onto it, let it take your weight and don't let it go!

(Tie a red ribbon somewhere you can see it as a reminder of God's promises and hope – it's good to 'run' into God's promises and to purposefully encounter him). 

Stances not Circumstances

Nothing and no one is beyond God's reach. It doesn't matter what your circumstances are, it's your 'stances' that determine your hope level. – Our stance is that God is good and nothing is impossible for him.

Invite God you into your work. Not just into your workplace, but into the work of your hands. It's incredible that we get to partner with God like that. (Translation example)

Let's go back to our verses in 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 (woven together and capable of holding a very heavy load) and a future."

As I was reading these familiar verses more recently, I felt the Lord say: "look at the verse that comes before." The reason for my hope is found in verse 10.

I realised that I had always read this verse out of context. It's in the lesser quoted and less often memorised Jeremiah 29:10 that God says this to his people in exile that "He will fulfil His good promise to them to return them to their land."

Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 10 & 11

"... I will come to you and fulfil my good
promise..."

"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."

"I will come to you and fulfil my good promise ... For I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you a hope and a future." You see, Hope is a promise.

In these verses, God is giving His people hope in the very place that they need it – hopelessness. They were actually going to have to spend another 70 years in exile, but God is reminding them of the promises over them as a people and therefore their hope-filled future.

Hope is a promise that will see you through whatever circumstances you are facing. At the beginning this letter, Jeremiah warns God's people to prepare for a *lengthened* stay in exile. That doesn't sound like fun, does it?! But he says "Build houses and live there, plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. Take wives and have sons and daughters, increase and do not diminish."

Increase and do not diminish

This tells me that it is possible for us to remain hope-full (full of hope) and even for us to prosper in less than ideal circumstances, all *without denying their reality* – they were in exile!

Living with a hope-filled perspective doesn't mean denying the reality of what's going on. God will never deny the reality of your situation. He is a God of reality, He weeps with those who weep and He mourns with those who mourn, but He *will* enable you to prosper, even within a difficult circumstance.

Declarations:

- *“God has designed me for increase, not to diminish”*
- *“I am going from glory to glory”*
- *“My future will be more glorious than my past”*

You are standing on his promises again.

What does “increase” look like in difficult circumstances – when it feels like you’ve been in exile for 50 years and you still have another 20 years to go!? That’s when you really need some hope!

Asking God questions – you can use these for journaling:

God, I can see what you are *not* doing, but what *are* you doing right now?

God, what are you saying to me in the *right here* and the *right now* of my situation?

God, what *is* your hand on right now?

Where *is* your grace and favour at this time?

Where *are* you prospering and what are you increasing, even despite my circumstance?

God, I can see what you are not doing, but what are you doing right now? *(Because it says in God’s word that He is always at work)*

God, what are you saying to me in the right here and the right now of my situation? *(Because it says in His word that he is with you in every circumstance)*

God, what is your hand on right now? *(Because it says in His word that there is a time and a season for everything – what time is it? What season is it?)*

Where is your grace and favour at this time? *(Because it says in His word that I am blessed in every circumstance)*

Where are you prospering and what are you increasing in, even despite your circumstances?

God hasn’t forgotten you! He knows full-well what his purposes are towards you, and they are good! And they are hope-filled, and that’s a promise!

I will fulfil my good promise to you for I know the hope-filled plans I have for you declares the Lord.

“Look up the word hope in its original language, because there’s still more! I want you to understand what my hope really means.”

“Mine the scriptures for my hope!”

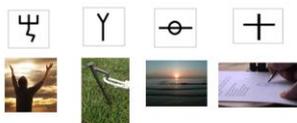
Listen to God the way that He has designed you to hear him.

Listen to him in the way that you have been designed to hear, because you won't hear him in the same way as the person next to you, you are not meant to, and you will express him in a way that is unique to you.

If you're a translator, translate him, if you're painter, paint him, if you're a biologist, see God at work in the human body, if you're scientist, find him in the formation of the world around you, if you're an IT specialist, see him in the order and structure of coding, if you are an accountant, find Him in the reconciliation, if you're in events and marketing, express him through your excellence, if you're in business, adopt his strategies ... Listen to Him in the way that you have been designed to hear. And express him in the way that only you can. It's all so glorifying to Him and it honours the way he's made you.

The Ancient Hebrew word 'Hope'

In Ancient Hebrew the word 'hope' would have been written something like this!



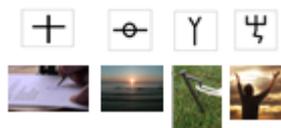
Hope

Ancient Hebrew was a language based on pictures. They would put together pictures that described what the word was like and what it did, so that we would know exactly what that word meant and how to achieve it.

This word up here shows us what hope is really like and how we can have it.

We have the ancient Hebrew script at the top, and I have chosen pictures underneath that show what each letter means, giving us the full meaning of the word as it would have been understood in Bible times.

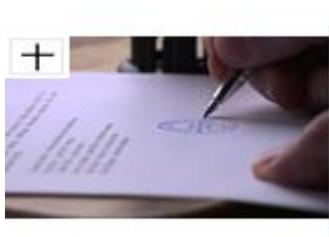
Ancient Hebrew was not only a picture language, it was also read from right to left, so to help us out I'm going to flip this picture around.



Hope

When we do this, you will see that even in the way it is written, Hope starts with a promise because ...

The first letter of the word Hope means a promise!



The first picture or letter of hope, is a cross. The cross was the way that they signed their legal documents to make them binding, it was a sign of covenant, a promise that cannot be broken.

And so as the first picture of hope, I have put an image of a legal document being signed. Even the sound of this letter in the Hebrew tells us something of its meaning. It is pronounced 'tav' – *tav, tav, tav*, it's the sound of the 'tap' with a hammer on a chisel as the stone mason would carve in stone. This is how they would have written their law on stone tablets. These letters are full of meaning in the ancient Hebrew. Hope begins with a promise and it's one that is set in stone.

Hebrews 6 tells us about the kind of promises that the Lord makes:

"Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was **promised**, he confirmed it with an **oath**. God did this so that, by two **unchangeable** things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the **hope** set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this **hope** as an **anchor** for the soul, **firm and secure**." (Hebrews 6:13-20)

13-20 "Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

God knows what He has promised you, therefore he knows how it will come about in the future – that's why we can have hope.

I will fulfil my good promise to you ... for I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to give you a hope and a future.

Holding onto hope looks like reminding ourselves of the promises that have been spoken over our lives. It looks like speaking them out. It looks like declaring them, standing on them, holding on to them and not letting them go.

I encourage you to remember the promises that God has spoken over you personally or through his Word.

Who does God say He is in scripture - and how can He be that for you?

I encourage you to go away and to write down the promises that you have from the Lord or the promises made to us all in scripture.

Declare them, stand on them, make them your own, insert your own name into them. They are for you.

There are some here on a sheet of paper if you would like to take that away with you at the end.

Hope starts with a promise and we need to stand on God's promises.

Expectation



The second letter of the word hope in ancient Hebrew is represented by a sun rising on the horizon. It speaks of expectation.

Hosea 6:2 says: He will respond to us as surely as the dawn comes.

This letter speaks of expectation.

Sometimes to find God's hope, we need a change of perspective, we need to change our way of thinking to God's way of thinking.

Romans 12:2 says 'be transformed by the renewing of your mind.'

We need to believe like God about our future and know that, just as the sun comes up every morning, He will come through for us.

Do you know that God is wildly optimistic about your future?

Do you know that God believes in you more than you believe in yourself?

Do you know that he has appointed you within your sphere of influence for such a time as this?

Do you know that with God there is always a solution for every situation that you face?

To find hope, sometimes we need to change the way we think.

We need to change our way of thinking to His – He sees no impossibilities.

Thinking like God is the difference between saying "God, nothing is happening!" versus "God I know you are doing something because in John 5:17, it says that you are always at your work and Jesus is too. Help me to partner with what you are doing."

Believing like God is the difference between saying: “God, I’ve got no motivation!” Versus “God you are doing something with my motivation.” Help me to partner with what you are doing.

Having God’s perspective is the difference between saying: “God you are not doing anything!” and “Lord I know what you are not doing, please show me what you are doing? Please make sense of what is going on - where IS the grace and favour at this time?”

It is God’s promises and his character that are our “evidence” for what is really true, NOT our circumstances.

To imagine a future without hope is to imagine a future without Jesus. He is our living hope. We have the God of all hope living inside of us. He goes before and behind. If I look to my future and I don’t have hope, I have looked around him. If I look to my past and I don’t feel hope, I’ve missed him. He’s there.

Hope is an anchor



The third letter of the word hope in the ancient Hebrew language is represented by a nail or a peg.

So far in the ancient Hebrew word for hope, we have a rope, a promise, expectation, and now a letter that represents a tent peg. And do you know what this letter represents? It means security, it means connectedness. This is the kind of tent peg that would have been used to peg down your tent where you would have been living at that time in the bible. Biblical hope gives you safety and it anchors you. God wants you to know that your future with Him is safe.

Hebrews say that we have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

We’ve seen that we have hope behind us in the form of the promises God has spoken over us. We have hope in front of us in terms of our expectation that God has a good future for us, and now hope anchors us in the present. It pegs us down; it makes us safe, it’s like a bridge connecting God’s promises to our hope-filled future.

I don’t like anything unless it’s practical – so if hope anchors the soul, I want to know how do I anchor my soul in hope?

I believe it looks like us refusing to think a hopeless thought in our mind, refusing to make a decision out of fear in our will and refusing to partner with the feeling of hopelessness in our emotions. We need to anchor ourselves in hope.

Hope is amazing!

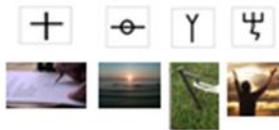


Now to our last letter of hope. This is my favourite one! You can see the little image at the top left-hand corner is the ancient Hebrew letter, and it represents a man on his knees praising God in awe, wonder and surrender.

What an amazing letter!

Originally, this letter would have been pronounced 'Ah.' What do we say in almost every language to express awe and wonder? Ah!

So this is the letter, Ah! Because God wants us to look at our future and think, "Ah!" I cannot wait to see what you have for me, God! I want to be joyfully excited about all that you have for me!



Hope

So this is our word hope – we put all of these pictures together and it tells us about the kind of hope that God wants to give us and how we can experience it in our lives.

It's a promise, we can expect it, it grounds us and makes us safe and it will amaze us.

Even after learning all of these amazing things about hope, I could have said it in one sentence: Biblical Hope is a person, and His name is Jesus. He is our living hope.

The only reason we can have hope is because of what Jesus did on the cross for us. He died to take away all of our sins, to give us back relationship with God, and to give us salvation – salvation eternally and salvation for now.

Jesus Christ is our living hope.

So real hope, Biblical hope, is a promise from God, He will change your expectations to being filled with hope, He will give you safety and He will amaze you!

Biblical hope is the confident expectation that good is coming, based on a promise.

So as we look ahead to this New Year, full of hope and full of promise, even if you have to mine for it, I want to speak over you the promise of God that he will never leave you or forsake you. I want to declare that His thoughts towards you are good. I want to say over you the truth that God knows the incredible plans that He has for you and that you can expect good things to come. I want to release over you a new hope, one that grounds you and give you safety and I want to declare over you that you are going to have those “Ah!” moments, because God is preparing you for something that is bigger than you know.

(See below for list of promises)

God's Promises to us through Scripture



Declarations:

- “God has a plan for me, He will prosper me, my future is full of hope” (Jeremiah 29:11, 12)
- “I am designed for increase, not to diminish” (Jeremiah 29)
- “I am moving from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18)
- “The best is yet to come” (Romans 8:28)

Hope-Filled Scriptures

- ‘We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure’ (Hebrews 6:19)
- ‘He will respond to us as surely as the dawn comes’ (Hosea 6:2)
- ‘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.’ (Romans 15:1)
- ‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.’ (1 Peter 1:3)
- ‘The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.’ (Deuteronomy 28:13)
- ‘In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.’ (Proverbs 3:6)
- “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” (Jeremiah 31:3)
- ‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.’ (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
- ‘So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.’ (Isaiah 41:10)
- ‘The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.’ (Psalm 34:18)
- ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.’ (Matthew 11:28)
- ‘Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.’ (1 Peter 5:7)
- ‘Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me’ (Psalm 23:4)
- ‘Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.’ (Deuteronomy 3:6)