

LIVING & LEADING IN HOPE

A Study in Applying the Promises of God



LIVING AND LEADING IN HOPE

A STUDY IN APPLYING THE PROMISES OF GOD

MCBC Man of the Word
Fall 2016

Edited by Eric Newton. Cover design by Justin Murphy, yourcreativepeople.com. © 2016 Mount Calvary Baptist Church. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without written permission from Mount Calvary Baptist Church, 1430 Hampton Avenue Extension, Greenville, SC 29601. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture is taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

LIVING AND LEADING IN HOPE

THEME

If Christian hope is like health, then biblical promises are like superfoods. God calls us to hope (Eph. 1:18; 4:4) and sustains that hope through His promises. As Paul reminded Titus, because God “cannot lie,” and because He “promised long ages ago,” our “hope of eternal life” is sure (Titus 1:2). Therefore, in order for us as men to live and lead in a world of hopelessness and uncertainty, we must study and apply the promises of God.

THEME PASSAGE

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” **Romans 15:4**

TIME

10 weeks: September 4 – November 12, 2016

GOALS

1. Develop a mutually edifying relationship with my prayer partner through prayer and encouragement.
2. Practice the discipline of treasuring and applying God’s promises.
3. Intentionally influence those around me with biblical hope.

EVENTS

Men’s Prayer Breakfasts: September 3, October 8 & November 12

MY PRAYER PARTNER (NAME, PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL):

MAN OF THE WORD PROGRAM

The leadership of Mount Calvary Baptist Church created the Man of the Word program in obedience to the command of 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." This ministry functions under the leadership of Pastor Mark Minnick, Pastor John Tipton, and Chris Baker, elder. The following men are the current Man of the Word officers.

- President Dan Dahlhausen
- Vice President Dave Howell
- Treasurer Jeff Foster
- Food Director David Baker
- Project Coordinator Jesse Keck
- Manual Director Eric Newton

We are grateful to Pastor Mark Minnick for his encouragement and leadership and for his vision for the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. We would also like to express our gratitude to the men who have donated their time, energy, and gifts by writing spiritually edifying articles for our growth and encouragement.

PREFACE

History will undoubtedly look back on 2016 as a period of unprecedented unrest and anxiety in America. It is tempting for us while living through such uncertain times to worry and doubt the faithfulness of God. But troubling circumstances are actually the Lord's gracious way of exposing the unreliability of everything *except* God's Word.

God has called us as men to lead, especially in trying times. This means we must meditate on God's Word and help others to do the same. One aspect of Scripture that God's people have treasured through the centuries are its promises. The expectation and fulfillment of these promises generates in us a true hope—one that is rooted not in wishful thinking but in the trustworthiness of God. Therefore, our theme this fall is *Living and Leading in Hope: A Study in Applying the Promises of God*.

This booklet is a ten-week study designed to encourage you in the practice of meditating on and applying God's promises so that you can live and lead in hope. The articles are testimonies and reflections on Scripture written by various men in our assembly. Each week's resources consist of:

- SCRIPTURE READING – A passage pertaining to the week's article to be read and considered during the week (and perhaps used in family worship)
- TRUTH FOR MEDITATION – Verses from the theme passage on which to meditate (Verse cards are included at the end of the booklet.)
- BOOK READING – C. H. Spurgeon, *According to Promise: God's Promises to Every Christian* (Christian Heritage, 2001)
- M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE – A way to keep on track in reading through the Bible in 2016 using the M'Cheyne system
- ARTICLES – Testimonies and devotionals concerning hope and promises written by Mt. Calvary Baptist Church men

Don't let these materials become daunting. Let whatever you do be a delight. If you can't keep up every component, choose the ones that you can use consistently and stick with them. At the very least, work to incorporate the emphasis on God's promises during family worship, in conversation at home, and in fellowship with other believers.

September 4-10

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 42-43

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” **Romans 15:4**

BOOK READING

“A Sieve Needed”

“The Two Seeds”

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 4	1 Sam 28	1 Cor 9	Eze 7	Ps 45
Sep 5	1 Sam 29, 30	1 Cor 10	Eze 8	Ps 46, 47
Sep 6	1 Sam 31	1 Cor 11	Eze 9	Ps 48
Sep 7	2 Sam 1	1 Cor 12	Eze 10	Ps 49
Sep 8	2 Sam 2	1 Cor 13	Eze 11	Ps 50
Sep 9	2 Sam 3	1 Cor 14	Eze 12	Ps 51
Sep 10	2 Sam 4, 5	1 Cor 15	Eze 13	Ps 52-54

LIVING AND LEADING IN HOPE

ERIC NEWTON

Every person is born with a longing for hope. Events such as the dawn of a new year, or the signing of an all-star player, or the rebound of the Dow Jones rejuvenate hope—at least temporarily. Political candidates often employ hope as a slogan in their campaigns. But regardless of the sincerity of the expression or the resources amassed to back it up, earthly hope invariably evaporates.

What then is the answer in a world full of reasons to be troubled and discouraged? Hope is universally desirable, but is it possible? An affirmative answer to that question hinges on understanding what hope actually is.

In contemporary English the word *hope* often signifies a wish, such as, “I hope you have a good day.” But true hope is more substantive than a pleasantry. The Bible sometimes uses the word *hope* interchangeably with words like *faith* and *trust*. For example, Psalm 62:10 says, “Do not *trust* in oppression and do not vainly *hope* in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart upon them.” This verse is speaking of our confidence.

But often in the OT, and especially in the NT, *hope* specifies a certain type of confidence. The nuance is its emphasis on what God has promised. Hope is confident expectation that God will act in the future to fulfill His word. One of the definitive examples of hope is Abraham, of whom Paul says, “In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, ‘SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE’” (Rom. 4:18). In other words, the patriarch had a confident expectation that the Lord would fulfill his covenant promise in the future, even though such confidence seemed humanly foolish.

There are several aspects of true hope that we should consider. **First, hope rests in what we cannot see.** In 1 Timothy 6:17 Paul commands, “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” We put our hope in money because we think it guarantees our future success and safety. But nothing could be further from the truth. It’s a mirage. Wealth, no matter how much we have, is uncertain.

In contrast, we must hope “in His word” (Ps. 130:5) because “as many as are the promises of God, in [Christ] they are yes” (2 Cor. 1:20). God’s character and oath are a fixed anchor, making our hope in His word “both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6:17-19). And the clearest confirmation of this hope is that God “raised [His Son] from the dead and gave Him glory” (1 Pet. 1:21). Unlike wealth, the Lord always comes through.

Second, hope looks forward to Christ’s glory and our glorification. Hope is “laid up for you in heaven” (Col. 1:5). Our hope will be realized when Christ returns. Therefore, we are “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13). Peter admonishes, “Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13). As one dictionary states, “NT hope is a patient, disciplined, confident waiting for and expectation of the Lord as our Savior.”¹

Third, hope flows from perseverance and pursues purity. Scripture’s emphasis on hope is not the power of positive thinking. Hope is intertwined with “proven character” (Rom. 5:4). The object of true hope cannot be seen, which means “with perseverance we wait eagerly for it” (Rom. 8:25). Hope in meeting the Lord face to face when He returns also motivates us to purify ourselves, “just as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). In other words, we will be transformed through confident expectation that God will complete all His promises with the return of the resurrected Savior.

Our temptation may be to survey the current secular and religious state of affairs and live with a gloomy, cynical attitude. But in Christ we have every reason to *live* in hope. We were once strangers to God’s covenants of promise, but we “have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:12). Furthermore, as men we must also *lead* in hope. There is no denying the darkening clouds looming over our nation. Blind optimism is just that—blind. But hope is not rooted in our circumstances but in the well-founded expectation that God will fulfill His words.

Living and leading this way is nothing new. Abraham left home, lived as an alien, and did not see the fulfillment of most of God’s promises. Yet he died *in faith* (Heb. 11:13). The psalmist exhorted his people, “O Israel, hope

¹ Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 188.

in the Lord; for with the Lord there is lovingkindness, and with Him is abundant redemption" (Ps. 130:7). Daniel interceded for his people on the basis of Jeremiah's prophecy of a captivity that would end after seventy years (Dan. 9:2). These believers trusted God's character and anticipated the fulfillment of God's promises.

We have an opportunity in days of mounting pressure to make visible the hope that lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15). The means to this hope are "perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures" (Rom. 15:4). By meditating on the Lord's promises—those already fulfilled and those yet to be accomplished—we live and lead in hope for God's glory.

WHAT HAS GOD PROMISED HIS SON? WEEK 2

September 11-17

SCRIPTURE READING

John 17

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession.” **Psalm 2:8**

BOOK READING

“The Valuation of the Promises”

“The Lord’s Promise: The Rule of His Giving”

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 11	2 Sam 6	1 Cor 16	Eze 14	Ps 55
Sep 12	2 Sam 7	2 Cor 1	Eze 15	Ps 56, 57
Sep 13	2 Sam 8, 9	2 Cor 2	Eze 16	Ps 58, 59
Sep 14	2 Sam 10	2 Cor 3	Eze 17	Ps 60, 61
Sep 15	2 Sam 11	2 Cor 4	Eze 18	Ps 62, 63
Sep 16	2 Sam 12	2 Cor 5	Eze 19	Ps 64, 65
Sep 17	2 Sam 13	2 Cor 6	Eze 20	Ps 66, 67

BLESSED BE OUR FATHER WHO FULFILLS ALL HIS PROMISES

RAJESH GANDHI

I did not grow up in a Christian family and had little acquaintance with the things of the Bible as a child and as a teenager. I had heard the name *Jesus* but mostly it was when people used it as an expletive.

From watching movies like *The Robe* and *Ben Hur* in my childhood years, I did see a moving presentation of the Crucifixion of Jesus and remember being distinctly and at the time inexplicably moved by viewing those scenes, even though I was not saved until many years after seeing those movies.

It was not until I was in college that I was exposed in any continuing way to some things from the Bible. When I would regularly visit a Catholic Newman center on the campus of Western Illinois University, I did not follow much of what was said in the homilies given in those services, but I distinctly remember being strangely moved when we would sing *the Model Prayer* that Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

I also visited a few churches with friends during those years, but I do not remember anything about what was preached in those churches. My exposure to Bible truth in my college years also included a movie about Christianity that I saw with some Christian friends.

Having had a habit for many years of browsing in bookstores, I encountered in a Christian bookstore some books about the New Age movement that warned that some of the things that I was involved in at the time were of demonic origin. I bought those books, and God used them to speak to me although I was not a believer yet.

God continued to work in my life by directing me to the religion section of the Public Library in Cookeville, Tennessee. From the hundreds of books in that section, He led me to read several that gave me a good overview of the story of the Bible.

God then directed me to some apologetics books in a Christian bookstore in Cookeville. Those books presented me for the first time in my life with the objective historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

About the same time, someone put a tract on my windshield that I read the day that it was put there. Through my praying through the suggested prayers in the back of the apologetics books and at the end of the tract, God saved me!

I am confident that the person who put that tract on my windshield prayed for God to use that tract to reach someone with His truth. God answered that person's prayers by using my reading of that tract as part of how He brought me to saving faith in His Son.

Soon after I was saved, I wanted to go to church but had no idea about what church to go to out of the dozens of church names that I saw in the phone book for Cookeville. I prayed, and God directed someone to come up to me at work and invite me to his church.

The person who did so did not know that I had been recently saved. God answered my prayer by leading me through him to the only truly independent fundamental Baptist church in Cookeville!

Many years after I was saved, I learned that I had been born in a missionary hospital run by Canadian Presbyterian missionaries in a small town in India. Those missionary doctors and nurses prayed over every baby that was born in that hospital.

Until I am with the Lord, I will not know for sure what they prayed for when I was born. It is entirely possible that they prayed for me to be saved one day, and if they did, God has answered their prayers.

Whether anyone else prayed directly for my salvation, Scripture reveals that Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Son of God, prayed for me to the Father (John 17:20-26). I praise our Heavenly Father for giving me to His Son in answer to His prayers and in fulfillment of His glorious promise to His Christ:

“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Ps. 2:8).

Having been saved by the Father's fulfilling His promise to His Son, may we all be used by Him to reach many others who will also be saved in

fulfillment of the Father's glorious promise to His Son that He would give Him the heathen for His inheritance. Knowing these things, let us all be diligent to pray and share the gospel of God concerning His Son to people in the power of His promised Spirit whom His Son has given us in fulfillment of the Father's promise (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who is faithful to keep all His promises to His Son and to everyone and everything else, including every living creature (Gen. 9:9-17). "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

WHAT IS THE PATH OF PILGRIMS?

WEEK 3

September 18-24

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 11

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.” **Matthew 19:29**

BOOK READING

“The Promise of God a Reality”

“The Peculiar Treasure of Believers”

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 18	2 Sam 14	2 Cor 7	Eze 21	Ps 68
Sep 19	2 Sam 15	2 Cor 8	Eze 22	Ps 69
Sep 20	2 Sam 16	2 Cor 9	Eze 23	Ps 70, 71
Sep 21	2 Sam 17	2 Cor 10	Eze 24	Ps 72
Sep 22	2 Sam 18	2 Cor 11	Eze 25	Ps 73
Sep 23	2 Sam 19	2 Cor 12	Eze 26	Ps 74
Sep 24	2 Sam 20	2 Cor 13	Eze 27	Ps 75, 76

WALKING BY FAITH

BOB BRADBERRY

The first of God's promises that I believed was on the day of my salvation: "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). At 32 years of age I claimed this promise and He forgave my sins and received me as His child. From that day forward, I have believed the Bible is God's Word, and His promises are given, not to be doubted, but to be claimed and trusted.

After salvation, as the Bible is read and studied, promises should begin to jump off the pages of Scripture: 1 John 1:9; Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:7; John 1:5; 4:8; Galatians 5:16; Psalm 37:4, along with many others. Believing and trusting in the promises of God gives the new believer a solid foundation for growth in the Christian life.

Not long after my salvation, I believed God was calling me to serve Him fulltime. I needed further training. Since I had heard the gospel over the Bob Jones University radio station, WAVO, in Atlanta, I sent an application to BJU. We put our house up for sale and gave notice to my employer where I had worked for 10 years. My wife and I prayed, trusting God to provide. Even though our house was on a dead-end street, it sold within a week—for cash!

Before being accepted as a student at BJU, we drove to Greenville from Atlanta, looking for a house to rent. After an exhaustive search, we were left with only one possibility. When we called the owner he said there was one couple ahead of us and he had promised the house to them. They were supposed to confirm rental by five o'clock, so we were to check back then. In the meantime, we looked into purchasing a trailer, making all the arrangements, contingent on our not being able to rent the house. We prayed and then telephoned the owner. He said the couple had not called back and to come to his office. After confirming that we would take the house, he said, "Don't you want to see the house?" We replied, "No," and wrote a check for the first month's rent. We believed that it was the house God provided. The house turned out to be just what we needed. This walk of faith was only the beginning of God's provision through the ensuing

years, as we continued to trust Him.

As graduation drew near, God was leading me to start a church. Due to circumstances which caused me to change my minor, I had to remain in school for an extra semester in order to graduate. During this time the university added the course, "Church Planting," which enabled me to go out as one of the first BJU church planters. What appeared to be discouraging with the additional semester, proved to be God's blessing!

Moving from Greenville to Tennessee with a wife and two little girls proved to be another step of faith. We visited the area looking for a house to rent, but as before when we moved to Greenville, no rental house could be found. There was a couple living in Tennessee who would be part of the new church. The wife was very helpful in locating a place to rent while we were in Greenville packing. I told her we could not pay more than \$135 monthly rent. Finally, I received a call. She stated that all she could find rented for \$150. I replied that we were praying and trusting God for a rental of \$135. After several more days of searching, she called back with the good news that God had led her to what we were praying for. The Lord provided again!

Over the years, God continued to answer our prayers, meeting every need: a meeting place for the church over a café and then in an old school building, and four acres of land for a building at the best location in town for a church. As the congregation prayed through many trials, God heard our prayers as every need was met. His promises proved true!

On one occasion things were not going well. I was overwhelmed with discouragement. As I sat in my car reading Scripture, the Lord led me to Matthew 19:27-29: "Then Peter said to Him, 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?' And Jesus said to them..., 'And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms, for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.'" This promise brought comfort to my soul, encouraging me to continue on for His glory!

In the 19th century, Henry George Salter wrote, "Every promise is built upon four pillars: God's justice and holiness, which will not suffer Him to deceive; His grace and goodness, which will not suffer Him to forget; His truth, which will not suffer Him to change; and His power, which makes Him able to accomplish."

Don't ever let discouragement cause you to give up! God orchestrates the lives of His children, for His glory. The bottom line is that as we walk by faith, claiming His promises and seeking His will, He is ever faithful.

ARE GOD'S PROMISES FOR ME?

WEEK 4

September 25 – October 1

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 128

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield;

The Lord gives grace and glory;

No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

Psalm 84:11

BOOK READING

“Whose Are the Promises?”

“The Promise a Free Gift”

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 25	2 Sam 21	Gal 1	Eze 28	Ps 77
Sep 26	2 Sam 22	Gal 2	Eze 29	Ps 78:1-37
Sep 27	2 Sam 23	Gal 3	Eze 30	Ps 78:38-72
Sep 28	2 Sam 24	Gal 4	Eze 31	Ps 79
Sep 29	1 Ki 1	Gal 5	Eze 32	Ps 80
Sep 30	1 Ki 2	Gal 6	Eze 33	Ps 81, 82
Oct 1	1 Ki 3	Eph 1	Eze 34	Ps 83, 84

NO GOOD THING WITHHELD

DAVID LOWRY

Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him.

You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;

Your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD. Psalm 128:1-4

Within a year and a half or so of being married, my wife and I soon realized we weren't in the 85% who conceive within a year. As the months of childlessness started adding up, we started grappling with the question: What does God promise about infertility? The patriarchs struggled with the same problem and God dealt with each of them in various ways. But while seeing these Old Testament believers work through this heartache is helpful, nowhere did I see God indicate that their promises of fruitfulness apply to modern believers like my wife and me.

With thoughts like these running through my head, I stumbled across Psalm 128:4. "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table." Soon, like the patriarchs, I was grappling with my own set of doubts and questions: Does this Psalm apply only to Israelites? Does the fact that it's in the Ascents section or the fact that it mentions Jerusalem and Israel give that view weight? Or is God obligating Himself to give children to all married men who obey and fear the Lord?

As you can see, I was already thinking in terms of context, original audience, and other important exegetical facets. But the questions that really unsettled me were: Is this something I can pray back to Him, or am I twisting its meaning to suit my current need? What about childless couples I know? Does it mean they're not obedient or God-fearers? Surely not! So can I base all my hope for children on this word from God and expect Him to deliver? I didn't want to be disappointed because I took something as a universal promise when it was not directed at me.

Ultimately, I can extrapolate from scripture that God is not unjust or unfaithful to His word to not give a godly Christian couple children. I knew

that then and I know it now. But I was able to go to God in prayer, confess that very fact, and then say something like this: "Father, you say that you will bless the godly man by making his wife a fruitful vine. Please answer in my family in a way that shows you are faithful to your word."

Now, a number of years later, I can say God has kept this promise to me. My three children indeed shoot around the table as if they were greased in olive oil (perhaps putting a slight stretch on the interpretation of that verse). I still struggle with the tension between seemingly universal promises like this one and believers who don't seem to get what God is promising. But I am settled on this: God is faithful to His word. And His word says, "No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly."

October 2-8

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 32

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

"By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff." **Hebrews 11:21**

BOOK READING

"The Two Lives"

"Different Hopes"

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 2	1 Ki 4, 5	Eph 2	Eze 35	Ps 85
Oct 3	1 Ki 6	Eph 3	Eze 36	Ps 86
Oct 4	1 Ki 7	Eph 4	Eze 37	Ps 87, 88
Oct 5	1 Ki 8	Eph 5	Eze 38	Ps 89
Oct 6	1 Ki 9	Eph 6	Eze 39	Ps 90
Oct 7	1 Ki 10	Phil 1	Eze 40	Ps 91
Oct 8	1 Ki 11	Phil 2	Eze 41	Ps 92, 93

DO YOU LIVE LIKE JACOB OR LIKE ISRAEL?

STEPHEN HUGHES

Over the last several years I've been collecting questions from my Bible study. Sometimes it's the meaning of a name, given quickly by a concordance. Other times it's a theological tangle that escapes my grasp. One question that is somewhere in the middle of these poles emerged over my last three years of special attention to the book of Genesis. The answer was rewarding, convicting, and certainly relevant to our MOW study. Why is half of the book of Genesis given to a detailed account of Jacob and his family? Abraham gets some good solid chapters. Isaac merits a token few. Jacob and his family get half the book. Why? There are the obvious reasons: his sons became the twelve tribes, he was the patriarch who took them to Egypt, etc. But that could have been covered more quickly. Genesis goes into details. Why? Here is the big lesson about Jacob that I learned.

Before Jacob is born, his mother is given a prophetic word that Jacob would be the son of the blessing. It was a prophecy she embraced, but that Isaac didn't at first. When things start going wrong and Esau is about to get the blessing, Jacob and Rebekah take it into their own hands to 'secure' the outcome of God's promise. Seeds of manipulation and deception were sown that would continue to be reaped throughout Jacob's life. The immediate result was that he had to leave, so he makes it to Laban where there is a back and forth of manipulative dealings until he escapes twenty years later. With the LORD's intervention and blessing, he not only puts the Laban years behind him, but emerges prosperous.

But the whole Esau episode isn't over, and moves towards an ominous confrontation as Jacob learns that Esau is headed his way with an army. With a death threat over his head and his brother coming on quickly, Jacob expects the end. He has finally run completely out of options. It's here that he reaches Peniel and wrestles with God (32:24-32). Something really big happens to Jacob here. And part of it is signified by the change of name. His whole life was characterized by manipulative attempts to gain blessing and prosperity. His very name *Jacob* signified his focus on outwitting his brother. All that changes now, and his new name *Israel*, prince of God, signifies a shift of focus towards God. Peniel was a spiritual victory for him. But although it was a victory, it wasn't the defining point of his life.

Troubles and pain haunt him going forward: Reuben's immorality, Levi and Simeon's violence and deception in Shechem, and the whole clan's anger towards Joseph. His family loses Deborah, his mom's special nurse, at *The Oak of Weeping* (35:8). He loses Rachel in childbirth (35:19). He loses Joseph and Simeon (42:36). Is it any wonder that by the time he stands before Pharaoh, he is ready to compare his life with that of his fathers and call the days of the years of his life "few and evil" (47:9)? It's a different man we have in Egypt than who started out in tents in Canaan, getting the best of the family.

It's in this Egyptian setting, out of the stricken land of Canaan, that we finally reach the defining moments of the life of a man now named Israel. He was born with a special promise. He spent the first half of his life trying to make it happen through his own scheming. He spent the second half reaping pain and sorrow. Now he is ready to die. But the end is different. He does it with the full assurance that God is going to fulfill the promises (48:21). And with the eye of faith he looks forward and pronounces the appointed things for his family, and worships Jehovah. This is the defining moment of his life, and this is the moment that Hebrews captures for us: "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (11:21).

God's promise is not going to advance through our own personal manipulation or self-interest. God's goal for our lives is not achieved through career-climbing or resume-building. God's blessing is not attained on the basis of our personal merits. And God's commission to us is not carried out by our own power.

A.W. Tozer observed that while we may do lip service about what we believe about God, we really spend most of our lives trusting ourselves, jockeying for positions and trying to get the best deals and personal promotions. Does that sound like faith? Or does that sound more like manipulation?

How do we know that we are truly trusting God's promises? How do we know that we are living by faith? When we live with reference to God (Israel), rather than in competitive struggles with others (Jacob). When we trust God for the means as well as the final outcome. When we are willing to cross the brook and face danger trusting in him and his protection. When we can look down from our deathbeds and assure our children that God himself is going to do everything that He has ever said for us.

WHAT IS GOD'S PROMISE FOR TODAY? WEEK 6

October 9-15

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 6:19-34

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." **Matthew 6:33**

BOOK READING

"Persecution Consequent on the Promise"

"The Parting"

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 9	1 Ki 12	Phil 3	Eze 42	Ps 94
Oct 10	1 Ki 13	Phil 4	Eze 43	Ps 95, 96
Oct 11	1 Ki 14	Col 1	Eze 44	Ps 97, 98
Oct 12	1 Ki 15	Col 2	Eze 45	Ps 99-101
Oct 13	1 Ki 16	Col 3	Eze 46	Ps 102
Oct 14	1 Ki 17	Col 4	Eze 47	Ps 103
Oct 15	1 Ki 18	1 Thes 1	Eze 48	Ps 104

CONFIDENCE TO SEEK GOD FIRST

SCOTT JONES

Right after my wife and I were married we moved from Ohio to South Carolina where I accepted a teaching position. There were many things to worry about: finances, no family nearby, and a new job in a new place, just to name a few. We aimed to seek God first and watched Him meet our needs. He directed us to a good church, which became our "family," and provided my wife a secretarial job at the school where I taught. Our Father was teaching us to keep seeking Him first and He will meet our needs.

After four years of teaching and the blessing of two children, my wife and I followed God's leading to Greenville for seminary training. There were again many reasons to worry during this second transition. I exchanged a full-time job with benefits for a part-time job with a school bill! But we had learned to trust God's promise to seek first His kingdom and righteousness, and He would provide what we needed. We are now entering our sixth year of seminary and He has met all our needs!

Not only has He met our physical needs, but also our spiritual needs. He has provided me with the grace and perseverance necessary to meet the spiritual needs of my family and still keep up with the demands of seminary. He has assured me in times of doubt and fear. He has calmed me in times of stress. During these spiritual trials, I remind my Lord of all the pressures I feel, and He calms the storm in my heart (Mk. 4:38-41).

This past February, the Lord brought me to one of the biggest undertakings of my life: ministering to my family during my grandmother's decline and death! I was asked to lead the funeral. This honor brought challenges together in a way I had not faced before: preferences, personalities, wants, wishes, sorrows, complaints, as well as vehicle difficulties, lack of sleep, hours of travel, work requirements, seminary assignments, husbandly and fatherly obligations, and the preparation to preach so that others would hear of the hope that is solely in Christ. I know others have borne greater burdens, but this was heavy for me. In all this I sought God's kingdom and righteousness. Though I was physically and spiritually drained, the Lord encouraged me to press on and supplied the strength through each moment.

Because of all these things I am confident in Christ's promise: "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Mt. 6:33). A few thoughts from this passage: (1) A man can only follow one master, God or wealth (Mt. 6:24). (2) The reason for this lesson is to "not be worried about your life" (6:25). (3) Life and body involves more than just food and clothing (6:25). (4) This is evident because God provides food for the birds and clothing for the grass (6:26-30).

Note the bird—it does not sow, reap, or gather its food into barns like man. Each bird simply gets food as needed. Men work all season to store up an abundance of food. God supplies for bird and man with no need for worry. A man should sow, reap, and store food as God supplies (cf. 2 Th. 3:10), but he should not resort to anxiety. If the Father supplies for the bird, do you not think that He will supply for you as well? Therefore, your life is more than just getting enough food; it is about your heavenly Father and seeking His kingdom and righteousness.

Note the lily—it does not exert itself in labor and it does not make thread for clothing (Mt. 6:28). Yet your Father has so designed each individual lily with more glory than King Solomon (29). This is the clothing God has made for the grass of the field which is present today and burned tomorrow (30). If your Father gives such clothing for the grass, do you not think that He will provide clothing for you? Therefore, there is more to your body than just clothing; your body is to be used to seek first your Father's kingdom and righteousness!

You have the opportunity to exemplify what it means to your family and the world to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." You have the opportunity to live knowing with full confidence that your Father in heaven will provide "all these things" you need. You have the opportunity to bear testimony to the truth of our Lord's words: "life is more than food, and the body more than clothing" (25).

What if I had given in to worry? I would not be in Greenville, seminary, or at Mount Calvary Baptist Church. Those are sad thoughts. But God is amazingly faithful to His promises! Let us be confident in His promises and put off the anxiety of tomorrow to be free of it today (34). Then you can use your life and body to seek first your Father's kingdom and righteousness and He will meet your needs.

October 16-22

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Peter 1

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you . . .” **1 Peter 1:3-4**

BOOK READING

“The Rule Without Exception”

“Taking Possession of the Promise”

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 16	1 Ki 19	1 Thes 2	Dan 1	Ps 105
Oct 17	1 Ki 20	1 Thes 3	Dan 2	Ps 106
Oct 18	1 Ki 21	1 Thes 4	Dan 3	Ps 107
Oct 19	1 Ki 22	1 Thes 5	Dan 4	Ps 108, 109
Oct 20	2 Ki 1	2 Thes 1	Dan 5	Ps 110, 111
Oct 21	2 Ki 2	2 Thes 2	Dan 6	Ps 112, 113
Oct 22	2 Ki 3	2 Thes 3	Dan 7	Ps 114, 115

CLAIMING GOD'S PROMISES AS MY OWN

JOEL FREDERICK

Many places in Scripture extol the faithfulness of God. Lamentations 3:22–23 says, “The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” We need to build our life on the promises of God and rejoice in them. Above all He has promised us who believe in Jesus Christ eternal life, and it is sure to come to pass. The Bible is filled with His promises. Begin with the promise of eternal life and rest in that one. He has promised to answer your prayers, to supply all your need, to guide you, to never to leave you, and to care for you.

Psalm 119:89–90 says, “Forever, O LORD, Your Word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands.” Here faithfulness is equated with God’s Word. God speaks never-ending truth. If God spoke something thousands of years ago, it still stands. I was thinking of this recently as I was going through the life of Elijah in my personal devotions. After a string of evil kings in the northern kingdom of Israel, Elijah comes on the scene just at the time of the worst king, Ahab. Matthew Henry describes it this way in his commentary on I Kings 17:

“So sad was the character both of the princes and people of Israel, as described in the foregoing chapter, that one might have expected God would cast off a people that had so cast Him off; but, as an evidence to the contrary, never was Israel so blessed with a good prophet as when it was so plagued with a bad king. Never was king so bold to sin as Ahab; never was prophet so bold to reprove and threaten as Elijah... he only, of all the prophets, had the honour of Enoch, the first prophet, to be translated, that he should not see death, and the honour of Moses, the great prophet, to attend our Saviour in His transfiguration.”

No matter how bad it may appear to be around us today, we live in settled assurance that God’s plan is being accomplished. God is faithful and true to His Word, and His promises still remain because He does not change.

I would like to give you three ways that I have found helpful in claiming God's promises as my own: studying His Word, reviewing His working in my own life, and learning to follow His voice. The following paragraphs expand on these three concepts.

In studying God's Word, we see a clear pattern of truth concerning God's character: He never changes and He never lies (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29). He was always true to His Word as He worked in the lives of the ancient Israelites. When He said He would do something, He did it. We build trust upon His proven character. **We can trust that God will be true to Himself.** He will never cease acting like God. He will never cease being sovereign, being holy, or being good.

We need to intentionally remember all the ways God has provided for us and delivered us in the past. I remember a time in my life when I had just graduated from BJU, and was working in Shelby, NC. It was wintertime, and there was some snow and ice on the roads. As I was driving to work, I came to a steep decline in the road, and as I began down the hill, my car began to slide sideways on the ice. There was a large box truck coming toward me down from the other side of the hill, and my driver's side was sliding toward the front of the box truck in his lane. In that moment, I believe the Lord gave me the calmness and the ability to get the car straightened back out and back into my lane just before the box truck passed on by at the bottom of that hill. When we recall the ways God has answered our prayers and protected us, it equips us to continue asking and expecting answers. **We learn to trust God's future faithfulness by remembering His past faithfulness.**

We also learn to trust God by learning to distinguish His voice from the many other voices that compete for our attention. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). God speaks primarily through His Word, but He can also speak through other people, through circumstances, and through the inner confirmation of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16). As we carefully read and meditate upon Scripture, the Holy Spirit can direct us to a verse or passage to claim and apply in our current situation. **Our faith and trust in God is built up and strengthened each time we experience the reality of one of His promises to us.**

God is pleased when we demonstrate faith in His promises (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is trusting in the character of God before we see how He is

going to work things out. As we see the ways He brings His promises to fulfillment, our trust in His faithfulness grows. Just as our trust in other people grows with daily interaction, our trust in God grows the same way. We trust Him, and rest in His goodness, even when we don't understand the circumstances that seem to contradict it. We can trust that God's plan for us will triumph. We can be encouraged that our hope in God is a living hope based in the resurrection of Jesus Christ through Whom we have eternal life (1 Peter 1:3–4).

October 23-29

SCRIPTURE READING

Philippians 4

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” **Philippians 4:6-7**

BOOK READING

“Endorsing the Promise”

“The Promise Used for This Life”

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 23	2 Ki 4	1 Tim 1	Dan 8	Ps 116
Oct 24	2 Ki 5	1 Tim 2	Dan 9	Ps 117, 118
Oct 25	2 Ki 6	1 Tim 3	Dan 10	Ps 119:1-24
Oct 26	2 Ki 7	1 Tim 4	Dan 11	Ps 119:25-48
Oct 27	2 Ki 8	1 Tim 5	Dan 12	Ps 119:49-72
Oct 28	2 Ki 9	1 Tim 6	Hos 1	Ps 119:73-96
Oct 29	2 Ki 10	2 Tim 1	Hos 2	Ps 119:97-120

LASHING MY MIND TO THE PROMISES OF GOD

KEVIN CALVINO

One of the most quoted and coveted promises in the Bible is Romans 8:28-29: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.” In a sense His promise to work everything together for good is conditional on the degree to which we love Him, to the degree that our hearts are teachable and humble toward Him.

To become more teachable and humble we need to seek Him. God tells us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. Walking by faith, obeying His Word, and praying all are very important elements of seeking Him. The way God answers our prayers is often in ways we don’t expect. Often He answers with trials that He knows will help us be conformed to the image of His Son.

In my life it seems that God often uses trials to focus my attention back on Him. These trials involve situations and circumstances over which I have no control. My pride pushes me to try to resolve the problem myself rather than trust Him. Because of my lack of faith, I do not listen to Him by simply looking into His eyes. I have required Him to use the bit and bridle to lead me. Rather than turning my mind to Him, I would turn it to myself. My default mode in these types of situations is to be fearful and anxious. Rather than seeing the situation as from Him, to lead me closer to Him, I worry. He needs to remind me often that I need to *work to completely focus my thoughts on Him and on His word.*

During one particular trial God directed me to two very encouraging promises: Isaiah 26:3, “He keeps him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him, because he trusts in Him”; and Philippians 4:6-7, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your

minds in Christ Jesus.” He has used these verses repeatedly, often multiple times a day to remind me to take my focus off myself and put it on Him. Alexander Maclaren states:

“It is the mind that cleaves to God which God keeps. I suppose that there was floating before Paul’s thoughts some remembrance of this great passage of the evangelical prophet when he uttered his words, which ring so strikingly with so many echoes of them, when he said, ‘The peace of God which passeth understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.’ What do men do with light things on deck when the ship is pitching? Lash them to a fixed point. Lash yourselves to God by simple trust, and then you will partake of His serene immutability in such fashion as it is possible for the creature to participate in the attributes of the Creator.”

God used these promises to remind me that His peace comes when I intentionally, deliberately, and frequently lash my mind to Jesus Christ.

A verse that God used to show me one of the things that would help me “lash” my mind to Christ is Psalm 62:1-2: “For God alone my soul waits in **silence . . .**; from him comes my salvation. ²He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; **I shall not be greatly shaken.**

Silence before God was not my practice. My soul was anxious, it was not waiting on God and it certainly was not waiting in silence. God used that verse to help me see that I need to work much harder at focusing my entire mind on Him at all times but especially during times of prayer. Maclaren comments:

“There must be the silence of the mind, as well as of the heart and will. We must not have our thoughts ever occupied with other things, **but must cultivate the habit of detaching them from earth, and keeping our minds still before God, that He may pour His light into them.**

We have to take the animal in us by the throat, and sternly say, ‘Lie down there and be quiet.’ We have to silence tastes and inclinations. We have to stop our ears to the noises around, however sweet the songs, and to close many an avenue through which the world’s music might steal in. He cannot say, ‘My soul is silent unto God,’ whose whole being is buzzing with vanities and noisy with the din of the market-place.

The silence of the soul before God is no mere passiveness. It requires the intensest [*sic*] energy of all our being to keep all our being still and waiting upon Him. So put all your strength into the task, and be sure that your soul is never so intensely alive as when in deepest abnegation (self-denial) it waits hushed before God."

I am so thankful that God keeps all of His promises, that He causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, and that He will never leave us or forsake us. I am thankful that during trials He leads us to the green pastures of His Word and feeds us and comforts us and shows us His goodness.

HOW DOES DESPAIR TURN TO HOPE? WEEK 9

October 30 – November 5

SCRIPTURE READING

Lamentations 3

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

"This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.
'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul,
'Therefore I have hope in Him.'"

Lamentations 3:21-24

BOOK READING

"Searching Out the Promise"

"The Time of the Promise"

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 30	2 Ki 11, 12	2 Tim 2	Hos 3, 4	Ps 119:121-144
Oct 31	2 Ki 13	2 Tim 3	Hos 5, 6	Ps 119:145-176
Nov 1	2 Ki 14	2 Tim 4	Hos 7	Ps 120-122
Nov 2	2 Ki 15	Tit 1	Hos 8	Ps 123-125
Nov 3	2 Ki 16	Tit 2	Hos 9	Ps 126-128
Nov 4	2 Ki 17	Tit 3	Hos 10	Ps 129-131
Nov 5	2 Ki 18	Phm	Hos 11	Ps 132-134

JEREMIAH'S JOURNEY TO HOPE

ERIC NEWTON

At the beginning of his classic *Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens wrote, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." American Christians in 2016 can identify. We have more conveniences and have received more tangible blessings than anyone in the history of mankind. But there is a lot of trouble too. Our newspaper headlines and social media provide plenty of evidence.

But the pressure, which invites discouragement and despair isn't just out there; it's in here. Some among us are walking through the darkest of valleys. For others, it's nothing earth-shattering but simply the struggle of life and the contingencies of the future.

The point isn't that Christians shouldn't face discouragement. The Bible is full of examples to the contrary. Rather, the question is, when we face it, what should we do? We find an answer in an ironic place—the book of Lamentations.

The loss of false hope

The circumstances are that the author of Lamentations (who seems to be Jeremiah) had observed the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and destruction of God's dwelling place, the temple, in 586 B.C. In the first two laments of this book he speaks of Jerusalem corporately, but in chapter 3 he expresses the affliction that he has personally endured.

The first 17 verses of Lamentations are an extended list of excruciating descriptions: *affliction, darkness, bitterness, hardship, dark places, a heavy chain, crooked paths, laughingstock, wormwood*, etc. Times were so bad that Jeremiah had reached the breaking point, as he expresses in verse 18: "My strength has perished, and so has my hope from the Lord."

The theological issue in Lamentations is not simply that bad things had happened but that God had permitted, even caused them. Jeremiah continually rehearsed his affliction, to the point that his soul was "bowed down" within him. He had sunk down in the depths (vv. 19-20).

What kind of *hope* had evaporated? The kind of hopes many have: powerful nations, political leaders, and easy religion. Judah had envisioned Egypt as a savior (4:17) and Assyria too (5:6). Judah had hoped in these former allies, these “lovers” (1:19). Judah had also hoped in King Zedekiah (4:20). Judah’s prophets had also misled God’s people with assurances of peace (2:14).

The substance of true hope

But the journey Jeremiah’s lament expresses suddenly pivots. It begins with a changed mindset. Literally, he *caused his mind to turn to this* (v. 21). In the words of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the prophet started talking to himself instead of listening to himself. As the psalmist says (42:5):

Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him
For the help of His presence.

When we sense there is no hope, we have to ask ourselves what we’ve been hoping for. Discouragement could be a mirror that reflects the misplaced treasure of our soul.

What did Jeremiah find when he fixed his thoughts on God? Why did he now have hope (v. 21)? Verses 22-25 meditate on the character of God—His *lovingkindnesses* and *compassions* and *faithfulness* and *goodness*. These attributes are good news for sinners living in a fallen world—better news than any stock market report could ever be.

These truths about God came to mind because Jeremiah knew his Bible and he knew his history. These verses look back to the Lord’s great self-declaration in response to Moses’ request, “I pray you, show me Your glory!” (33:18) Moses records what he heard as God’s awesome presence swept by: “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (34:6). And of course, God did bring His people to the land He promised in spite of their pervasive failures.

What Jeremiah came to understand is that it’s not the Lord’s gifts but the Lord Himself who constitutes hope. Hope is not national peace or prosperous business or faithful leaders, though these blessings are nice. Hope is the expectation that God will continue to be what He has always been.

When we hope in God we realize that part of His faithfulness is following through on threatened judgment. The Lord cannot be righteous and not judge sin, and Judah was experiencing this divine justice. But Jeremiah knew God “will not reject forever” (v. 31), and what Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 25:12 came true. Israel returned from exile to its land after 70 years of captivity. Then over 500 years later God came to Israel in person. Those like John who walked the earth with Jesus Christ “saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth [lovingkindness and faithfulness]” (Jn. 1:14).

The fruit of true hope

This true hope bore unmistakable fruit in Jeremiah’s life. The first fruit was **patience**. He recognized that his responsibility was to wait for and seek after the Lord (vv. 25-26). Another fruit was **perseverance**. He acknowledged that bearing up under trials in earlier stages of life is God’s goodness—to demonstrate faithfulness and prepare His children for stronger tests (v. 27). As James says, “the testing of your faith produces endurance” (Jam. 1:3). A third fruit was **prayerfulness**. Beginning in verse 40, Jeremiah appeals to the Lord on the basis of His character. Hope did not nullify the need for urgent petition that God might be merciful.

If you and I wake up in the morning and see the sun rise, or if it has already risen, we can be sure of two things, even in the most troubling and uncertain of circumstances. The earth beneath may seem like shifting sands, but according to Lamentations 3:22-23 (1) there is a fresh supply of God’s mercies awaiting us, and (2) His trustworthiness to His Word and His people is as sure as the rays of light streaming through the window. The Lord will continue to be what He has always been.

November 6-12

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 119:1-24

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.”

Psalm 1:1-3

BOOK READING

“The Promises in Possession through the Spirit”
“Jesus and the Promises”

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Nov 6	2 Ki 19	Heb 1	Hos 12	Ps 135, 136
Nov 7	2 Ki 20	Heb 2	Hos 13	Ps 137, 138
Nov 8	2 Ki 21	Heb 3	Hos 14	Ps 139
Nov 9	2 Ki 22	Heb 4	Joel 1	Ps 140-141
Nov 10	2 Ki 23	Heb 5	Joel 2	Ps 142
Nov 11	2 Ki 24	Heb 6	Joel 3	Ps 143
Nov 12	2 Ki 25	Heb 7	Amos 1	Ps 144

OUR DAILY SANCTUARY

DAN DAHLHAUSEN

Two verses which the Lord has used in my life in a significant way are Philippians 4:6-9, "Be anxious for nothing," and Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord as He directs my path." I have meditated on, prayed about, and attempted to apply these throughout my Christian journey. As a man living in a world system that opposes God's ways and yet trying to live for God and lead my family, I am tempted to worry, to be full of anxiety. I have found that being consistent in my time with the Lord, and seeking the things from above (Col. 3:1-4) to be the solution to these sinful tendencies. Being consistent is actually like putting money in a savings account to be used, not only for small daily items but also for the major and often unexpected expenses of life. Though we would all agree that consistency in daily devotions is necessary, I'm sure you have found out how hard this is to accomplish considering the distractions of life.

So how do we diligently seek the Lord as we're instructed in Proverbs 8:17? Let me share with you what I've done for the past 10 years, and show how the Lord has used this to impact my life. For years I struggled with finding time in the evening to study and meditate on the Bible. All too often something would come up that required my time and attention: home repair, family or work situation, (fill in the blank). When I finally sat down for Bible study, I would be so tired my "quiet time" would become just that, "zzzzz." How awkward it is to fall asleep while talking to your wife or coworker, let alone the Lord of your life. (I will have to admit that I once fell asleep while talking to my mother-in-law on the phone and got caught—VERY embarrassing.)

Per Pastor Minnick's suggestion, 10 years ago I started to drink my coffee black, and to spend time with the Lord first thing in the morning. I get up early to drink black coffee, read the Bible, drink more coffee, study, drink still more coffee, meditate, and pray. This has been life changing for me, both the drinking black coffee ☺ and the morning study of the Scriptures. After a few days it was easy to adjust to the earlier hour and now it is like having dessert before dinner; I look forward to my time with God each morning. Close relationships take time to develop. Think on this: 1 hr./day = 30 hrs./mo. = 365 hrs./yr. (~10 weeks of full time work) =1725 hrs./5 yrs.

(~ 1 yrs. of full time work)! Time really does add up! Spending daily time with the Lord can be compared with accruing interest; consistent deposits add up to a large fortune. But it's so much more than that; you're adding not only to your temporal but to your eternal account!

Time spent in the Scriptures benefits not only you, but others around you. I'm so thankful for the investment others have made into my life, and I've profited greatly from their time spent with the Lord. We all need help to love the Lord and others and to fulfill our God given responsibilities. As a medical doctor, I need God's guidance and protection, in order to "do no harm." At the age of 47, I was diagnosed with cancer and given 6 months to live. The thought of leaving my wife and 7 children, ages 5-18, drove me to the Lord to gain the peace that passes all understanding. I'm thankful for the storehouse of promises I was able to draw from, deposited in my account throughout my years of Bible study. I've been better equipped to deal with life's issues as a result of the time I've spent learning and applying God's promises.

Because we live in uncertain times we need to continually seek the Lord, so we're not overcome by temptation to worry or doubt God's truth. Jeremiah 17:12 tells us, "A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." The best way to gain access to this sanctuary is by having a consistent daily personal time with God. This will have an immeasurable impact on you, your family and those who the Lord brings into your life.

Week 1

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

Romans 15:4

Week 2

“Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.”

Psalms 2:8

Week 3

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.”

Matthew 19:29

Week 4

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

Psalms 84:11

Week 5

“By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.”

Hebrews 11:21

Week 6

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Matthew 6:33

Week 7

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you . . .”

1 Peter 1:3-4

Week 8

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7

Week 9

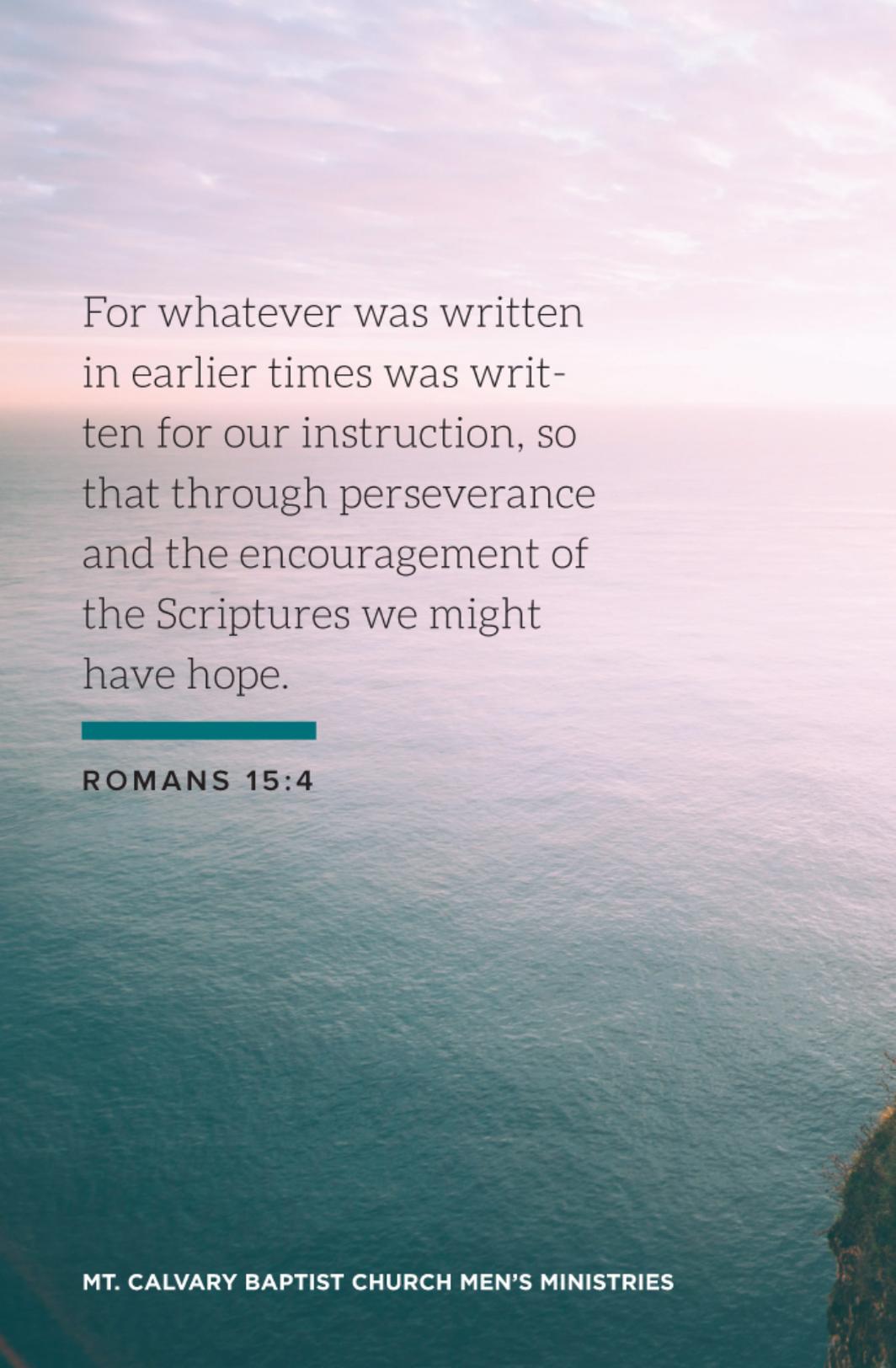
“This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. *They* are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I have hope in Him.’”

Lamentations 3:21-24

Week 10

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.”

Psalms 1:1-3



For whatever was written
in earlier times was writ-
ten for our instruction, so
that through perseverance
and the encouragement of
the Scriptures we might
have hope.

ROMANS 15:4