

DARE WE SPEAK ABOUT HOPE?



**EXPLORING THE MESSAGE
OF HOPE IN 1 PETER**

**EASTER 2020
13 APRIL–20 MAY**



INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1

In her podcast, “*Nice Try*,” Avery Trufelman explores the different kinds of utopias that people have tried to create throughout history. There are many: Disney World; Biosphere 2; the major cutlery company Oneida; Germania; right back to Jamestown; and even the idea of how suburbs were originally created! The irony of all of them, and this is what she tries to get to, is that utopias never survive. Even if the creators of these utopias have the best ideals, they always seem to forget about one important piece of detail: life happens.

Many Christians today have an inclination to see the Kingdom of God as one such utopia: where everything will just be fine, a magical island devoid of such earthly problems as pandemics, injustice, violence and hunger.

Our theologies then also follow this trend. We become so concerned with “one day” or “if everything will just be okay” that we forget to take seriously the world around us. When pandemics strike, we then bounce back and forth between hope and despair. Not sure which will suit the Christian life better. Do we cry over the pain and suffering we see, or do we optimistically try to “send a positive message” or tell people that “everything will be fine?” Truth is everything is not fine.

Voltaire called this a type of “mania,” when we maintain and sustain the idea that everything is alright when in fact everything is actually wretched.

INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1

We see it all around us. The economy is literally falling apart. People are losing their jobs. Mothers don't have food to give to their babies. Others are lonely, suffering locked down to struggle with the monsters inside of them. Hospitals around the world are struggling to keep up. Everything is not fine.

Christianity have tried to live with *real hope*.

Now hope is a difficult word. Sometimes we've made it "cheap." We often confuse it with the exact same utopian optimism mentioned above. Douglas John Hall writes that we will never be able to sustain any hope for the future "unless we can learn how to distinguish hope from optimism."

Rather, he says, following Romans 4:17, Christian hope is "hope against hope." Hope that knows its antithesis, despair. In fact, the Latin root word for hope is *spes*. Despair has a similar root: *desperare* (*de+sperare*) – that is: "without hope."

So, this is the major question that we have to deal with as a Christian community during this time:

What does it mean for the Christian community (that's us!) to live with real hope?



INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1

During this time we will follow four rhythms:



Listen to God



Real Talk



Listening in the world



Practice





Rhythm 1: Listening to God (Divine Reading)

Lectio Divina is the Latin for "Divine" or "spiritual reading" of the Bible. This way of Bible reading comes from the early church. It is rooted in the belief that we hear God's voice, speaking to us here and now, in the whole Bible. Lectio Divina traditionally flows in five movements:

Silence (*silencio*): Silent preparation of the heart and spirit. Part of this is a conscious reception of God's presence and a deliberate retribution of all noise in your life.

Read a passage (*lectio*): Read the text, preferably no more than ten verses at a time, slowly and out loud. Be sensitive to the movements of the Spirit. Stay with words or phrases that affect you and catches your attention. Do not analyse but listen and wait.

Meditate or reflect on Scripture (*meditatio*): Read the text aloud for a second time. Think about and reflect on the words or phrases that the Spirit has on your heart. What is the Spirit telling or doing in you?

Pray the Scriptures (*oratio*): Read the text a third time. Talk to God about your deepest emotions and feelings. What discomfort or resistance does this word create in you? How does this word comfort you? Toward what is God inviting you?

Think about what you heard (*Contemplation*): Bring your mind to God and rest in the presence of the living God. Allow the Word to sink deep into your heart and body. Choose a symbol or sign to remind you of this Word throughout the day. Continually remember it as you continue with your day and life.



Rhythm 2: Real Talk

“Real talk” follows the approach of dialogue rather than win-and-lose debate. We share perceptivities, rather than fighting for closed points of view or absolute viewpoints. We strive for consensus, rather than a negotiated settlement with which the majority is more or less satisfied. We come to clarity, rather than a final conclusion. We grow in wisdom, with the attitude of Jesus Christ, rather than pragmatic, selfish cleverness.

The following rules apply:

1.
I speak personally ...
and refrain from generalizations.
2.
I am honest and vulnerable ...
and keep from 'little lies.
3.
I listen deeply ...
and refrain from healing, repenting, or correcting others.
4.
I'm staying in the moment ...
and face the discomfort.
5.
I open myself ...
and refrain from agendas.
6.
I wait patiently for God ...
and do not prescribe how God should meet us.

This will happen Tuesday's at 18:00. Download the Zoom app, meeting ID will be shared in the Bron and E-Community Groups.



Rhythm 3: Listening in the world

We can learn a lot from people who are actively busy working to make the world a better place. Here we try to:

Listen to others so that we can discern God's calling for our own community.

Find creative ways to address visible problems around us.
Be motivated so that we do not lose hope.

Ask the question: how can I make a small difference?

These will take place as virtual live interviews that will be broadcasted on our social platforms. Join in and ask questions. In this way we learn from the bigger South African community.



Rhythm 4: Practice

“We do not think ourselves into a new way of acting. We act ourselves into a new way of thinking”

Alan Hirsch

Every week we will post a weekend activity for you to do that links to the text and cultivate genuine hope. We can only grow if we participate. Without that we're simply consumers of the gospel and not active participants in the hope-story of Jesus.