

# FOCUS ON FAITH

## HOPE OR HOPELESS?

If you've been reading the Prayers for the Week recently you'll know that since the beginning of the year the church leaders composing the prayers have been focusing on "Hope". Hope for families and marriages, hope for those involved or connected with the Asian tsunami tragedy, hope for peace in Iraq, hope for those who are poor and homeless and this week, hope for future generations.

Why hope? Because I believe many of us find this a difficult area. Some of us may be hoping to win the lottery even if the chances of us getting six randomly drawn numbers are stacked against us. Or we hope that only good will come our way in the future when the reality is that none of us is exempt from life's difficulties and disappointments. We hope our children will turn out okay and that they'll do well in school or their careers and possibly we hope for good health and a long happy life.

On the other hand for some of us maybe the situations and circumstances of our lives look pretty hopeless at present. It could be that a relationship has broken down, a marriage has failed, a career has been sacrificed on the altar of a company's economic expediency or a business venture has gone belly up. Maybe we've received a disturbing diagnosis about our health or perhaps someone we love has recently passed away and we can only look forward with a feeling of despair and hopelessness.

### Biblical hope though is not wishful thinking

Have you ever heard the saying, ***"Those who think they can, can, but those who think they can't are always right"***? The Bible says something similar. Proverbs 23 verse 7 in the King James Bible records Solomon's pearl of wisdom, ***"For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he."***

So often we spend our time worrying about what might happen or what has happened. A poster I once saw reads, ***"Who says worry doesn't work? Most of the things I worried about last week never happened!"***

Now I'm not just talking about positive thinking or having an affirming mental image. Rather this is about determining our course of action because of our attitude. Until Roger Bannister came along nobody thought the four minute mile barrier would ever be broken. Nowadays, even though a mile is rarely raced in competitions, it's a regular occurrence for top athletes to exceed the average speed Bannister had to run to set the standard.

Dick Fosbury invented the Fosbury Flop in order to achieve greater heights in the high jump. He was called a dreamer to start with when he said his technique would enable jumpers to clear higher heights. How many Olympic high jumpers can you now think of who use the old "straddle" method?

Why were these two athletes successful? Because they believed it was possible. They held out the hope that their dream was achievable and that they were going to do everything possible to attain their goal. Instead of focusing on what might go wrong they made a conscious decision to practice, hone and refine their skills in order to achieve what they had determined in their hearts.

Biblical hope though is not wishful thinking. It's about a certainty for the future. Here are a couple of verses from the Bible for you to think about in this context.

Talking of trusting God for the future as well as the present, King David writing in Psalm 25 verse 3 says: ***"No-one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame."*** The writer of the book of Hebrews declares, ***"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he (God) who promised is faithful"*** – Hebrews 10: 23.

Of course the future holds things for us that none of us can see clearly but believing in a God who is faithful is one way of moving into the unknown with confidence. Some of the difficulties you may be facing right now may seem like immovable mountains that you may not feel you have the strength or will to climb and overcome. But you can bring your concerns to a God of infinite power and love and as you do, take hold of the Apostle Paul's prayer for the Christians in Rome when he writes in Romans 15 verse 13: ***"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him."***

**The choice is yours – to live with an attitude of hope, trusting God for the future or keep worrying. I know which I'm choosing!**

If you have any concerns or difficulties you'd like help with log onto [www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk](http://www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk) where you'll find links to websites and contact details for the various Christian churches in the Bridgnorth area.



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