

MONDAY MANNA

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SEEKING HOPE IN SEEMINGLY HOPELESS TIMES

By Jim Langley

We live in very troubled times, without a doubt. Between a global pandemic, social unrest, economic turmoil and frequent instances of severe, extreme weather, many people are beyond concerned – they are struggling with a sense of hopelessness. There are two primary ways to respond in circumstances like these: We can give into the deepening despair, or we accept them for the adversity they are, but use them as opportunities for growth.

The problem for many people is they do not know where to turn when life seems out of control. Some find themselves returning to past addictive behaviours. There are those who even make the tragic and irreversible decision to “solve” their problems with suicide.

I was recently saddened to hear from one of my clients, who informed me that his ex-wife decided to end her life. She had battled bi-polar disorder for many years. Even though she had a life insurance policy, the death proceeds will not remove the pain my client and his two young boys will have to bear, even though the woman deserted her family several years ago. They have still lost any future contact with someone they loved.

Even though I can try to support the family as much as possible, often there is little consolation you can give. This was not the first time I have encountered someone who gave into feelings of hopelessness and did not consider the impact such drastic actions could have on those nearest to them.

Despite such tragedies, I have come to regard the search for hope in seemingly hopeless times as a worthwhile endeavour. Life is precious and worthwhile, no matter how dismal things may seem. We all face difficulties during seasons of our lives. Even for followers of Christ, we should understand life is not always easy. Jesus told His disciples, *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Our hope is not to be in our circumstances, but in God, who is in control of our circumstances.

I have also found encouragement in the lyrics from a well-known Gaither Vocal Band song, *Because He Lives*: *“Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future. And life is worth the living just because He lives.”* These are powerful words to remember, because we all find ourselves in valleys much more than on mountaintops.

As business and professional people, we always look for the bottom line. In terms of hopelessness, it is a tactic of Satan, described in the Bible as a liar and a deceiver, the enemy of God. His goal is – and has always been – to deceive us and destroy our lives. For those of us who have placed our trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord, we can be certain our eternal well-being is secure. His work of salvation and redemption took place nearly 2,000 years ago, covering our sins past, present and future.

The world around us, which we can see and feel, can indeed cause us to lose hope, despair. However, in the Scriptures we find assurance: *“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently”* (Romans 8:24-25). A “hope-so” world breeds hopelessness, but biblical hope breeds a confident assurance and an earnest, unwavering expectation.

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© 2020, all rights reserved. Jim Langley has been writing for more than 30 years while working as a life and health insurance agent. In recent years, his passion has turned to writing about his relationship with God. His goal is to encourage others to draw near to Him as well. A long-time member of CBMC, he started writing "Fourth Quarter Strategies" in 2014.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

How have the challenges of this year – the pandemic, social unrest, a troubled economy – affected you?

During this time, have you ever found yourself struggling with feelings of hopelessness? If not, do you know of someone who has? What has that experience been like – for you or for them?

Sometimes we might ask something like, "Do you think the weather will be good tomorrow?" and someone will respond, "I hope so." What do you think is the difference between "hope so" and biblical hope?

How do you respond when you hear someone saying they are placing their hope in God, even in difficult, seemingly impossible circumstances?

NOTE: For more about what the Bible says about this topic, consider the following passages:

Romans 5:6-8

2 Corinthians 4:18

Ephesians 6:14-18

1 Thessalonians 5:8-11

Hebrews 6:17-20