

**SEEKING HOPE IN SEEMINGLY HOPELESS TIMES****By Jim Langley**

Among the indirect effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic – we might term it “collateral damage” – has been a dramatic increase in people of all ages who experience feelings of hopelessness. During the pandemic many people did not know where to turn. Hopelessness and despair became constant companions. For some, this prompted a return to past addictive behaviors. Others even took the irreversible position of ending their lives to escape their fear and pain.

I will never forget hearing from one of my clients that his ex-wife decided to end her life. He still had carried life insurance on her, even though she had deserted their family more than three years earlier. However, the death benefits could in no way remove the pain he and his two young boys had to bear over her loss. Someone has termed suicide “a permanent solution to a temporary problem.” With her decision to take her own life, this family lost contact with someone they loved.

Life is precious and I have always wondered how someone can just give up, no matter how dismal or hopeless things may seem. I consider seeking hope in seemingly hopeless times a very worthwhile endeavor. We all face difficulties during seasons of our lives. As a follower of Christ, I have come to understand that life is not always easy – and it is not intended to be. Jesus told His disciples, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

I also find encouragement in these lyrics from a 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 beautiful words that I have committed to memory; occasionally I find myself singing them during discouraging times. Like most of us, I find myself in valleys much more often than mountaintops.

Experience has taught me this is where God prefers to use me, when I feel closest to others in need of encouragement. This is why our personal experiences are so significant. We need to share them with others who might be going through similar circumstances.

Hopelessness is a tactic of our spiritual enemy, whom the Bible identifies as Satan. He and his demons desire to stir feelings of hopelessness, taking as many people down as they possibly can. As C.S. Lewis declares in his powerful little book, *The Screwtape Letters*, Satan is a liar and a deceiver. His goal has always been to deceive us and destroy our lives. The answer to this is our eternal hope in Jesus Christ.

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For all who have placed our trust in Christ as Savior and Lord, we know our eternal well-being is secure. The work of salvation took place nearly 2,000 years ago as Christ died for our sake and our sins of the past, present, and future. But His work continues today. We have His promise, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus also told His followers, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Even when things seem most hopeless, we can cling to another assurance: “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).

© 2023, 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

1. Do you agree with the assessment that in recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people who have experienced or are experiencing feelings of hopelessness and despair? If so, what factors do you think account for this?
2. In your own case, have you or someone close to you experienced any of these feelings? How have you responded?
3. Mr. Langley states faith in Jesus Christ – not only in the work He did to provide eternal salvation and forgiveness, but also what He wants to do in our lives today – can bring us a sense of hope and confidence even in times that seem without hope? Do you agree? If so, how have you experienced this in your life?
4. If you encountered someone else who had become downhearted and without hope, what steps do you think would be most helpful?

#### NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Romans 5:6-8, 8:28,37-39; Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11; Titus 2:13-14

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