

## Week 2.

- What is your personal definition of 'hope'?
- Why is it important to have hope?
- Read Romans 15:4-13
- How can the 'steadfast encouragement' of Scripture give us hope?
- Do you feel hopeful about the future - why?
- How has God given us a sense of hope and optimism for the future?
- How are we to exercise 'hope'? Is it a 'one off' decision?
- Hope is often linked to perseverance. Why do you think that is?

*Hope looks with certainty toward the future God has promised his people, but at the same time it looks back to the Christ event.*

- Advent is traditionally the time when we look towards the return of Jesus and the end of times. How might a deeper awareness of 'apocalyptic events' give us cause for hope?
- Why might people be looking for hope?
- What might be the 'enemy' of hope?
- Do we have a responsibility to share our sense of hope? (1 Peter 3:15)
- Pray for those who feel 'hopeless' that we may have something positive to offer and the courage to share our experience of hopeful living.



## Advent Expectations : Filled With Hope

*Hope = 'an active struggle against desperation'*

[G. Marcel in Words of Spirituality : Enzo Bianchi : SPCK : 2012]

'Hope should be one of the defining marks of the believer. In the OT it is predicated on the mighty acts God has done for Israel in the past, and thus the faithful can be certain that he will exercise his righteousness on their behalf in the future. The meaning of "hope" in the NT is radically different from that of the English word hope. Rather than expressing the desire for a particular outcome that is uncertain, hope in the NT is characterised by certainty. The object of hope in the later NT is variously described: it is seeing God himself, the resurrection of the dead through Christ Jesus, and an end to suffering. Although God's people may be persecuted, the Apocalypse encourages them to hope; it presents Christ as the supreme ruler of the universe who will one day be victorious and ensure victory for God's people. Revelation's vision of hope reaches its climax in Revelation 21:1–22:5, which describes in extravagant detail the new creation and the new Jerusalem.'

[My paraphrase from IVP Dictionary of Later NT & its Developments via Logos]

