

HOPE IS HERE

CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS

Hope is Here – Launch (Talk given by Keith Brindle on 12/01/20)

1. What does hope mean to you?
2. Do you know any verses or passages in the Bible about hope?
3. Where do you find hope in your life?
4. Where is hope missing in your life?
5. Keith spoke about ultimate hope and everyday hope. What does ultimate hope mean to you? What does everyday hope mean to you?
6. For those who don't believe in God or heaven how do we make our Christian hope real?
7. Keith spoke about our Christian hope being in the here and now, because we are loved in the here and now by God. How do we know this? And how can we share this with others?
8. What questions around Hope would you like us to address in the coming months?

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2. Hope is Here – Why Hope? (Talk given by Keith Brindle on 19/01/20)

1. The words optimism and hope are used interchangeably most of the time. How do you see the difference/similarities between optimism and hope?
2. What things help you to remain hopeful/optimist?
3. Someone (Fyodor Dostoevsky) said 'to live without hope is to cease to live.' How do you interpret that?
4. Keith quoted a song with the (cheerful) chorus 'Maybe I'm just trying to distract myself from my mortality.' Do you recognise the truth of this? How do we/does culture distract itself?
5. Share the things you do to ensure your hope remains in Christ (rather than in other things).
6. How do/can we put our hope for things (healing, relationships, etc), without them becoming our only (ultimate) hope?
7. Read Colossians 1:15-23. What do you read about who Jesus is that is a source of hope to you?

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3. Hope is Here – Reclaiming Hope (Talk given by Richard Saint on 26/01/20)

1. What did you find most or least helpful from the talk?
2. What do you think of the assessment of hope becoming redundant if we simply trust our own tactical and prudent efforts?
3. What things are you susceptible to place your ultimate hope in? Status, Skill, Stuff, Strength
4. Does knowing that God sees you and loves you help you in your situations?
5. The imagery of an anchor is interesting as an anchor works at a distance from the ship as long as it remains connected.
 - a. Does this imagery help when we feel that God is at a distance?
 - b. What keeps us connected to God as our anchor? Could this be prayer (v22)?

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4. Hope is Here – What Are You Waiting For? (Talk given by Keith Brindle on 02/02/20)

1. What resonated with you from the talk?
2. What inspired you?
3. What challenged you?
4. What space are we giving God each day to actively work on the bits of our character that we know are not in line with God's righteousness?
5. Who are you accountable to in that regard?
6. Who is praying for you, supporting you as you work this stuff out?
7. Where, when are you giving the Holy Spirit the opportunity to work with your spirit?
8. Keith suggested that at the end of the day, to think over the day and ask yourself prayerfully what did you do, or say that you are happy with and not happy, allowing the Holy Spirit to both challenge you about who you are and to comfort you. Could you consider doing this? Could you be held accountable to give it a go and hold someone else in your CG accountable?
9. Where and when are you giving time to praise God, to pray and to possibly, for some, consider fasting? (Outside of the times when we come together and do these things collectively, have you considered a routine and regular pattern of worship and prayer that works for you?)

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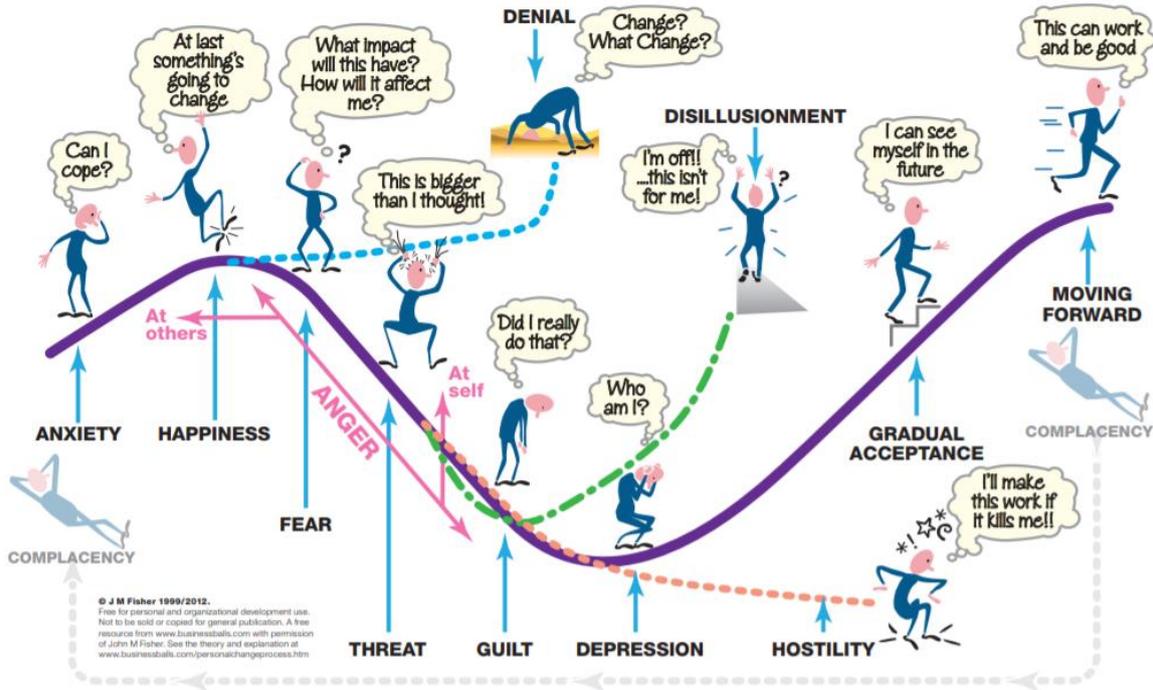
5. Hope is Here – Helpless, but not Helpless? (Talk given by Steve Ibbetson on 09/02/20)

1. The difference between helplessness and hopelessness?
2. What sort of life situations cause such states in us.
3. My example of the prisoner waiting to be sentenced before a judge is not dissimilar to receiving a diagnosis from a consultant, being made redundant etc. All involve cancelling of life expectations and life quests. Consider the examples from the sermon and if appropriate the groups personal experiences.
4. People cope in different ways:
 - a). Some have god experiences and need Christians to walk with them to explain the experience.
 - b). Some have a total loss of hope and need Christians to walk with them through the experience.

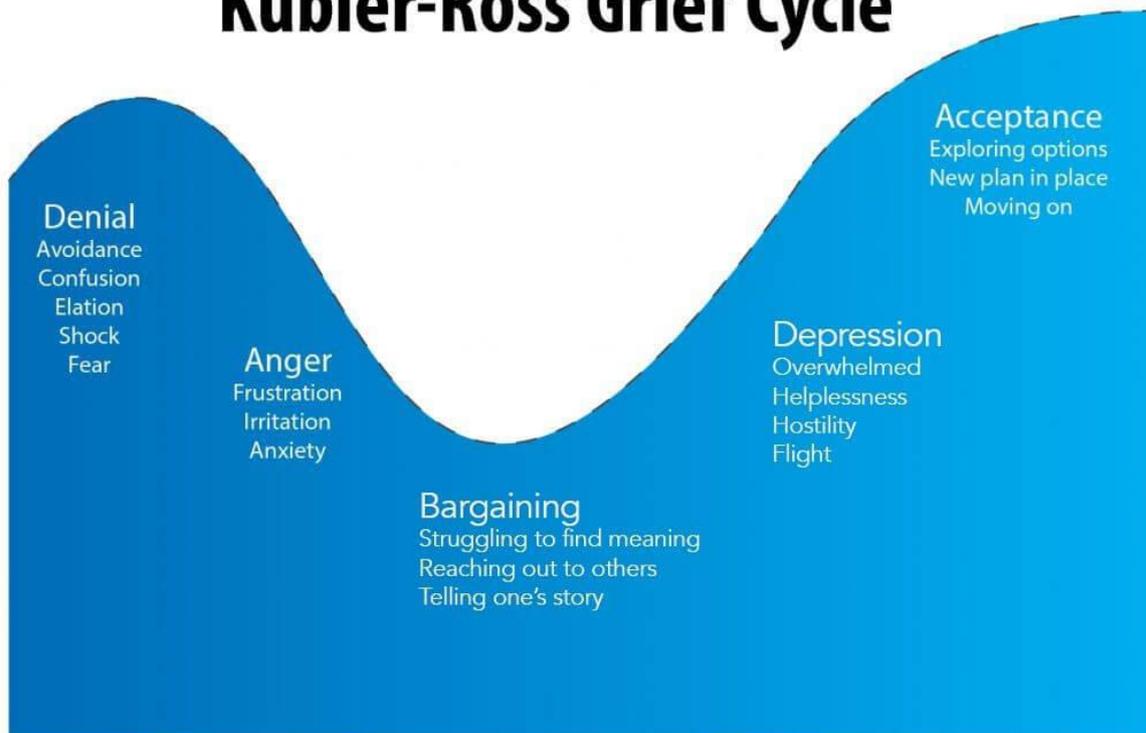
Discuss your experiences of these different reactions.

5. The bible has examples of people with both approaches to such experiences. Acts 9:1-19, Mark 14:32-42, 1Kings 19. There are others you could also consider.
6. Peoples experience in these situations can be very similar to the grieve curve (see two examples on following page). Discuss. Discuss how faith impacts our experience.

The Process of Transition - John Fisher, 2012 (Fisher's Personal Transition Curve)



Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle



Information and Communication

Emotional Support

Guidance and Direction

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6. Hope is Here – Hopeful Foundations: Hearing and Doing (Talk given by Richard Saint on 16/02/20)

1. What did you find most helpful or challenging from the talk?
2. What are we susceptible to building our lives and faith upon?
 - a) Are they firm like rock or likely to fail under pressure?
3. Which of the strong foundations do you find most helpful or most challenging?
 - a) You are loved, You can trust God, You are forgiven, God's promises are for now and eternity
4. Think about your own foundations, which bits are strong and which are weaker?
5. The parable is about listening to God's teachings and doing it in our lives
 - a) What do you find easy to listen to and do?
 - b) What do you find harder to listen to and do?

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7. Hope in Jesus' Glory (Talk given by Anthony Rose on 23/02/20), 2 Peter 1:16-end, Matt 17:1-9

1. What is the glory of God?
2. How do you think God's glory is enhanced, when we, his followers, give Him glory?
3. How and when did you last experience God's glory?
4. Why do you today need to glimpse the glory of God?
5. Anthony spoke of not wanting to be defined by his Parkinson, but being defined as a child of God? What defines you?
6. Are you a well-polished mirror that reflects God's glory into the world? What are the things that tarnish that mirror?
7. How do you allow the Bible to reveal the glory of God to you?
8. How are you spending time with the Holy Spirit?

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8. Hope in Temptation (Talk given by Paul Jakeman on 01/03/20), Matt 4:1-11

1. How was your understanding of temptation helped by Barclay's reminder that the original Greek word is better translated as "testing"?
2. Jesus was tempted – but he was the Son of God. What do you learn from that?
3. We are tempted as Jesus was. How good are we at using the bible – the sword of the Spirit – in responding to temptations?
4. Paul claimed that there was hope (even) in temptation. Do you agree? Does it feel that way when we are struggling?
5. Only be as specific as the group is comfortable with, but what (if any!) aspects of the sermon were helpful in your own situation?

Groups that use written prayers may like to finish with the one David Sibson wrote for the 11am service:

We thank you, Heavenly Father, that even though we are subject to temptation, you give us the promise of hope.

We can derive hope from our knowledge that even your son Jesus was himself tempted, and that we are being tested in your refiner's fire.

We can take hope from following the example of Jesus and the way he dealt with temptation; and

When we are troubled by temptation, we can still have hope in the victory of Christ at the end of Lent.

Amen

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9. International Women's Day (Talk given by Anna Brindle on 08/03/20), Acts 9:36-42, Gal 3:26-29

1. Read Galatians 3:26-29. What does it mean to you to be 'all one in Christ Jesus'?
2. Read 2 Timothy 1:5 and 2 Timothy 3:15-17 where Paul write about Timothy's mother Eunice and grandmother Lios. How can this encourage and challenge those of us who have the ability to raise up future leaders by growing their faith as children? Is this limited to just parents and grandparents? (It takes a village to raise a child!)
3. Are you challenged to live as humbly and generously as the women in the plaques?
4. Do you need to guard against valuing people – maybe especially women – for what they do for you? Maybe even to repent for inequality you've been part of?
5. Are you inspired to use your natural practical gifts to change lives for God like Dorcas?
6. How could you learn about and be inspired by women who have done amazing things, to re-dress some of the inequality history has fed you so far?
7. From what Anna shared where is the hope in the Christian faith for women?

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10 If hope is here, where is here? (Talk given by Mike Wilmott on 16/03/20), John 4 5-42.

1. What did you find most helpful / encouraging?
2. What did you find most difficult / challenging?
3. The woman at the well was an outsider – and Jesus went to her – who are the outsiders that we think he would go to today in Devizes?
4. Jesus asked the woman at the well for a gift – a drink of water. What can we receive from outsiders, from those we might be seeking to help? How should this affect our attitude towards them?
5. What do you think Jesus means by ‘a spring of living water’?
6. How can we keep this spring of living water flowing through us?
7. Do we see ourselves as people that can seed new hope for those seeking it?

Read 1 Timothy 17-19 – after the last week, v.17 may seem particularly resonant in terms of the vagaries of putting hope in wealth! But in both verses 17 and 18 , the writer uses strong language – ‘commanding’.

8. Jesus talks of ‘living water’ ‘overflowing’ (John 4) – Paul talks about ‘God richly provides’ (v17). Do we see God as generous and giving?
9. Do we see good deeds and generosity (v18) as a duty, or a response to the riches we have received?
10. The hot topic of the day is how to avoid catching and passing on coronavirus. How can we pass on instead the message of hope? What does that look like today?