

Is there hope in a pandemic?

Bible verses for Explore – 11 March 2023

1. From curse to blessing

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Genesis 12.1-3

Galatians 3.13-14

2. Through the valley

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7. Jars of clay

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9. God intended it for good

Genesis 50.15-21

1. From curse to blessing

First discuss:

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about suffering and hope?

*Then write in **one** sentence:*

How might you encourage someone using the truth contained in these verses?

Genesis 3.14-19 (abridged)

So the Lord God said to the snake, 'Because you have done this,

 'Cursed are you above all livestock
 and all wild animals!

I will put enmity
 between you and the woman,
 and between your offspring
 and hers;

he will crush your head,
 and you will strike his heel.'

To the woman he said,

 'I will make your pains in childbearing
 very severe;
 with painful labour
 you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband,
 and he will rule over you.'

To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree,

 'Cursed is the ground because of you;
 through painful toil
 you will eat food from it
 all the days of your life.

For dust you are
 and to dust you will return.'

Genesis 12.1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

 'I will make you into a great nation,
 and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
 and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you,
 and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
 will be blessed through you.'

Galatians 3.13-14

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.' He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

2. Through the valley

First discuss:

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about suffering and hope?

*Then write in **one** sentence:*

How might you encourage someone using the truth contained in these verses?

Psalm 23.1-4

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

Psalm 34.17-18

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
The Lord is close to the broken-hearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

3. No more death or pain

First discuss:

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about suffering and hope?

*Then write in **one** sentence:*

How might you encourage someone using the truth contained in these verses?

Revelation 21.1-5

Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’

He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’

4. Hoping patiently

First discuss:

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about suffering and hope?

*Then write in **one** sentence:*

How might you encourage someone using the truth contained in these verses?

Romans 8.18-28

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

5. Nothing can separate us

First discuss:

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about suffering and hope?

*Then write in **one** sentence:*

How might you encourage someone using the truth contained in these verses?

Romans 8.31-39

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

‘For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

6. My heart yearns

First discuss:

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about suffering and hope?

*Then write in **one** sentence:*

How might you encourage someone using the truth contained in these verses?

Job 2.7-10 (abridged)

Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

His wife said, 'Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!'

He replied, 'Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?'

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Job 19.6-27 (abridged)

Job said,

'God has wronged me
and drawn his net around me.

'Though I cry, "Violence!"
I get no response;
though I call for help,
there is no justice.

He has blocked my way
so that I cannot pass;
he has shrouded my paths
in darkness.

His anger burns against me;
he counts me among his enemies.

'My breath is offensive to my wife;
I am loathsome to my own family.
Even the little boys scorn me;
when I appear, they ridicule me.
All my intimate friends detest me;
those I love have turned against me.
I am nothing but skin and bones;
I have escaped
only by the skin of my teeth.
'Oh, that my words were recorded,
that they were written on a scroll,
that they were inscribed
with an iron tool on lead,
or engraved in rock for ever!
I know that my redeemer lives,
and that in the end
he will stand on the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him
with my own eyes –
I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

7. Jars of clay

First discuss:

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about suffering and hope?

*Then write in **one** sentence:*

How might you encourage someone using the truth contained in these verses?

2 Corinthians 4.1-12

Since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

8. Discipline

First discuss:

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about suffering and hope?

*Then write in **one** sentence:*

How might you encourage someone using the truth contained in these verses?

Hebrews 12.4-12

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.’

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined – and everyone undergoes discipline – then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

9. God intended it for good

First discuss:

What do these passages tell us about God?

What do these passages tell us about suffering and hope?

*Then write in **one** sentence:*

How might you encourage someone using the truth contained in these verses?

Genesis 50.15-21

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?' So they sent word to Joseph, saying, 'Your father left these instructions before he died: "This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly." Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.' When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. 'We are your slaves,' they said. But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.' And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.