

Day 1

December 30



Pray | Praise God for conquering sin and death for you

Celebrate because our God is victorious and faithful!

The week ahead is a week of transitions and continued celebrations. As we close out 2019, it's appropriate and necessary for us to set aside some time to remember and celebrate the faithfulness, the greatness, the generosity, and the love of our great God. In our scripture passage for today, King David does just that, and he calls all of us to do the same. As you read Psalm 98 today, consider reading it out loud. Make it your personal celebration of the God of the universe. Because of his victory and great love for you, you can have hope - and from hope comes joy. Surely that's worth singing a new song and making a joyful noise!



Read | Psalm 98



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

As you look back on 2019, how has God's faithfulness, love, and mercy been revealed in your life? As 2019 comes to a close, don't miss the opportunity to reflect on this and give God thanks.

The last verse of Psalm 98 reminds us that God will return to our world and judge the world with righteousness and equity. Judgement is not always something we think to celebrate. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, do you celebrate the promise of judgment? Why or why not? If you are not a follower of Jesus, God's judgment could be scary or simply not real. If God is speaking to you this season, calling you to explore this more, please don't ignore his call. His love is real and it's for you, too. Take the next step. Talk with God about your thoughts and concerns.

Psalm 98 was the base from which the lyrics to the famous song *Joy to the World* were written. Take a few minutes to reflect on these familiar lyrics:

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy

Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

Day 2

December 31



Pray | Give God thanks for his faithfulness and provision in 2019

Only God is worthy to be Lord of your life.

The passage from Isaiah that we're reading today is entitled, *The Greatness of God* (ESV). As you read the verses today, recall and celebrate the characteristics of God that truly make him great; the characteristics that distinguish him from everyone and everything else that we know. The characteristics that make him worthy to be our Lord include: Almighty, Gentle Shepherd, Creator, Everlasting, Just, Incomparable, Reliable Provider. **Our God truly is GREAT!** Make those words the window through which you reflect on the past year and look forward to the year ahead.



Read | Isaiah 40:9-31



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

As we move through different seasons of our lives, different characteristics of God are more evident. Looking back on the events of your life in 2019, what characteristics of God were most evident and relevant to you? Go to God in prayer and praise him for those characteristics and celebrate his greatness.

Many of the verses in Isaiah 40 compare the greatness of God the Creator to the things of earth that he created. The obvious conclusion is that the created things are never as great as the creator. Despite that truth, the sad reality is that we are all so easily drawn into prioritizing and valuing created things over the creator. Why do you think that is? Take a moment to reflect on the created things that draw you away from God's priorities for your life, and ask God for the strength and wisdom to shift your focus away from these things and to him.

Isaiah 40:31 provides powerful images and assurances to those who have put their trust in God. *But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.* How does the idea of "mounting up with wings like eagles" or "running and not being weary" or "walking and not fainting" encourage and inspire you as you look forward to 2020?

Day 3

January 1



Pray | Ask God to fill you with hope that can only come from him

Suffering Perseverance Character Hope

Happy New Year! Today we celebrate the beginning of another year – a clean slate, a fresh start. Many of you will use this opportunity to establish some new goals and contemplate some new habits, all in the name of making ourselves and our lives more like we believe they should be. If one word could summarize it all, it would be HOPE. We change because we have hope - hope that our bodies will be more healthy, hope that our lives will be less stressful and more meaningful...the list goes on and on. As Christians, we have a source of hope that goes beyond any source that is available on this earth. Today is the perfect day for Christians to recall, and reflect on, the source of our hope, and let that reminder shape our vision and goals for 2020. Let God's words in our scripture passage today fill you with renewed hope and confidence, not in your own strength and capabilities, but in God's.



Read | Romans 5:1-5



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

As followers of Jesus Christ, we should be the most hopeful people in the world, but we often let the things of the world steal our hope. Why do you think that is? Reflect on the things of the world that can steal your hope, then take that list to God in prayer and ask for his strength and wisdom to see those “hope-stealing” thoughts through his eyes.

God created all humans in his image and all humans can find their ultimate hope in God's love and the gift of salvation made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you have not yet made Jesus the Lord of your life, you have not yet experienced the hope you were created to experience. If God is speaking to you this New Year's day, respond to him today. Go to God in prayer; share your fears and your hopes, and commit your life to Jesus Christ.

Spend a few minutes connecting the dots between suffering, perseverance, character, and hope. Can you get to real hope without suffering?

Day 4 *January 2*



Pray | Ask God to renew and expand your confidence in his promises

Christians must live confidently and boldly because Jesus made it possible.

As you consider your priorities, dare we say “resolutions”, for 2020, you should consider the words of God in our scripture reading today. The scripture provides both meaningful resolutions and a powerful reminder of the reasons for adopting them. First, the resolutions: 1) Draw near to God – confidently enter his presence with a sincere heart that desires an eternal relationship with him. 2) Hold unswervingly to the hope you have in God’s faithful delivery on his promises. 3) Encourage (or spur) your fellow Christians to greater levels of service and love. 4) Commit to meeting together as followers of Jesus Christ to encourage and build each other up.

Why should you do these things? Because you love Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection opened a path back to a relationship with God. Because of your love for Jesus, you want to bring glory to him today, and ultimately spend eternity with him in God’s perfectly restored kingdom.



Read | Hebrews 10:19-25



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Which of the four resolutions mentioned would be most impactful to your life and relationship with God in 2020? Take a few minutes to reflect on some practical steps you can take to make it happen. Remember, you do not need to do this on your own; ask God and friends to help.

How can you spur other Christians on to love and service (good deeds)? What steps can you take right away to make it real?

Many of us struggle to really act on some (or all) of these resolutions because we’re carrying the heavy weight of a guilty conscience. If that’s you, these verses from Hebrews provide assurance that Jesus provided a path to relieve you of that guilt as well. Hebrews 10:22 tells us we can have our hearts “sprinkled clean” from a guilty conscience. If you’re struggling with the weight of guilt, take that guilt to God in prayer and ask for clarity on how you can be “sprinkled clean”.

Day 5

January 3



Pray | Ask God to energize your life with hope flowing from his promises

The Christian's ultimate hope comes from Jesus' promised return.

We're all starting 2020 with a perspective that is unique to our own life situations. Whether your thoughts about the new year are filled with hope, anxiety, dread, or something in between, today is the perfect day to reflect on the source of those feelings. As people who have made Jesus Christ our Lord, we should always be filled with hope, based on God's promises. But as sinful humans living in a fallen world, we can easily lose sight of those promises in the busyness, stresses, and strains of life.

Today's scripture passages remind us of our ultimate source of hope: the day when Jesus will return. The day when sin, death, pain, and tears will be gone, and God will come to live among us in a perfectly restored creation. If you're already hopeful for 2020, make sure your hope is based on what is eternal. If you have anxiety or fear or simply no hope for 2020, make today the day that you begin to find renewed hope in the promises of our great God.



Read | Revelations 21:1-7, 2 Peter 3:10-14



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Are you optimistic and hopeful for 2020? It's easy to have these emotions because of physical things: your job is going well, your health is good, your family is functioning well, etc. While these are great blessings from God, it's so important to ensure your ultimate hope and identity is not found in these things. Take a few minutes to reflect on the source of your optimism and hope. Consider your reaction to losing your job, money, family, or health. Spend time in prayer with God aligning your hope to his promises.

Are you anxious or worried about 2020? If you have made Jesus Christ your Lord, you already know that you should not be feeling these emotions, and yet we all struggle with them at times in our lives. When emotions like this begin to surface, it's critical to have strong spirit disciplines (scripture reading, regular prayer, active participation in a community of believers) to raise awareness and bring peace. Bring your concerns to God in prayer right now. Share the details. Open your heart to him and then listen. He is trustworthy and faithful and will provide a path out of your anxiety.

As followers of Jesus Christ, the hope of heaven should be the primary motivator for all we do. However, because it's so hard to grasp the reality of heaven, it's often not a factor in our decision-making and priority-setting. How real is heaven for you? How can you make it more real and impactful in your life?

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