

## Hopeful Leadership

Leadership involves motivating, directing and, many times, inspiring. Hope, or being able to raise expectations of a hopeful outcome, is a key aspect of good leading. Today, we often find ourselves inundated and overwhelmed by the complexities of life, the volume of things to be handled, and the speed by which expectations develop, multiply, or change. Anxiety, fear, and doubt can, and often do, limit our effectiveness. This session will seek to explore the nature and role of hope in the leader and in their leading.

**Stuart McAllister** was born in Scotland and saw his life changed by Christ at the early age of twenty. Filled with a hunger to learn more and deepen his understanding of the faith led him to join Operation Mobilization in 1978. He worked with the organization for 20 years in Vienna, Austria, and his service took him to Yugoslavia, where he was imprisoned for forty days for distributing Christian literature. Upon his release, he continued to preach in communist countries, resulting in more imprisonments. With a rich history of service, Stuart has acted as general secretary of the European Evangelical Alliance (1992-1998) and been involved with the European Lausanne Committee. Stuart joined Ravi Zacharias International Ministries in 1998 as the International Director and today serves as Regional Director, Americas. He has contributed chapters in the books *Beyond Opinion* (Thomas Nelson, 2007) and *Global Missiology for the 21st Century* (World Evangelical Fellowship, 2000).

### ***Romans 8:24-25; 15:13; Psalms 42:11***

*“Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.”<sup>1</sup>*

James Hagerty: *“One day I sat thinking almost in despair, a hand fell on my shoulder and a voice said reassuringly, ‘cheer up, things could get worse.’ So I cheered up and, sure enough, things got worse.”*

*“Hope is bred in the bone. Our spirits were made for hope the way our hearts were made to love and our brains were made to think and our hands were made to make things. Our hearts are drawn to hope as an eagle is drawn to the sky. A ‘life instinct’ is what Karl Menninger called hope. Keep hoping, you keep living. Stop hoping, you die inside.”<sup>2</sup>*

- **What do we mean by hope?**

The Webster dictionary defines it this way: *“to cherish a desire with expectation of attainment.”<sup>3</sup>*

The theologians Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart shed light for us. *“Hope is among those capacities or activities which mark off the territory of the distinctively human within our world. The quest for meaning, truth, goodness and beauty is closely bound up with hope as an activity of imagination in which we seek to transcend the boundaries of the present, to go beyond the given, outwards and forward, in search of something more, something better, than the given affords us.”*

*“Hope is born the moment we believe that the good things we wish for and imagine having are possible for us to have. The odds may be against us, but hope does not calculate the odds. All hope needs is a belief that what we hope for is possible.”<sup>4</sup>*

- **Why is it so hard?**

*“Worry is hope’s bothersome twin brother,” and so it seems. He said, “Worry is forever trying to take the wind out of hope’s sails. Hope is forever resetting its sails to whatever wind there is. Sometimes hope gets the better of worry; sometimes worry pins hope to the mat. But we are stuck with both of our fighting siblings.”<sup>5</sup>*

-The pressure of life, circumstances and real events.

-The impact of others’ problems, concerns and needs on us.

-Our own internal struggles, doubts and fears.

## **I. The Christian View of Hope**

### ***Revelation 21: 1-5***

**A. The earth is the Lord’s** (Psalms 24:1-2).

**B. Redemption is accomplished** (Colossians 1:13-14).

*“The good news of the gospel is not simply about forgiveness for sins and escape from the wrath of God. It is about connecting believers with something absolutely extraordinary that God has prepared for them in the future. It is about the glory of having within oneself the source of all truth, all love, all holiness, all righteousness, all forgiveness, and all healing—the Messiah himself.”<sup>6</sup>*

**C. The future is in His hands.**

*“The Christian hope is finally invested not in an extension of or a development from the conditions, actualities and potentialities of the present order of things, but in a decisive activity of the God who in the beginning called this same order into being out of nothing, and who promises us a transformation of our situation so radical as to be pictured under the figure of a wholly new creative act on God’s part.”<sup>7</sup>*

*“There is such a thing as an ecology of hope. There are environments in which it flourishes and others in which it dies.”<sup>8</sup>*

## II. The Experience of Life

### A. **Disappointment: a stealth weapon** (Psalm 120:5-7).

### B. **Personal doubts: I can't do this.**

*"We choose to wait when we want what we wait for. We **HAVE** to wait for it because we can do nothing to make it happen. We are **ABLE** to keep waiting for it only as long as we keep believing it will happen. Waiting is the wanting, in the helplessness, and in the believing. But it is the helplessness that makes the waiting so cold, so lonely, and sometimes so paralyzing."*<sup>9</sup>

### C. **When hope gets lost or clouded.**

*"Idealism is fostered by hope. Realism is fostered by experience. Skepticism is fostered by uncertainty. And cynicism is fostered by disappointment. And so it comes full circle, for at the root of all disappointments lie the trampled remains of hope."*<sup>10</sup>

## III. Hope, not Dependent on Circumstances

### A. **The example of Vaclav Havel.**

*"Either we have hope within us or we don't. It is a dimension of the soul and it's not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation."*<sup>11</sup>

*"Hope in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for success, but, rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed."*

### B. **The examples of Wilberforce and Bonhoeffer.**

*"The more unpropitious the situation in which we demonstrate hope, the deeper that hope is. Hope is definitely not the same as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out."*<sup>12</sup>

### C. **Hope's Actions.**

*"To see beyond what is to what can be. Or to see within what seems to be to what really is. This is imagination. There can be no hope without it."*

*"Hope comes alive with the birth of faith and stays alive as long as we keep believing. We hope only for what we believe is possible. No matter what we put our faith in, we will*

*sing the song of hope only to the tune of faith. Hope, we could say, is faith with an eye to the future.”<sup>13</sup>*

Contrast:

*“Such is our situation at the turn of the century. The twentieth century, born in the worship of the future, is now ending with shame for the past and contempt for the future. Having been too often betrayed by our expectations, we look upon any idea of promise as a virtual betrayal. If hope can be compared to a well in a garden, it is as if we now felt that the well had been poisoned.”<sup>14</sup>*

#### **IV. Christian Leadership**

##### **A. Biblical realism.**

*“Hope is a matter of both knowledge and will (we know what happened before, and we know what we desire) but it is characterized above all by the application of imagination and trust to a future which is essentially open and unknown.”<sup>15</sup>*

##### **B. Contra Pessimism.**

*“Hope for the Christian is not divorced from faith and reason, or from history. The forfeiture of hope is often the last blow before a person loses mental stability. In the larger social context a pervasive melancholy often presages the breakdown of a culture.”*

*“Christianity offers a living hope, and sufficient reason for it. It carries assurance that God is at once Lord of the future and Sovereign of the present. That is all the reason one really needs for confronting the very crumbling expectations of modernity with the enduring principles of Christianity.”<sup>16</sup>*

##### **C. The God of Promise (Isaiah 55:6-13).**

Bauckham and Hart direct us. *“The wellspring for a distinctively Christian way of being in the world is to be identified in things which faith believes about the shape of God’s future.”*

*“What is, can only finally be understood in the light of what will be and thus God’s future reaches back into the present and bathes it in a quite distinctive light, transfiguring it and generating alternative ways of being in it.”<sup>17</sup>*

#### **V. Hopeful Leading**

##### **A. It is NOT Optimism.**

*“Optimism is essentially a sort of inner dynamism, a propelling force which keeps one going; but it is simultaneously coupled with a sort of blindness, for the optimistic person does not see the objective character of the situation, and then respond with optimism, but he is optimistic on principle, and this very disposition blinds him to the objective character of the situation...Optimism can be compared to a fuel, and the very moment a person runs out of this fuel, his optimism comes to a sudden and unforeseen halt.”<sup>18</sup>*

**B. Hope and the historical.**

- Three things anchor us as our world and life-view orientate us. The world that is, is not the world that was. It is now damaged, disordered and flawed.
- The world that is, is not the world that must be. We do not blindly accept things but embrace the power of redemption unleashed in the Gospel.
- The world that is, is not the world that will be. A new day is coming when all will be made new.

**C. Contented discontent.**

*“That we do not reconcile ourselves, that there is no pleasant harmony between us and reality, is due to our unquenchable hope. This hope keeps man unreconciled, until the great day of the fulfillment of all the promises of God ... This hope makes the Christian church a constant disturbance in human society, seeking as the latter does to stabilize itself into a “continuing city” ... Thus it will constantly crave ‘the passion for the possible,’ inventiveness and elasticity in self-transformation. In breaking the old and coming to terms with the new.”<sup>19</sup>*

So, “May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13, NASB).

***Suggested Reading:***

- Ryan A. Neal, *Theology As Hope*.
- Randy Alcorn, *Eternal Perspectives*.
- Matt Perman, *What’s Best Next*.
- N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*.
- John Polkinghorne, *The God of Hope and the End of the World*.
- Lewis Smedes, *Standing on the Promises*.

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- <sup>1</sup> Barry Morrow, *Heaven Observed: Glimpses of Transcendence in Everyday Life* (Colorado Springs: New Press, 2001), 17 & 39.
- <sup>2</sup> Lewis Smedes, *Keeping Hope Alive: for a Tomorrow We Cannot Control* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 6.
- <sup>3</sup> *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 16<sup>th</sup> Edition* (Merriam-Webster: Springfield: 1997), 558.
- <sup>4</sup> Richard Bauckham and Trevor A. Hart, *Hope Against Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 52.
- <sup>5</sup> Smedes, 29.
- <sup>6</sup> David Aikman, *Hope: the Heart's Great Quest* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1995), 114.
- <sup>7</sup> Bauckham and Hart, 77.
- <sup>8</sup> Bauckham and Hart, 44.
- <sup>9</sup> Smedes, 34.
- <sup>10</sup> Wilbur W. Caldwell, *Cynicism and the Evolution of the American Dream* (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, Inc. 2006), Intro xi.
- <sup>11</sup> Vaclav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace* (NY, NY: Vintage, 1991), 181.
- <sup>12</sup> Havel, 181.
- <sup>13</sup> Smedes, 13 & 21.
- <sup>14</sup> Chantal Delsol, *The Unlearned Lessons of the Twentieth Century: An Essay on Late Modernity* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 2.
- <sup>15</sup> Bauckham and Hart, 53.
- <sup>16</sup> Aikman, 146.
- <sup>17</sup> Bauckham and Hart, 83.
- <sup>18</sup> Dietrich and Alice Von Hilderbrand, *The Art of Living* (Manchester: 1994), 79-80.
- <sup>19</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1975), 32-35.