



## Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

### Certain Hope for Uncertain Times April 3-5, 2021

#### 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

<sup>19</sup> *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

<sup>20</sup> *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

<sup>21</sup> *For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.* <sup>22</sup> *For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.* <sup>23</sup> *But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.* <sup>24</sup> *Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power.*

<sup>25</sup> *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*

<sup>26</sup> *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

1. What is your favorite Easter tradition?

Possibly: brunch, ham, coloring eggs, chocolate, watching *The Ten Commandments* with Charlton Heston on public television. Maybe fancy clothes for church, trumpet music, or lilies.

PW likes how we recite, "Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed!"

Search Nate Wordell on YouTube to see a children's message about that.

2. Go to [thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com) and search synonyms for "hope." What do you learn about the certainty of our world's hope?

Some synonyms show certainty, such as *confidence, expectation, promise*.

Others show uncertainty, such as *wish, aspiration, concern, fancy*.

From those words, I learned worldly hope can be good, and it's important, but it isn't always a sure thing.

3. Each person list an example of worldly hope. (No repeats.)

A hint—How would someone with a worldly definition of hope complete this sentence: "I hope that \_\_\_\_\_."

Possible answers:

I hope I see my family for Easter.

I hope COVID concerns go away, and we can get back to normal.

I hope I don't have to wear a mask much longer.

I hope others will continue to wear masks.

I hope my vaccine works.

I hope my illness goes away.

I hope our country can be more united.

I hope I find a steady job.

I hope we have cheesy potatoes for dinner.

4. A) Biblical hope is based on Jesus' promises.

B) Biblical hope is certain.

How are those two statements related?

**BECAUSE** biblical hope is based on Jesus' promises, it is certain. That's because Jesus' promises always come true. Some of those promises haven't come true yet, (he will return with his angels, he will take our bodies to heaven, etc.), but he warned us that those would happen after a long time. All his promises about the immediate future (Lazarus would wake up, the stormy sea would become calm, a leper would be healed)—those promises were verifiably kept. Since Jesus has a perfect track record of keeping promises, we can be sure that he will keep his promise about our resurrection and our eternity in heaven—even though we haven't seen it yet.

Christians do not trust Jesus without evidence. We trust Jesus based on God's goodness and Jesus' power throughout recorded history—precisely because he worked our salvation through his death and resurrection. (By the way, he predicted that one too.) **ILLUSTRATION:** Just as you'd trust a doctor who has never been wrong or a mechanic who has never misdiagnosed a problem in a car, for that same reason (and to a much greater degree), you can trust Jesus.

5. Give examples of times Jesus proved his promises are reliable.

John 11:4, 11, 17, 25, 43-44

*<sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it. ... <sup>11</sup> After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up.” ... <sup>17</sup> On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days... <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ... <sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”*

Mark 5: 37-42

*<sup>37</sup> He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” <sup>40</sup> But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup> He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.*

Matthew 8:23-27

*<sup>23</sup> Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup> Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. <sup>25</sup> The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” <sup>26</sup> He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.*

*<sup>27</sup> The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”*

Matthew 20:17-19 (and many other times)

*<sup>17</sup> Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, <sup>18</sup> “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death <sup>19</sup> and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”*

6. How might people of this world answer the question, “Are you sure you will be in heaven?”

The most common response in PW’s experience is “I hope so.” Are they sure? “No.” If they provide any more information, they usually point to what THEY do. “I give money to the church.” “I attend worship.” “I say my prayers.” “I do good deeds.” They are uncertain because they don’t know if they’ve done enough.

7. Jesus died for our sins, rose from the dead and was welcomed back into heaven. That historical fact gives you certainty that you will be in heaven. How so?

Jesus did enough to earn heaven. It seems like that to me because he was so morally upright. But it doesn’t matter what I think. God is the gatekeeper to heaven, and his opinion matters. God affirmed that Jesus’ work accomplished salvation by raising him from the dead and welcoming him into heaven. Those are verifiable historical facts, and those events guarantee that Jesus did, in fact, win heaven for you.

8. Jesus is described as the firstfruits of everyone who is in the grave. What is similar between Jesus and the first bushel of grain in a harvest?

The firstfruits of a harvest prove that there is more of the same crop to come.

Jesus’ resurrection proves that there are more bodily resurrections to come. You will rise from the dead because Jesus rose from the dead.

9. Agree or Disagree: The certain hope of Easter is all about what happens after we die.

Agree: Eternal salvation after death is what we know for sure because of Easter. Easter doesn't guarantee lots of money, or perfect health, or a happy family. It guarantees forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and life everlasting in heaven.

Disagree: The certain hope of Easter has a transformational effect on life right now before I die. Because I have certainty of my forgiveness, I can live guilt-free in this life. Because I have certainty of eternal life, I can bear suffering in this life.

Here's an illustration from Pastor Jon Hein:

*Two workers work in identical circumstances-- identical cubicles, identical fluorescent lights buzzing overhead, identical uncomfortable chairs, identical computer, identical responsibilities. They have the excruciating job of copying numbers from one spreadsheet to another. They work ten hours per day for six days per week, no vacation—brutal job. The guy in cubicle A is told to work this way for a year, and you'll have a chance to win \$10,000. The guy in cubicle B is given a signed contract. It says, "Work this job for a year, and we will give you \$1 billion." Those two guys approach work differently, don't they. The guy in cubicle A is ready to quit after one week! He says, "Come on, man. Let's get out of here. You with me?" And the other guy is like, "No. No, I'm good here!" "You sure?" "Oh yeah. I'm certain." Because he has certain hope.*

*You have certain hope too. Just like a guy with a \$1 Billion contract, you can approach the dreary parts of life on earth with a spring in your step and an otherworldly determination.*

10. Reflect on your time in this Bible study. Come up with one thing you learned, one thing you already knew, and one question you have.

Answers will vary.