

Hope25

Lenten Studies
2025

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Foreword

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15)

The Apostle, Peter, reminds us all of the importance of sharing our faith; of sharing with others the wonderful hope that we have in Jesus. In our world today there is a great need for this hope. The Hope25 initiative is an intentional season of sharing hope in Jesus. It is a project of the Australian Anglican Church working together, and as such provides a positive demonstration of our unity and faith.

Hope25 seeks to encourage and resource Anglican communities towards a renewed focus on evangelism. But most of all, Hope25 aims to reach out to those who are lost amongst the uncertainties, hurt and brokenness of this world, to offer this thing that only our faith in Jesus can offer – hope.

During this Lenten season, may you be blessed by the studies in this book. May your Lenten journey be encouraged and deepened by them, as we prepare ourselves to receive the gift of Jesus’ resurrection, the source of our hope, and proclaim this to the world through the events of Hope25.

The Most Reverend Geoff Smith
Archbishop of Adelaide and Primate

One

**Hope from
God's Promises**

Day 1: Ash Wednesday 5 March

Bible reading: Genesis 3.1-15

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. ⁸They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." ¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." ¹³Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." ¹⁴The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

The great tragedy of this passage is that the man and the woman doubted the Lord's goodness. The Lord had supplied all that was necessary for a good life, including boundaries that provided safety, and the Lord's provision was incredibly generous. Sadly, the man and the woman doubted the Lord's goodness, and that doubt led to them disobeying the Lord with very significant consequences.

The Lord continues to be incredibly good and generous to all of the creation. His love is complete and does not end. He is always faithful and trustworthy.

We, too, are often tempted to doubt that goodness and love, charting our own course apart from the Lord, which often does not go well. However, just as the Lord did not abandon the man and woman but provided a way forward for them and their descendants, so the Lord does not abandon us but continues to provide a way to life.

Even in the midst of failure there is hope with the Lord. When we are conscious of our failings and feel disconnected and far away, that's not the way the Lord sees things. The Lord, in love, will provide a way forward which, if we grasp it, will move us to more life.

Geoff Smith
Archbishop of Adelaide and Primate

Reflection

When have you been conscious of your failings, and the Lord's faithful love?

Day 2: Thursday 6 March

Bible reading: Genesis 12:1-9

¹Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." ⁴So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, ⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. ⁹And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

This passage is the hinge that the rest of the Bible turns on! Here is an old(ish) couple, Abram and Sarai, midway through following God's instructions to them. Perhaps they feel a bit bogged down in Haran, or a bit uncertain what the next step will be. But they continue to listen and respond to God. God's grand promises to them (verses 2-4) contain the seeds of the world-rescue plan that Scripture will reveal, which comes to its full flowering in Jesus. The time-frame is not short – God's faithfulness and patience are long-term.

The promise about the nation of Israel (verse 2) is the floor plan for the rest of the Old Testament – and the nation's eventual decline results in further promises about what God would do. The promise about all peoples on earth (verse 3) is fulfilled as the result of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension along with his Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. Through Jesus, by faith, Gentiles have been grafted into the true descendants of Abraham, as Paul spells out in Romans 2, 4 and 11. Abraham's response to God's communication is to worship (verse 7) and to call on God (verse 8). That is a good example to follow.

A hope and prayer for Hope25 is that, through telling the story of God's promises fulfilled in Jesus, many more will join God's family – that they too will call on God and worship.

Greg Anderson
Bishop of the Northern Territory

Reflection

Are there ways in your own life where you have seen God's plan unfold slowly rather than in an instant?

Day 3: Friday 7 March

Bible reading: Genesis 15

¹After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ²But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." ⁴But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." ⁵He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. ⁷Then he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." ⁸But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" ⁹He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. ¹¹And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ¹²As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. ¹³Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; ¹⁴but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." ¹⁷When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

In yesterday's reading, God had made some big promises to Abram. Ten years have passed, and he still has no heir. How can those promises be fulfilled without one? The Lord again appears to Abram.

Genesis 15 begins on a high note with the Lord promising to be Abram's shield, his divine protection, and his very great reward. But look at Abram's response (verses 2–3). He complains to God. Abram is now 85 and Sarai 76. Given the human impossibility of bearing a child, Abram explores what seems to be his only solution, to name one of his servants as his heir. God graciously responds (verses 4–5). He will abundantly fulfill his promises.

Note Abram's response (verse 6). It is faith that guarantees his relationship with God and the future fulfilment of God's promises. In Romans 4, Paul quotes this verse to argue that righteousness for us comes through faith, just as it did for Abraham. Abraham believed God could bring life from a man and woman whose bodies were as good as dead.

We believe in God who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead that we might receive his righteousness and life eternal with him. Through faith we are heirs of the promise to Abraham. We can trust God to fulfil his promises concerning our futures even when experiences in this world appear to the contrary. God's proven faithfulness is our sure hope.

Vanessa Bennett

Assistant Bishop, Canberra and Goulburn

Reflection

How does this passage inspire hope for you?

Day 4: Saturday 8 March

Bible reading: Deuteronomy 11.1-12

¹You shall love the Lord your God, therefore, and keep his charge, his decrees, his ordinances, and his commandments always. ²Remember today that it was not your children (who have not known or seen the discipline of the Lord your God), but it is you who must acknowledge his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm, ³his signs and his deeds that he did in Egypt to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and to all his land; ⁴what he did to the Egyptian army, to their horses and chariots, how he made the water of the Red Sea flow over them as they pursued you, so that the Lord has destroyed them to this day; ⁵what he did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place; ⁶and what he did to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab son of Reuben, how in the midst of all Israel the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, along with their households, their tents, and every living being in their company; ⁷for it is your own eyes that have seen every great deed that the Lord did. ⁸Keep, then, this entire commandment that I am commanding you today, so that you may have strength to go in and occupy the land that you are crossing over to occupy, ⁹and so that you may live long in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰For the land that you are about to enter to occupy is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sow your seed and irrigate by foot like a vegetable garden. ¹¹But the land that you are crossing over to occupy is a land of hills and valleys, watered by rain from the sky, ¹²a land that the Lord your God looks after. The eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

In Deuteronomy, God's people are on the border of the land promised to Abraham. The promise in Genesis 12 is now elaborated further. The people are given two instructions to keep, with two differing explanations.

First, they are to love the Lord their God by keeping his commands (verse 1) because he showed his love for them in the rescue from Egypt, he defeated their enemy's army (verses 2-4), he led them through the wilderness (verse 5) and saved them from rebellion (verses 6-7).

Second, they are to keep the commandment they are about to receive, a giving of the law which will dominate the rest of Deuteronomy. They are to do this so they will have strength to enter the Promised Land (verse 8). The land is described in glowing terms. Rebels had described Egypt as a land flowing with milk and honey (Numbers 16:13-14) but Moses reminds this new generation that it is land sworn to them that is so blessed. It is constantly watered but, more wonderful still, the Lord's eyes are constantly on it, a beautiful image of God's attentive, overseeing care.

The hope of God's people, receiving that which was promised, is based on what God has done in saving them, and strengthened by the wonder of what lies ahead. The right response to being grasped by this hope is loving obedience to God.

We as God's people look back to the sure salvation that was won for us by Jesus and look forward to the hope we have in the resurrection.

Chris Jones
Assistant Bishop, Tasmania

Reflection

How can looking backward and forward strengthen your faith?

Testimony - Eleanor Lamprey

I was brought up in a Christian family that always went to church. My father, a man with strong Christian values, didn't tend to attend church with us, but my mother took me to church each week and Sunday school. At this point, we went to the Methodist Church, and church events were central to our social lives as children and teenagers. The church was our extended family, and we belonged to that community. As I grew up, I went to a Christian school for high school (MLC), and during my teenage years, I continued my involvement in Church and even got involved with the Methodist Crusader choir. We sang at conferences and events around Sydney and even at the Billy Graham crusades. These were a bit overwhelming; Graham was a very powerful speaker, and many people were there.

In my twenties, I slackened off going to church regularly while I was working as a nurse in Sydney, Adelaide, and then the UK, where I met my husband. During this time, I sometimes went to the local church. When I got married to Peter, I was still interested in church but not a regular attender.

Peter was Roman Catholic, and I was a Methodist, and we ended up both worshipping in the Anglican church at Mundaring in Perth. As our family grew, we continued attending church as a family tradition. When Peter and I chose a church, we really started owning our faith and went to church because we decided to attend for ourselves, not because our parents took us. Peter did a lot in the church and loved to read about faith and the Bible. Our boys were Alter boys at Mundaring, and I continued my interest in church and church activities. We ran a group for mothers and babies at church. I continued to worship at Mundaring, and I still do.



During this time, my faith has grown. Though there have been hard times, I don't think I've faltered in it. We had difficult things happen in our lives: our daughter died when she was 36 hours old, and one of our sons died as an adult. Recently, my husband Peter died after living with dementia. I tried to keep going with faith through my husband's death and illness. Towards the end of Peter's life, I found it very difficult to understand the whole situation and prayed that the Spirit would take Peter home and that his suffering would be ended. I found it very difficult to go through this time, but the Spirit was with me. Through these family tragedies, I felt that God was present through His Spirit, even in our sadness and suffering.

My faith has given me the hope that there is something more for us and that we have a purpose in life. We have something to hold on to. We can know that Jesus is present and with us. I am a great Holy Spirit person. The Holy Spirit is always with us; even when we aren't as faithful as we should be, the Spirit is with us and giving us faith in everything. God gives us a purpose for living; even in the hard times, there is something for us to hold on to. I believe that God still has good things ahead. To God be the glory.

Group Study 1: Days 1-11

Hope from God's Promises

This week's discussion questions arise from God's promises to Abraham and David, and how those promises create a theme of hope in the Bible.

1. Read this week's testimony of an Australian Anglican whose hope is in Jesus. What encourages you in this testimony? Have one or two members of the group share why Jesus is their hope. Give thanks in prayer for those who shared and for Eleanor, who wrote this week's testimony.

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2. The creation God made was 'very good' (Genesis 1:31), but it did not last long. The first man and woman's sin in the Garden of Eden, led to their expulsion from God's presence. Read Genesis 12.1-9. What promises does God make Abraham? How do these promises suggest a new start for humanity?

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3. Read 2 Samuel 7:1-16. Later in Israel's history, God adds two promises to David. What are these promises and how do they add to the promises to Abraham?

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4. Discuss generally how the promises to Abraham and David are seen through the Old Testament story, and the degree to which at times they are fulfilled or not fulfilled.

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5. How are the promises to Abraham and David developed in the New Testament? The readings on days 10 and 11 are just two examples of the New Testament development of these promises.

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6. Each person in the group is encouraged to name two or three people they know who do not seem to hope in Jesus. What sorts of things do you think these people may hope in? Each week as a group, pray for all these people that they find their hope in Jesus. Write the names below so you can pray daily for all these people.

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Pray for those named above who do not seem to have hope in Jesus that they may find true hope in Jesus.

Together, pray the Hope25 Prayer.

God of Hope
you call on us to be your witnesses in this uncertain world;
by your Spirit awaken in us
a true vision of your kingdom,
a greater certainty of our salvation, and a deeper dedication to your service;
that through our words and actions the same Spirit may
bring many who are lost to be found,
and for them to celebrate the hope
that we can only have in Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray. Amen.