

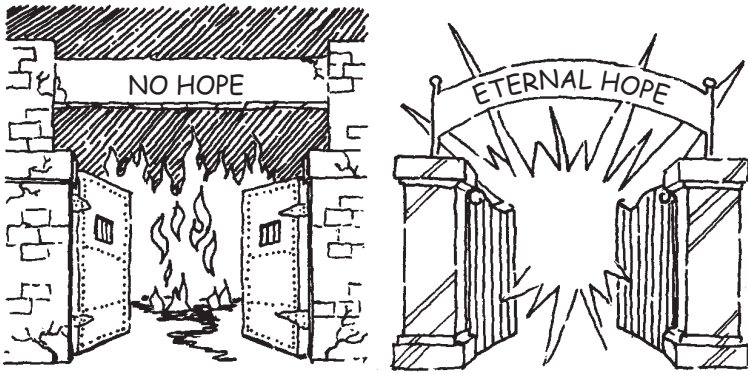
LESSON 10 Maintaining Hope

In the poet Dante's *Inferno*, he describes the gates of hell. The sign over the gates says, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter in."

None of us knows the full and final answer to suffering. God may not reveal to us the *why* of our problems, but He asks us to believe that every one of them has a purpose to work out that which is best for us. And we who know and love the Lord have this blessed hope: this life is like a race that we are running, and the end of the race is not death—death will just carry us across the threshold into life everlasting! What a glorious hope!

This certain hope of being saved is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls, connecting us with God himself behind the sacred curtains of heaven, where Christ has gone ahead to plead for us from his position as our High Priest (Hebrews 6:19-20 Living Bible).

We do not know what the future holds for us in this life. But we do know who holds our future, and He has revealed to us that in Him there is *hope*! In this lesson we will consider what the Scriptures say about the hope of the Christian, and we will look at ways of maintaining hope. One day all of our problems will be behind us, and we will be ushered through the gates of heaven where Jesus Christ is our eternal hope!



lesson outline

Through Christ the Over comer

Through Affirmation

Through Faith

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Identify from given Scriptures how our hope is based on Christ the over comer.
- Identify promises of God given in Scriptures that we can claim, and conditions that accompany His promises.
- Based on biblical examples, write a statement of affirmation of what God has done in the past and what He can be expected to do in the future.
- Recognize true statements relating our problems to our eternal hope of full communion with God.

learning activities

1. Study the lesson in the same manner as you have done for previous lessons. Be sure to read all Scripture texts given, as they are important to a full understanding of the lesson. Answer all study questions and check your answers with those we have given.
2. Find the definitions in the glossary for any key words you do not know.

3. Take the self-test and check your answers.
4. Answer the questions in Unit Student Report 3, then submit your answer sheets to your ICI instructor.

key words

affirm
affirmation
commended
comprehend

maintain
reflection
speculate
temporary

turmoil
uniqueness

lesson development

THROUGH CHRIST THE OVERCOMER

Objective 1. *Identify from given Scriptures how our hope is based on Christ the over comer.*

We started this course by quoting these words of Jesus: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Christ through His death and resurrection overcame the power of sin and death. In His life He overcame the temptation of His enemy, the devil. By His power we, too, can be over comers.

Jesus Is triumphant over death and Hades (hell). When John, the writer of the book of Revelation, saw Jesus, he fell at His feet as though dead. Jesus spoke, “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (Revelation 1:17-18).

Jesus, rose from the dead after His crucifixion and burial. He appeared to His disciples and friends several times, and to more than 500 of His followers at the same time (1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

According to the words of Jesus, those who live and believe in Him will never die. Jesus used the occasion of the raising of Lazarus from the dead to give this teaching. His words to Martha at that time are words that bring comfort and hope to every believer: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26).

It is clear from the teaching of Scripture that those who love Christ never die—they merely change location. They depart from their temporary dwelling here (their physical body) and are immediately in the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6, 8). Because Christ has overcome death and the grave, we have an eternal hope that is steadfast and sure—the hope of eternal life in heaven with Him.

A beautiful old song by Edward Mote, "The Solid Rock", expresses the hope we have in Christ:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
When darkness veils His lovely face
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.
His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found,
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.
*On Christ the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.*

Knowing what Christ has done for us, and knowing that when we depart this life we shall be forever with Him, gives us a hope that sustains us in the darkest hours of our life.

Application

1 Read Acts 24:15. What is our hope based on in this Scripture?

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2 Read 1 Peter 1:3. What does this Scripture say is the source of our hope?

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- 3 Read Colossians 1:5; Titus 2:13; and Hebrews 6:19. When do these Scriptures reveal that our hope is going to be fully realized?
- In the trials that we go through.
 - When we are saved.
 - When we are united with Jesus in heaven.
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THROUGH AFFIRMATION

Objective 2. *Identify promises of God given in Scriptures that we can claim, and conditions that accompany His promises.*

As we saw in Lesson 2, one of the first things a person must do to become a Christian is *confess* that the resurrected Christ is Lord of his life. Confession, or *affirmation*, is also very important in maintaining Christian hope. The person who sees only the dark side of life, the problems and testings, and talks about them constantly, is bound to be discouraged and fearful. But the person who recognizes God's power to help him in every circumstance, and who talks about the many blessings and good things God has done in his life, will have hope even in the most difficult circumstances.

Sometimes all we can see is the problem we are faced with. I have a friend who has helped me many times when I have had difficult problems to deal with—by reminding me of how wonderfully God has helped me in similar situations in the past, and of all the blessings He has showered upon me over the years. When we think of His goodness and all of the promises He has given in His Word to be with us and keep us, our faith grows strong and we can be victorious in any trial.

Review God's Promises

- His promises are unfailing (1 Kings 8:56).
- He has the power to do what He promises (Romans 4:21).
- He promises deliverance (Psalm 34:19-20).
- He promises to be with us (Isaiah 43:2).
- He promises that our prayers will be answered (Mark 11:24).
- He promises that our faith will be honored (Luke 17:6).

7. He promises blessings to those who give liberally (Proverbs 3:9-10, Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 9:6).
8. He promises to be with those who are obedient (John 14:23).
9. He promises to come to the aid of those who seek Him (2 Chronicles 7:14, Luke 11:9).
10. He promises eternal life (1 John 2:25, James 2:5).

These are but a few of the many promises contained in God's Word. Find each one in your Bible and read it. As we review His promises, our hearts are encouraged to *trust* Him, and we can't help but affirm, "What a mighty God we serve!" No wonder the prophet Micah, after reviewing God's promise to Israel, "As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them my wonders" (Micah 7:15), responded with these words of affirmation:

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18-19).

Application

4 Read the following Scriptures and match the text with what promised in each one.

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|---|--------------------|
| a God will answer our prayers. | 1) Psalm 34:19-20 |
| b He blesses those who give. | 2) Kings 8:56 |
| c If we ask for His help, He will give it. | 3) Luke 17:6 |
| d He will deliver us from our problems. | 4) Mark 11:24 |
| e He will honor our faith. | 5) John 14:23 |
| f If we obey Him, He will be with us. | 6) Proverbs 3:9-10 |
| g He will not fail to keep His promises. | 7) Luke 11:9 |

One of God's most beautiful promises is given in Psalm 91. In this Psalm He promises His protection against all the forces of evil that would seek to harm us.

Application

5 Read Psalm 91. What is God’s protection based on? (See vs. 1, 9, and 14.) Choose the best answer.

- a) We must call upon His name when we need help.
- b) We must abide in Him and love Him.
- c) We must be strong and fight against the enemy.

6 Read the following Scriptures and explain the condition for receiving the promise given in each.

- a 2 Chronicles 16:9
- b Psalm 34:7
- c John 15:7
- d Mark 11:24
- e 1 John 3:21-22

7 Read Psalm 91:15; Isaiah 58:9; 65:24; and Zechariah 13:9. What promise is given in each of these Scriptures?

.....



Consider Biblical Examples

Objective 3. *Based on biblical examples, write a statement of affirmation of what God has done in the past and what He can be expected to do in the future.*

There are many biblical examples of positive affirmation in the face of great difficulty. By positive affirmation I do not mean claiming that something is different from what it actually is. I mean recognizing the goodness of God and His power to help in every situation—His power to deliver us from the evil one, to protect us in times of danger, to comfort us in our sorrow. This affirmation is based upon what God has *already* done, and our belief that He will *continue* to act in the future as He has done in the past.

Application

8 Read Daniel 3:13-18. What statement of affirmation is made in this passage of Scripture?

.....

.....



In Habakkuk 3:17-19, the prophet makes this affirmation of trust in God:

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, *yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on to the heights.* (Italics mine)

One of the greatest statements of affirmation in the Bible is found in Psalm 23. King David was a man who knew joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, safety and danger. Many times he had to run from his enemies. He knew what it was to sin against God and receive forgiveness. His was a troubled life, filled with turmoil, grief, persecution, regrets, doubts, and opposition. The Psalms are filled with his cries to the Lord for help and mercy. But Psalm 23 is one of the most positive statements of affirmation found in the Bible. It speaks to many areas of life where we need the Lord's help.

PSALM 23

THE AFFIRMATION

WHAT GOD GIVES US

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing.
 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
 he leads me beside quiet waters, he
 restores my soul.
 He guides me in paths of righteousness for
 his name's sake.
 Even though I walk through the valley of the
 shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you
 are with me;
 your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
 You prepare a table before me in the
 presence of my enemies.
 You anoint my head with oil; my cup
 overflows.
 Surely goodness and love will follow me all
 the days of my life, and I will dwell in the
 house of the Lord forever.*

Provision
Satisfaction
Peace
Renewal
Guidance
Protection
Comfort
**Assurance in the time
 of danger**
Honor, blessing
Countless blessings
**Eternal goodness and
 love**
Eternal hope

Application

9 Read Psalm 66:16-18. These verses are a testimony or affirmation of what?

.....

10 What two specific acts of God are mentioned in this Scripture?

.....

11 What was the condition for receiving these two acts of God?

.....

12 What is Paul's testimony in 2 Timothy 3:11?

.....

13 What two affirmations does the apostle Paul give in 2 Timothy 4:16-18?

a In the past:

b In the future:

14 In a separate notebook, write your own affirmation of what the Lord has done for you in the past, and based on that, what you can expect Him to do for you in the future. Then share this affirmation with someone else. Start your statement with these words: *Come and . . . let me tell you what God has done for me.*



THROUGH FAITH

Objective 4. *Recognize true statements relating our problems to our eternal hope of full communion with God.*

Maintaining hope depends upon a strong faith in God. Hebrews 11 is called the *faith chapter* of the Bible. In verse 1 we read these words: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Read all of Hebrews 11. The first part of this chapter records the victories won by men and women who had great faith in God. Their faith revealed the power of God working through their lives.

Application

15 How do verses 35 through 38 differ from verses 4 through 34?

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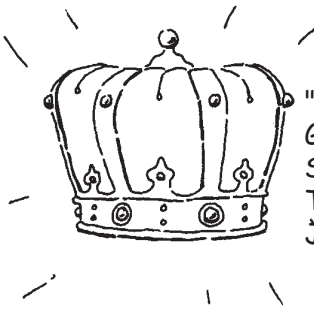
16 According to verse 40, why did they not receive deliverance?

.....



Therefore, these people were not commended because they were victorious over their enemies, *but because they were sure of what they hoped for but had not seen* (v.1). And what did they hope for? God's promise of eternal life with Him in heaven! Note that the experiences of these men and women of faith were each unique. No two of them experienced the same things. It is from their various trials and victories that we can see the hand of God working in their lives, and we can have faith that He will work in our lives in a similar way.

In his book, *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis discusses the uniqueness of each soul. He suggests that if God had no use for the differences between us, He would not have created more than one soul. We are the temple of God (2 Corinthians 6:16). God dwells within you, and within me. I am His temple. God knew me before I was born (Psalm 139:13-16). I am wondrously made by Him. I was created for *His* pleasure. All my life, my heart has been yearning for Him, and yet I only catch brief, momentary glimpses of that which is contained within the divine nature (1 Corinthians 13:12). We can only speculate as to the wonderful things He has prepared for us in our heavenly home. But is it not possible that in my earthly trials, tears, joys, sufferings, and victories God is forming me in such a way that I will be able to fill a unique place in His kingdom? Is it not possible that my own assortment of experiences, good and bad, has revealed God to me in a way known and understood only by me? Is it not possible that each Christian is being given, through his own unique experiences in this life, knowledge of a particular facet of God which only he can fully comprehend?



"WELL DONE, THOU
GOOD AND FAITHFUL
SERVANT ... ENTER
THOU INTO THE
JOY OF THE LORD"

Mathew 25:21

C. S. Lewis suggests: “Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it—stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand.” He further concludes that if everyone experienced God in the same way and worshipped Him in an identical way, “the song of the church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note” (1976, pp. 132-142).

In Revelation 2:17 these words are written to the church: “To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it”

Think of it! The reward for being an overcomer in this life is a new name known only to God and to me! That name perhaps is a symbol between God and me of all that I am, all that I have suffered, all the victories I have won, all that I have become through the power of Jesus Christ working in me! It will represent my own personal fellowship and communion with my Creator, which will be different from that of all other overcomers. What a glorious thought that in heaven, our communication with the saints of all the ages, including those men and women of great faith listed in Hebrews 11, will include the sharing with each other of God’s revelation of Himself to *us*! As I share with you, and you share with me, each of us will receive a greater comprehension of our wonderful God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9 we are told, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” When I think of the wonderful things God has prepared for us, my faith is made strong, and I can accept whatever trials and difficulties He leads me through in preparation for my eternal place with Him. In John 14:1-3, Jesus comforted His disciples with these words: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”

Application

17 Which of these are TRUE statements relating earthly problems and suffering to the Christian's hope of eternal fellowship with God? Circle the letters preceding your choices.

- a** All of the people mentioned in Hebrews 11 received full deliverance from their earthly trials.
 - b** The people of faith in Hebrews 11 were able to face their difficulties bravely because their hope was strongly fixed upon God's promise to them of eternal life.
 - c** The new name we will receive in heaven will be a reward for overcoming the trials and temptations of this earthly life and placing our hope in Christ Jesus.
 - d** My new name in heaven will only be known by God and me.
 - e** We can have a full revelation of God in this life if we are overcomers.
 - f** The cure for a troubled heart is trust in God and what He has promised.
-

The apostle Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face." Now our hearts long for full communion with our Savior—in heaven that communion will be complete. Revelation 1:7 tells us, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him." When that day comes, I shall see Him with my own eyes, and not through the eyes of another. Until then, my faith will keep me sure of what I hope for, and certain of what I do not see.

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while,

“He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

—*Hebrews 10:32-39*

As a conclusion to your study of this book, can you not say, with me, the words of this poem?

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Earth's trials will seem so small, when we see Him.

One glimpse of His dear face all sorrows will erase,

So bravely run the race, till we see Him.

—Written by Esther Kerr Rusthoi,
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You have now concluded the final lesson in this unit. Take the self-test and check your answers. Then review the unit and answer the questions for this unit in the student report at the back of the book.

self-test

TRUE-FALSE If the statement is TRUE, write **T** in the blank space. Write **F** if the statement is FALSE

- **1** The term *Christ the Overcomer* reminds us that Christ gained victory over death and the grave for Himself and for us.
- **2** When the physical body dies, the Christian immediately enters into the presence of the Lord.
- **3** When Christ said that those who live and believe in Him would never die He was talking about physical death.
- **4** Our hope in Christ the overcomer is based on the knowledge that because of His death and resurrection we have eternal life in heaven with Him.
- **5** *Positive affirmation* means claiming that God has answered our prayers even before we see the answer.
- **6** One way to affirm God's power to help in every circumstance is to review and believe His promises.
- **7** Some of God's promises are made with the condition that we meet certain requirements in order to receive the promises.
- **8** The Twenty-third Psalm was written by the Psalmist David in a moment of despair because his prayers had not been answered.
- **9** We can with assurance affirm what we can expect God to do in the future, because He has proven His power to us in the past.
- **10** The faith of the men and women listed in Hebrews 11 was based on the victories they won throughout their lives.
- **11** One of the beauties of heaven will be the sharing of the saints with one another of their unique relationship with God As they trusted Him in every one of life's situations.
- **12** The new name each of us will receive from our Creator in heaven will be a reward for being overcomers in this life, no matter what trials we have endured.

answers to study questions

- 9 Of what God had done for the Psalmist.
- 1 That there shall be a resurrection of the dead.
- 10 Answered prayer, and giving of love.
- 2 The resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 11 The Psalmist got rid of any sin in his heart.
- 3 c) When we are united with Jesus in heaven.
- 12 That the Lord rescued him from every trial and persecution.
- 4 a) 4) Mark 11:24.
b) 6) Proverbs 3:9-10.
c) 7) Luke 11:9.
d) 1) Psalm 34:19-20.
e) 3) Luke 17:6.
f) 5) John 14:23.
g) 2) 1 Kings 8:56.
- 13 a) The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.
b) The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom.
- 5 b) We must abide in Him and love Him.
- 14 Your answer. This is probably the most important exercise you will do in this lesson.
- 6 a) A heart fully committed to God.
b) Fear of God (honor, respect, reverence).
c) Remain in Christ and allow Him to dwell in you.
d) Belief (faith) that you will receive what you ask for.
e) Obey His commands and do what pleases Him.
- 15 Verses 35 through 38 tell about men and women of great faith who did *not* receive deliverance from their trials and persecutions, but who suffered or gave their lives in order to serve God.
- 7 God will answer us when we call upon Him.
- 16 Because God had planned something better (for all of us). (Their real deliverance did not depend upon temporary relief from earthly trials.)
- 8 "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king" (v. 17).

- 17 a** False. (Some were put to death. Their deliverance was of a different nature.)
- b** True.
- c** True.
- d** True.
- e** False.
- f** True.