



HOPE STARTS HERE — LOOK UP

Trying harder drains you.

Hope sustains you.

Isaiah 40:31(NIV): "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."

Who didn't make it? "The Optimists"

The Stockdale Paradox

Unwavering confidence that things will change

Brutal acceptance of their present reality

Isaiah 1:4(NLT): "...what a sinful nation they are— loaded down with a burden of guilt. They are evil people, corrupt children who have rejected the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him."

Isaiah 40:1(NIV): "Comfort, comfort MY people," says your God."

The motivation to change does NOT begin with Condemnation or Commands but with Comfort(deep sigh of relief)

The Science of Hope

Hope is not just a feeling.

Hope is a functioning advantage.

Modern neuroscience and psychology show that when people have hope:

- They think more clearly
- Recover faster from stress
- Experience less anxiety
- Burn out less
- Persist longer
- Relate better
- Make wiser decisions under pressure

When hope disappears

Fear narrows vision.

Options shrink.

Everything feels urgent—and nothing feels meaningful.

Hopelessness doesn't just feel bad.

It makes life harder to live well.

The Bible never treats hope as optional because hope is a source of strength.

Isaiah 40:22(NIV): "He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers."

They had a HOPE problem because they had an IDENTITY problem.

Numbers 13:33(NIV): "We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes."

- God never calls them grasshoppers
- Their enemies never call them grasshoppers
- They call themselves grasshoppers

Most people don't struggle with the Bible's MESSAGE—WE struggle with its METHOD

When you understand how the Bible WORKS, life starts to WORK

Science shows that a visually driven, short-form video culture (TikTok, Reels, Shorts) shrinks us internally. It doesn't just distract us; it reshapes how we think, feel, regulate emotion, and experience identity.

Visual media trains our brains for speed, not depth. It literally reduces our capacity for deep focus.

Dopamine overload leads to anxiety, restlessness, emptiness

Short videos are dopamine machines.

Our anxiety increases

Short-form visual content keeps the nervous system in:

- Alert mode
- Comparison mode
- Evaluation mode

Our bodies are constantly asking, "Am I enough?"

There is no resolution, no closure, no rest.

Studies consistently link heavy short-form social media use with:

- Increased anxiety
- Increased depression
- Increased loneliness
- Decreased emotional regulation

Not because the content is evil

but because the pace prevents nervous system recovery.

Identity erosion: comparison without context

Identity is formed through:

- Story
- Meaning
- Values
- Relationship
- Memory

Short-form visual culture gives you:

- Highlight reels
- Performances
- Fragments
- Algorithms that reward extremes

So you end up comparing:

- Your inner life
- To other people's outer life

That's a losing game neurologically and psychologically.

Over time:

- Self-worth becomes unstable
- Identity becomes weak
- Meaning becomes fragile

This is exactly why Scripture is skeptical of sight alone and emphasizes hearing, remembering, and reflecting.

Deuteronomy 6:4(NIV): "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

Romans 10:17(NIV): "...faith comes from hearing."

They had a HOPE problem because they had an IDENTITY problem.

What is God's answer to their problem?

Numbers 15:38, 39(Voice): "...make fringes on each corner of their clothes and include a blue thread in each fringe. They should do this forever, as it will bring to mind all My commandments and remind them not to wander off to do whatever their eyes see."

Tzitzit was a physical interruption

God's way of saying:

Stop letting your eyes run your life.

Lift your attention. Remember who you are. Remember who I am.

That's not a decoration, it's identity protection.

Psalms 121:1-2(NIV): "I lift up my eyes... where does my help come from?"

Isaiah 40:26(NIV): "Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens."

Colossians 3:1-2(NIV): "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

Re-anchors my identity in Jesus—and restores my hope.

What Does Science Say?

Looking down—constantly—does five things:

- Narrows attention (tunnel vision)
- Keeps the nervous system activated
- Increases anxiety and anger
- Drives control and over-management
- Shrinks identity to performance and pressure

Looking up does the opposite:

- Expands attention
- Calms the nervous system
- Restores perspective
- Reduces anxiety and control
- Rebuilds hope and meaning

Why This Matters So Much for Washington in 2026:

Washington is a city of:

- urgency
- pressure
- control
- comparison
- constant looking down

If we don't change where we're looking, 2025 stress will follow us straight into 2026. But if we learn to look up: we recover our identity and our hope is restored. Hope doesn't disappear because life is hard.

It disappears when we forget who we are.

Jewish Tradition Links Major Identity Collapses to the Same Day: the 9th of Av

1. _____
2. Solomon's Temple Destroyed (Solomon's Temple)
3. The Second Temple Destroyed (Second Temple — rebuilt under Ezra, expanded by Herod)

The Spies in Numbers 13

Isaiah 40:1(NIV): "Comfort, comfort my people..."

2 Timothy 2:13(NIV): "If we are faithless, he remains faithful."

Psalms 36:5(NIV): "Your faithfulness reaches to the heavens."

Let's begin to fix '26 together.....right here, right now!

All scriptures referenced are from the New International Version (NIV) translation of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.