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How would you characterize yourself as more hopeful or more cynical?

For the Christian where is our hope based?

What do you think about Snyder's idea that "hopeful thinkers are people who are able to establish clear goals, imagine multiple workable pathways toward those goals, and persevere, even when obstacles get in their way?" is right that hopeful thinking

What goals can we set to help us cope with tragedy and maintain hope?

How can we avoid "us" and "them" posturing?

Whose hope can you strengthen this week?



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June 18, 2016 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
Psalm 62:5-6 HOPE by Andy McDonald

It is in hard moments, times of despair, that finding hope is most important.

Those days when the temperature is just right, the sky the perfect blue, surrounded by family and friends, with just enough hunger pains to anticipate the picnic spread out on the tables before you, with the bills paid, the weight lost, the report card filled with A's there isn't much of a call for hope.

When things are really good in the moment of contentment and satisfaction there's little call for hope.

The longer you've lived in Florida the less you may remember the hope of Spring. My two winters in Michigan attending seminary were record breaking winters for cold temperatures and for snow fall. The snow came in serious amounts the first week of November and we literally didn't see the ground again until the first week in April. Those long, dark, cold nights of winter we feared would never end.

And yet there was hope. For all the years before and since winter ends and spring comes. Right now even in the reality of the heat of Florida the barrenness of a real feeling of a long winter has blown into our lives. The numbness of the cold, feeling bruised and broken and barren like a grey cold midwinter's day up north, has infected our lives in the tragedies of the last week or so.

And one of the risks of bleakness is hopelessness. But let me assure you that just like some years when it seems an extra long wait for the renewal of life that comes with spring, better days will return, we need not be shaken beyond recovery.

And while we need not be shaken beyond recovery it is important that we recognize and process the reality that we have been shaken.

One of my reactions to overwhelming bad news and trauma is to escape from it by trying to sort of remove myself from it and view it as a third party. I had sort of gone numb into this escape mode until I received an email from my Rotary Club about the death of Cory Connell. I didn't recognize the name but quickly recognized the picture of this young man, a graduate of Edgewater High School. He worked at Publix and at the CVS just a block from my home.

He was a pleasant engaging young man who had chatted and checked me out at CVS on numbers of occasions.

Then on Thursday at Rotary one of our member's son Drew came and presented. Just 20 years old Drew is on the Lake Mary Fire Department. He and his friend Chris are both firefighters and Cory, their classmate, had decided he was going to the Fire Academy and do the same—he loved to help people. Instead, his funeral started at 10 this morning in Ocoee.

Whether it's the tragedy of this week or another one there are those long dark days of winter, physically, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually when we may wonder if spring will ever come. IT WILL!

Psalms 62:5-6 David writes "I wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation my fortress where I will not be shaken."

This week at Vacation Bible School the theme was Cave Quest and they discovered five of the many things that Jesus gives us. He gives us hope, courage, direction, love and power.

It is fitting that as we began the week on Monday morning we started with hope and today we conclude our week returning to this great gift that Jesus is in our lives—he is our hope.

I found it interesting to discover that hope isn't an emotion but rather a way of thinking.

If you research the origins of the word you find that the Indo-European root of the word hope comes from the same root from which the word curve comes, but what it means in the original is “a change in direction, going in a different way.”

According to C.R. Snyder who spent a lifetime studying hope he defined it as a way of thinking opposite of cynicism.

To move to cynicism is to think of things as having no chance of change that we are stuck. That the badness of the world is what it is and there will be no change. That the senseless taking of life won't change. Cynicism is hopeless.

Snyder believed that there are three components that make up hopeful thinking.

1. Goals - Setting realistic goals
2. Pathways – Finding different ways to achieve your goals
3. Agency – Believing that you can instigate change and achieve the goals.

We can't undo the events of this past week. No matter how we'd like to, but we can look forward and set some goals, find ways to achieve our goals and if those ways get blocked come up with some alternative means, and choose to believe that we can instigate change.

Snyder characterized hopeful thinkers as people who are able to establish clear goals, imagine multiple workable pathways toward those goals, and persevere, even when obstacles get in their way.

In light of this weeks events we will do well to set some goals.

There are some goals we can set for ourselves to help us cope with reality.

Here are just a few suggestions of the simple kinds of things that can help us cope, heal and live with hope.

Physical Goals- could be things like

--Sleep 7-9 hrs --eat healthy --keep hydrated --exercise

Emotional Goals could be

--Laughter and fun --face emotions directly --journal --say no to bad habits --talk through issues to get through issues

Relational Goals

--Connect with family and friends --voice needs to others --join support group --utilize counselor --learn love language of those close to you

Behavioral Goals

--Daily planning time --Short term goals --hobbies --create bucket list --Read for development --volunteer --take on new challenge

Spiritual Goals

--Meditation --forgive other and yourself --listen to inspirational music --attend spiritual class --pray --observe a day of rest

These help build our new normal. Who will we be? What will our community be? How will our church be? Who will our friends be?

I hope we can let this horrible tragedy spur us to less “us” and “them” kind of thinking. “ More often than not history is a record of conflict between us and them.” Art of Possibility p. 182

I think about the names we scrolled at the beginning of service and all the lives who touched their lives, their stories are unique to them as our stories are unique to us, but in so many ways we are all similar.

We all seek connections, to be part of something, to belong.
 We all know the joy of a smile and a word of commendation.
 We share the same hunger pains for food.
 We all fear loss.
 We sense the competition for resources.

We all know the deliciousness of crawling into a soft bed to find rest.
We all have felt the sting of failure and the joy of success
We all know the feeling of wishing
We all know the hunger to love and be loved.

I have hope that the story of “We” We the people. We the people of Orlando. We the children of God, can some how supersede the story of us and them. I have hope that we can ask, “What do we want to have happen here? What’s best for us—all of each of us, and all of all of us. What’s our next step?

As followers of Christ we believe that a day will come when evil will be no more and rightness will reign because of what Jesus has done we have hope. This life is just like a flower that sprouts and grows and blooms and is beautiful and then it is over. Without the resurrection no change is coming there is no hope. But Jesus rose from the grave and conquered death and is coming again. He is our hope.

This week has been hard. Experts say it will take us around 2 years to recover but recognizing each day as gift and each person as a gift can speed our healing and living with gratitude can increase our hopefulness. So take a deep breath, maybe for just a moment close your eyes and just be, in silence anticipate hope, new goals, new movement toward them, new belief that God is making all things new in you.

Video on Gratitude: <https://youtu.be/gXDMoiEkyuQ> or just search “gratitude” and look for the video. Below is the text of the narration

The text of Brother David’s A Good Day...

You think that this is just another day in your life...

It’s not just another day.

It’s the one day that is given to you – today...

It's given to you.
It's a gift.
It's the only gift that you have right now...
...and the only appropriate response is gratefulness.

If you do nothing else but to cultivate that response to the great gift
that this unique day is...
If you learn to respond as if it were the first day in your life
and the very last day
then you will have spent this day very well.

Begin by opening your eyes, and be surprised that you have eyes you
can open
That incredible array of colors that is constantly offered to us for our
pure enjoyment.

Look at the sky.
We so rarely look at the sky.
We so rarely note how different it is from moment to moment, with
clouds coming and going.
We just think of the weather, and even with the weather we don't
think of all the many nuances of weather...
We just think of "good weather" and "bad weather."

This day, right now, with its unique weather, maybe a kind that will
never exactly in that form come again..
The formation of clouds in the sky will never be the same as it is right
now...

Open your eyes. Look at that.

Look at the faces of people whom you meet.
Each one has an incredible story behind their face, a story that you
could never fully fathom.
Not only their own story, but the story of their ancestors.
We all go back so far...

And in this present moment on this day, all the people you meet, all that life from generations and from so many places all over the world flows together and meets you here like a life giving water if you only open your heart and drink.

Open your heart to the incredible gifts that civilization gives to us.

You flip a switch and there is electric light.

You turn a faucet and there is warm water, and cold water, and drinkable water...

a gift that millions and millions in the world will never experience.

So these are just a few of an enormous number of gifts to which you can open your heart.

And so I am wishing you will open your heart to all these blessings and let them flow through you.

That everyone you will meet on this day will be blessed by you, just by your eyes, by your smile, by your touch, just by your presence.

Let the gratefulness overflow into blessing all around you.

Then it will REALLY be a good day.

Lord teach us to value the days of our lives. Fill us with hope—New goals for our lives, multiple pathways towards those goals, and belief that we can instigate change and preserve. And for today may we be grateful. Our hope is in you alone. Amen