

“Life’s Essential Ingredients” Pt.2

(3/29/20)

Last week, because of the coronavirus, the governor of Illinois has imposed a “shelter in place” order mandating that we can no longer meet in groups until the virus runs its course.

Because of this forced sequester we, along with many other churches, have taken to social media and have started live-streaming our services.

And since this is a unique situation, and because many are feeling ‘trapped’ and anxious—I felt like the Lord wanted us to put our normal Sunday morning study in the Gospel of John on hold and do something different.

And so, I’ve started a series entitled—“**Life’s Essential Ingredients.**”

One thing about adversity is that it has a way of stripping our lives of the extraneous and getting us to focus on the basics or the essentials—the things in life that really matter.

With regard to *‘life’s essential ingredients’* let me just begin by saying that—every recipe contains certain ingredients—some of them are a matter of taste and are not necessary.

But then, there are ingredients that are not optional—they are absolutely essential for that recipe to work and produce the intended results.

When it comes to what we’ll call “*the recipe for life*”—there are certain mandatory or essential ingredients that must be included if a person’s life is going to ‘turn out’ the way God intended.

If we're going to be thorough, let me start with the ingredients that make life possible on a *physical* level.

There are certain *drives* that God has built into the human body that are attached to certain, what we'll call 'ingredients,'—ingredients that the body needs to ensure its health and survival.

The strongest of these is: the air drive, followed by the water drive, which in turn is followed by the food drive, the sleep drive, and the sex drive.

These are so important for the survival of our physical bodies (not to mention the perpetuation of the human race)—that God built into our bodies an 'alarm system' that warns us when our body is being deprived of any one of these essential ingredients—this *alarm* takes the form of cravings leading to intense desires.

Now, just as God has given us physical drives to keep our bodies physically healthy—He has also built into our 'non-physical being' or our *soul* certain essentials that must also be satisfied if we're going to remain emotionally healthy.

As we said last week—those 3 ingredients are: Peace, Hope and Love

Now, some of you might be thinking that these 3 essential ingredients should be—“*faith, hope and love*”, instead of “**peace, hope and love.**”

And you think that because of what Paul the apostle said in 1Corinthians 13:13 where he said, “*And now abide faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*”

Look, I'm certainly not going to argue with you about the importance of faith in a person's life (true faith in Jesus Christ) as being an essential ingredient for life.

However, let me say that the reason I didn't include faith in the list of essential ingredients was because—it's included in the first essential we covered last week—PEACE!

As we said last time, the Bible talks about 3 kinds of peace—they are as follows:

1. **Peace with God** (Romans 5:1)—Salvation.
2. **The peace of God** (Philippians 4:7)—Practical peace to see you thru your day.
3. **The peace the world gives** (John 14:27)—An artificial peace that comes thru alcohol and drugs.

So inherent in and essential to the concept of biblical peace—is faith.

Faith in Jesus for salvation (peace with God); and faith in God's promises that brings into our lives the peace of God for daily living.

Now that brings us to the second ingredient that is essential for life—HOPE!

As essential as *peace* is for life—I think that hope might even be more essential.

Hope is one of the intangibles of life that can't be measured out or weighed on a scale the way you would food or some other commodity that is essential for our physical well-being—and yet hope is no less essential for life—

“A number of years ago, a study was done on rats in Norway that lived on the wharfs by the sea. After being thrown in the open water, one group paddled for about three and a half minutes before giving up and drowning. A second group was thrown in but plucked out right before they drowned. The next day, when the rats were thrown back into the water, scientists were astounded to find them able to tread water for forty-five minutes or more—evidently because they had hope they would be rescued as they had been the day before.”

Hope is one of the things that makes life possible—we can't live without.

But when it is present and 'alive' in our hearts—it's amazing the obstacles we can overcome and the things we can accomplish!

Several years ago, I came across the story, of a self-made millionaire named Eugene Lang.

Mr. Lang powerfully changed the lives of the sixth-grade class in East Harlem, New York.

One author recounts the story—

“Mr. Lang had been asked to speak to a class of 59 sixth-graders. What could he say to inspire these students, most of whom would drop out of school? He wondered how he could get these tough and poor children even to look at him. Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak to them from his heart. ‘Stay in school,’ he admonished, ‘and if you do, I’ll help pay the college tuition for every one of you.’ At that moment the lives of these students changed. For the first time they had hope. Said one student, ‘I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling.’ Nearly 90 percent of that class graduated high school and went on to college.”

English author, poet and essayist Samuel Johnson wrote in his work, The Rambler—

“The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure, but from hope to hope.”

Most people think that we make it from day to day through *pleasurable* experiences when it isn't pleasure that keeps us going from one day to the next—it's **hope**.

We don't often realize it but it's true—how do I know?

Because, there have been more than a few millionaires that have committed suicide—not from lack of pleasure but from an absence of hope.

Proverbs 13:12 (NKJV)

¹² Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but *when* the desire comes [when a hope is realized], *it is* a tree of life.

Or in other words, when we're deprived of hope we become emotionally sick and that will lead to depression and in some cases suicide.

Webster's dictionary defines *hope* this way—*"To desire with expectation of obtainment."*

Humanly speaking just because we hope for something doesn't mean it's guaranteed—unless it's hope rooted in a promise of God.

In the Bible God has given His children many promises—all of which are designed to give us hope.

Peter called these *"exceedingly great and precious promises."* (2Peter 1:4)

Many of these deal with everyday life, where God has promised to provide everything we need to live physically from day to day.

Matthew 6:31-33 (NLT)

³¹ "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

God, who created us, knows how important hope is for living our lives here on earth—and how prone we are to lose it when things get tough.

That's why, in His Word, He constantly tries to encourage us not to lose hope in Him and in His promises to us—

Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Romans 15:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God wants His people to have hope because He knows it is an essential ingredient for life—He knows that when hope is gone life becomes impossible.

And that is why this present Coronavirus crisis our nation is going thru has caused so much turmoil in people's hearts—it's because they don't have hope that this is going to work itself out and life will return to normal.

In other words, for many their hope for the future is greatly diminished causing anxiety, fear and depression—while for many others, they have lost *all* hope for the future which has caused more than a few to commit suicide.

A few days ago, a 19-year-old British woman gave a solemn warning just before committing suicide, she said—"*more people will die from suicide during this than the virus itself.*"

All from a lack of hope.

David expressed the importance of hope when he faced a life-threatening crisis, he said,
"*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed [had hope] that I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living.*" (Psalm 27:13)

The word 'hope' appears 154 times in the Bible (NKJV)—78 times in the Old Testament and 76 times in the New.

And whenever it's used in relation to something God has promised His people it always means—*“To wait with expectation; Quiet, confident trust.”*

In Scripture when God promises us something—it's not an *'I hope so hope'* (maybe it will be or maybe it won't); it's always an *'I know so hope'* (a sure thing)!

Now, the promises of God are something we must cling to by faith—faith in the power of God to keep His promises to us, even as Abraham believed the incredible promise God gave to him (Explain):

Romans 4:20-21 (NLT2)

²⁰ Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹ He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.

And the most important promise of all the promises God has given—is the promise of eternal life to all who receive His Son into their hearts as their Savior.

This promise produces hope in our hearts—the hope of our eternal inheritance someday in heaven:

Colossians 1:5 (NKJV)

⁵ ...because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

This *eternal* hope then *'trickles down'* into our practical, daily lives here on earth—especially when we are confronted with any kind of crisis or adversity in our lives.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart [“we will not lose hope”]. Even though our outward man [physical man] is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Now I feel the need to stop here and say some things that might be difficult for some of you to hear—but I would be remiss as a pastor if I didn't.

There are many adversities in life that come our way as children of God that God hasn't promised to deliver us from—at least not in this life.

The history of the Church is full of examples of Christians who loved God with all their hearts and walked in obedience to His commandments—that wound up being martyred for their faith.

How is that compatible with Paul's statement in 1Corinthians 13:8 that "*God's love never fails*"?

Look, just because we're God's children and He loves us—that doesn't mean His love will never fail to produce for us a happy ending and that everything will always work out the way we're hoping.

There are times when we won't experience a 'happy ending' in a given situation—no matter how much hope we have.

In other words, sometimes the marriage won't be saved; the job won't be salvaged; and/or the sickness won't be healed.

I'm convinced that many children of God, all over the world, who contract the Coronavirus will wind up dying from it—many will be spared but others will die.

"So, where's the hope for the future in that Phil?"—where it has always been—in God!

Our hope is always in God to do whatever His sovereign will determines in a given situation—no matter what. ("Not my will but your will be done"—Matt. 26:42)

Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled [for the future]; you believe in God, believe also in Me." (John 14:1)

Job said, "Even if He slays me (takes my life)— I'm still going to trust Him!" (Job 13:15)

Job's trust in God wasn't for the temporal but for the eternal—

Job 19:25-27 (NKJV)

²⁵ For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; ²⁶ And after my skin is destroyed, this *I know*, That in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. *How* my heart yearns within me!

In the real-world God doesn't promise us freedom from problems and pain, and He doesn't promise us that everything will always work out the way we hope so that we can live happily ever after.

The only hope that God has given us where we will live happily ever after—is the hope of heaven.

The cross and ultimately the resurrection of Jesus from the dead guarantees us the hope of a heavenly inheritance.

This what Peter was rejoicing in when he declared—

1 Peter 1:3-7 (NKJV)

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ...

Listen, it was the cross and the death of Jesus that made this hope a reality—the same cross He said *we* must take up if we want to be one of His disciples.

And yes, that cross was primarily figurative (dying to self here on earth to serve God and bring Him glory)—and yet it might mean that some of us could be physically martyred for our faith—are we willing to take up that ‘cross’?

The problem with us as Americans is—we have so many blessings that we’re not looking forward to heaven but rather, we’re clinging to our lives here on earth.

We must stop holding onto this life so tightly!

Could that be one of the reasons God has allowed this pandemic, so that we as His people would get our eyes off of the temporal and on to the eternal?—Maybe.

Hebrews 12:26-28 (NKJV)

²⁶ ...but now He has promised, saying, "*Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.*" ²⁷ Now this, "*Yet once more,*" indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Let me close by saying one more time—we must stop thinking that being a Christian means God has promised us blue skies and smooth sailing while we’re on this earth.

And because we are His children that—He “owes” us a happy ending to every problem we face in life.

Of course, you pray for solutions to your problems and hope for happy endings—but if they don’t come how are you going to handle it?

I mean what if the cancer isn't healed or the marriage isn't saved or the problem, whatever it is, isn't solved?

How is that going to impact your relationship with God?

What if everything came crashing down—I'm talking about the whole world economy and we found ourselves in the greatest depression the world has ever seen—how would it affect your relationship with God?

Look, we can't be sure that this COVID-19 pandemic isn't a judgement from God—a judgment that will ultimately pave the way for the coming of the Antichrist. (Comment)

Our only true hope that we will definitely and absolutely live happily ever after is found in the hope of heaven—and it is that hope that needs to sustain us from day to day.

That's why Paul admonished believers in Col.3:2—"*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*"

And Jesus in Matt.6:19-21—"*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*"

I don't know what the future is going to bring with this pandemic we're experiencing, but I know one thing for sure—God is on the throne and therefore I'm not going to worry about it!

Worry doesn't solve our problems—it only adds to them!

Corrie ten Boom said something profound regarding this—*"Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength."*

Author and evangelist Greg Laurie said—

"So, how should we respond to this global health crisis?—Pray! Pray for yourself. Pray for others. Pray for those who are sick. Pray for those who are at risk. Pray for the doctors, nurses and researchers who are treating patients and are working to stymie the virus. Pray for the government officials who have to make difficult decisions, and pray for your friends, family members and neighbors. Thinking about others takes the focus off of ourselves and actually helps to reduce our worry and anxiety!...

Instead of listening to or reading the news as soon as we open our eyes in the morning or before we go to sleep at night—we can start or end our day with prayer and/or Bible reading. We can meditate on the hopeful words that God Himself gives us in Isaiah 43:2, 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.'

Turn your worry into worship! When anxious thoughts come sweeping into our minds—uninvited and unwelcome, we can sweep them back out with praise. We can listen to worship music, sing songs, dance, play instruments and create works of art – or do whatever we do when we express our love for and awe of God.

There will always be something that will frighten us in this life. But in these uncertain days, we can take the time to count our blessings and thank God for his divine provision and protection. We don't have to be filled with fear, anxiety and worry.

God loves you and wants a relationship with you. That is why Jesus came to this earth – to give to us both the meaning of life and the hope of life beyond the grave. He died on the cross for your sin, and if you will turn from your sin and invite Him into your life, you will never be alone again."