

THE VIRTUE OF HOPE

The Christian Teachings of Virtue (Series 5, Part 2, Teaching #34)

Instructions: Read aloud, underline what stands out to you most, discuss



Leader Guide...

See the back page for
detailed facilitator
instructions.

The unshakeable confidence in the Good News of Christ is hope.

The virtue of hope enables one to trust in God and the promise of Christ for eternal life—divinely inspiring one to desire God’s will on earth and union with God’s love in Heaven as one’s utmost happiness and ultimate end.

Hope follows faith as the second of the seven chief virtues, for one cannot hope in God if one does not believe in Him. Faith and hope work together to draw the believer closer to Christ. By faith, one assents to Christ; by hope, one aspires to Him. Hope, then, moves the faithful not just to believe in Christ, but to ardently pursue Him.

Hope is more than a fleeting wish or an optimistic outlook—it is a supernatural virtue infused into the soul by God Himself. It is not merely human positivity or resilience; rather, it is the firm trust that God will fulfill His promises, that His mercy is greater than your failures, and that eternal life is your ultimate destiny. This is why hope is not something we create on our own, but a divine gift—a grace that lifts the heart beyond the limits of human understanding. Left to yourself, you are prone to despair, to discouragement, and to reliance on the temporary things of this world. But by God’s grace, hope is planted deep within, enabling you to trust that no matter what trials come, you are being led toward something far greater than you can now see.

To have hope means to trust unwaveringly in God’s promises, believing that what He has spoken will come to pass. The Scriptures are filled with these promises—of redemption, of grace, of victory over sin and death, of eternal happiness through faith in Jesus Christ. Hope does not require you to see the fulfillment of these promises immediately; it simply requires that you believe. This is not blind optimism, nor is it naïve wishing—“Hope is the anchor of the soul. It prevents us from drifting away in the storms of life” (St. Vincent de Paul). It is what enables the believer to endure suffering, to walk forward when life is uncertain, and to cling to the knowledge that God’s plan is always leading to a greater good, even when it cannot yet be perceived.

Where faith enlightens the intellect to perceive the truth, hope strengthens the will to pursue the truth. Without hope, then, it is possible to know the Way but do little to nothing to go the Way.

(continues on next page...)

7 Chief Virtues

Faith

Hope

Charity

Prudence

Justice

Fortitude

Temperance



Continue Learning: Scan the QR code to access the video for this teaching as well as additional resources such as related Scripture, quotes, and more.

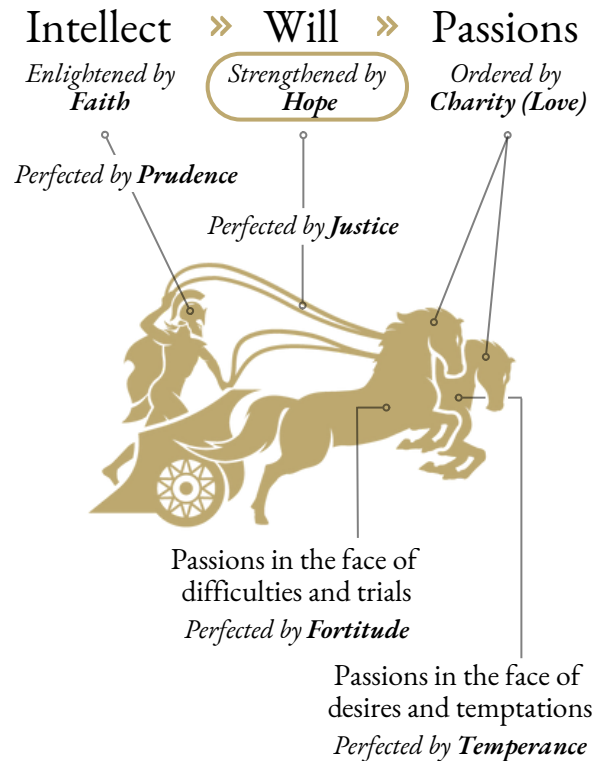
Or, visit horseandchariot.com/the-virtue-of-hope



Hope is the charioteer's resolve when the road is long—the unyielding grip on the reins when trials press in. If faith is the light by which the path is seen, then hope is the strength that keeps the charioteer from collapsing, pressing onward toward the Promised Land. Without hope, the will falters, the reins slacken, and the chariot slows to a halt, overcome by doubt and despair. But with hope, the will remains steadfast, guiding the soul forward—through darkness, through suffering, through uncertainty—toward God.

Because hope is so deeply intertwined with faith, it naturally bears fruit in action. Hope is meant to be lived out—not as a distant, vague longing for something better, but as a transformative force that shapes daily life. A hopeful soul does not simply wait for Heaven; it strives toward it, living in a way that reflects the coming Kingdom of God. Just as the charioteer fixes their eyes ahead and presses forward, so too does the hopeful heart remain fixed on eternity, walking boldly in the direction of God's promises, knowing that He who calls is unwavering.

The gift of hope is found only in the souls of the faithful on earth, still traveling the road to Heaven's gates; for in Heaven, hope is forever fulfilled, and in hell, forever lost. Thus, God gives the Christian pilgrim hope so they enduringly trust in Him, turn to Him, and reach for Him—aspiring to be a reflection of His love until they rest in His love—all while leaning on the grace of the Holy Spirit to both express it and obtain it, and to persevere through countless adversities in its pursuit.



Just as natural hope moves one to pursue a worldly goal, though the path is difficult, supernatural hope moves one to pursue a spiritual goal, though the path is difficult—principally, the Way of Christ.

One with hope stands tall when others hide, presses forward when others give in, and waits with poise when others grow flustered. They refuse to let fear or despair defeat them. They look beyond the present struggle and cling to the promises of God. They trust that suffering is not meaningless, that every trial has a purpose, and that God's mercy is greater than their failures. Hope keeps them steady in life's chaos, knowing "the world's thy ship and not thy home" (St. Thérèse of Lisieux).

Hope looks like the woman who prays for a way forward when all doors seem closed. It looks like the man who remains joyful despite hardship, trusting that God is working all things for good. It looks like the cancer patient who refuses to give in to despair, the struggling worker who keeps believing a breakthrough will come, and the grieving parent who holds onto the promise of Heaven.

Hope is Joseph trusting in his dreams even from the depths of a prison, Job refusing to curse God in his suffering, and Abraham believing in God's promise of a son despite his old age. It is the bleeding woman who reached for Jesus' robe, the paralyzed man whose friends lowered him through the roof, and the disciples who endured persecution for the sake of the Gospel. Above all, it is Jesus Himself, who endured the cross "for the sake of the joy that lay before him" (Hebrews 12:2), knowing God's plan would bring ultimate redemption for all.

In these ways and more, Christian hope imparts a spiritual joy that can shine in any circumstance. God would not expect Christians to be joyful if there were nothing to look forward to. But there is! That is the good news—so good, all difficulties pale in comparison. For this reason, the hopeful are resiliently joyful in the divine destiny God has in store for them.

HOPE IN ACTION: *Select 1-3 areas you'd like to take action most in your life.*

I endeavor to put my hope into action by...

- ☐ *Choosing to believe that God is working all things for good, even when I don't see it.*
- ☐ *Remaining joyful in hardship, trusting God's promises over my present pain.*
- ☐ *Praying for open doors when the path ahead seems blocked.*
- ☐ *Trusting that suffering has purpose and is never wasted in God's hands.*
- ☐ *Resisting despair and reminding myself that Heaven is my home, not this world.*
- ☐ *Encouraging others with God's promises when they feel discouraged.*
- ☐ *Waiting with patience and confidence, knowing God's timing is perfect.*
- ☐ *Holding to hope in prayer, even when my prayers feel unanswered.*
- ☐ *Clinging to the cross, trusting that every trial has resurrection on the other side.*
- ☐ *Continuing to move forward in faith, believing that God's plan is unfolding, even now.*

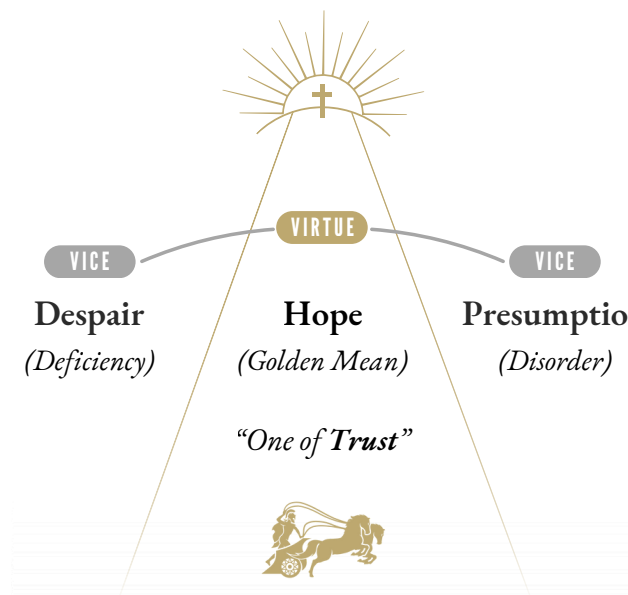
The vices opposed to hope are, at one extreme, a deficiency of hope—which is despair, and at the other extreme, one can never have too much hope, but one can have disordered hope—which is presumption.

The vice of despair is a disposition dead or devoid of trust in God and His promise of salvation by grace through faith. Despair is to say, “My sad state outweighs God’s mercy.” Despair is a liar! No sin or circumstance, no matter the degree, can exceed the immense scope of God’s forgiveness and grace. Yet, the despairing soul believes otherwise, thinking their sins are too great to be forgiven, that suffering has no meaning, or that God has abandoned them entirely. It is found in the one who has given up on prayer, convinced God no longer listens, in the sinner who believes they are beyond redemption, in the weary heart who sees only darkness and refuses the light. Despair suffocates the soul, drowning it in hopelessness and severing its connection to divine mercy, where healing and renewal await.

The vice of presumption is a disposition whereby one presumes salvation is assured, regardless of a lack of true faith or cooperation with grace. The presumptuous one either takes God’s grace for granted, assuming salvation despite a lukewarm and fruitless faith and expecting pardon without repentance, or they disregard God’s grace entirely, assuming salvation by their own merit, adopting the mindset, “I’m a good person, so I’m going to Heaven.” It is found in the one who sins freely, expecting forgiveness without contrition, in the believer who sees no need to grow in virtue, and in the self-righteous who assume they are saved while condemning others. Presumption blinds the soul to its need for grace, leading one to neglect the very means of salvation they falsely believe are unnecessary.

It is said, “No one loses Heaven except by his own fault. So far as God’s part is concerned, our salvation is certain. It is only our part—our cooperation or non-cooperation with God’s grace—that is uncertain” (Leo J. Trese). Sadly, both despair and presumption reject grace—one by refusing to believe in God’s mercy, the other by abusing it. Together, they drag the soul away from trust in God’s promises, either into the pit of fear and hopelessness or into the arrogance of self-assurance, both leading to destruction rather than to the eternal life true hope secures.

Thus, whether it be by despair or presumption, the belief one has already lost or already won, prevents them from running a good race. The outcome is the same: spiritual sloth. Spiritual sloth dismisses grace and drains hope, inviting soul-dragging sins such as lust, gluttony, and aimlessness. Hence, it is written, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick...” (Proverbs 13:12) and to “...work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12)—to resist despair, avoid presumption, and hold onto hope.



It is the anchor of hope that keeps one from drifting into the darkness of despair—where they no longer trust God—or the disillusionment of presumption, where they believe they no longer need Him. It is worldliness that leads to both.

Worldly hope, which is natural hope, is an essential part of life. The hurting hope for healing, the persecuted long for peace, the daring dream of success. Without hope, life loses its direction; one cannot persevere without the prospect of a brighter future. Yet these hopes, while good, must never supersede one's hope in Christ, lest the ills of despair or presumption soon follow.

Divine hope, which is supernatural hope, is the believer's assurance of a brighter future—the crown gift of grace through faith. Scripture declares, “This [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, which reaches into [Heaven] where Jesus has entered on our behalf” (Hebrews 6:18–20).

Unlike the anchor of a ship in the sea, the anchor of hope in Heaven does not merely prevent the faithful from drifting—it actively pulls them forward, keeping them grounded in Christ's truth while encouraging them to rely on the winds of grace to guide them through their unique spiritual journey across the ocean of life.

Thus, the hopeful resist the currents of the times, while untethered souls wander far from God. It takes an elevated mind, a humble heart, and a connected soul—anchored to the Rock of Christ—not only to remain unmoved amid the waves of the world but also to be a herald of hope.



The best defense against worldliness and the vices opposed to hope is to cultivate hope itself. Hope must be fought for. It does not come easily, nor does it remain without effort. The squalls of life will try to tear it from your grasp. Failure will hint you are beyond saving. Comfort will entice you to believe striving for Heaven is unnecessary. But hope is not a feeling; it is a choice. It is the decision to trust in God when nothing makes sense, to press forward when the road is long, and to refuse despair even when every voice tells you to give up. In fact, “The greater the difficulties, the greater should be our hope” (St. Maximilian Kolbe).

Where are you tempted to lose hope? Do you let failure trick you into thinking you are beyond redemption? Do you let suffering harden your heart, believing God has forgotten you? Do you live as though salvation is assured without repenting, presuming God’s mercy while neglecting to seek holiness? Hope demands vigilance. It does not sit idle, waiting for relief—it moves forward in faith. The hopeful soul fights against despair by clinging to the promises of God, and it resists presumption by striving daily for virtue, knowing the path of Christ is narrow.

Hope is cultivated in the choices no one sees. It is found in the one who seeks forgiveness after falling into sin, refusing to believe their failures define them. It is found in the one who keeps praying when Heaven seems silent, the one who continues working when they see no fruit, and the one who chooses faithfulness over fear. It is in the one who reminds their weary heart of God’s goodness when doubt creeps in, and the one who refuses to believe hardship is meaningless, knowing every trial can bring them closer to God.

Grow in hope through prayer, Scripture, and gratitude. Prayer keeps the heart connected to God, the source of all hope. To seek hope is to seek Him, for “they that hope in the Lord will renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31). Scripture illuminates God’s promises, reminding believers of His faithfulness, for it is said, “If we want to have a future filled with hope, we must build it on faith” (St. John Bosco). Gratitude strengthens hope by shifting focus from what is lacking to the countless ways God has already provided. Together, these practices fortify the soul, enabling one to persevere through trials with trust in God’s goodness and His eternal plan.

As hope takes root, it fuels the soul. The one who once feared hardship now embraces it as a path to holiness. The one who once wavered in doubt now stands firm, trusting that God’s plan is greater than their understanding. The one who once settled into complacency now runs the race with perseverance, knowing eternity is worth every struggle. The Christian soul, like a diamond, is not fractured but formed through the pressures of life.

Ultimately, hope is the flame that keeps the journey of faith alive. The faithful, although imperfect and prone to stumbling, are always picked back up by the helping hand of hope, each time arising with renewed resolve in their walk with Christ. For in the end, the soul that hopes rightly never walks in defeat—they have concrete trust in God, habitually choosing hope and moral fortitude despite having absolutely no certainty things will get better in this life, but possessing absolute certainty things will be better in the next.

As one grows in the virtue of hope, they grow in their desire for God; as one grows in their desire for God, they grow in the virtue of hope. God is both the source and object of hope, and it is His will, through faith, to bestow the grace of hope in each of our souls so we desire nothing less than what He desires for us: oneness through Christ.

Seeker of virtue, the way of hope is a path that will demand your perseverance, stretch your trust, and challenge everything you think you know about waiting on God. Hope is not wishful thinking. It is not mere optimism. It is a battle for the soul—a fierce and unyielding grip on the promises of God when everything around you tempts you to let go.

At first, hope may feel effortless, like the sun rising on a new day, filling you with confidence that God is leading you to good things. But the path of hope is no gentle walk—it is a climb, steep and exhausting. There will be days when you feel lost, when suffering clouds your vision, when prayers seem unanswered. Doubt will whisper, “God has forgotten you.” The world will tell you to take matters into your own hands, to place your trust in wealth, success, or fleeting pleasures. You will see others prosper while you struggle, and you will be tempted to despair—to believe God has deserted you or that your faith was in vain.

But if you persist, if you press forward, something powerful will happen: hope. For when hope is forged by fire, it becomes unbreakable. It teaches you to trust in God’s goodness even when you do not see it, and to wait with confidence even when the road is long. You will learn that true hope is not found in the things of this world, but in God alone—the One who never fails, never forgets, and never forsakes His own. Hope will become your anchor, keeping you steady when seas are rough, when suffering strikes, and when the world falls apart.

Hope requires effort. It demands surrender. It will cost you your impatience, your need for control, your desire for instant answers. But it will give you everything—the strength to press on when others turn back, the strength to trust when reason fails, and the strength to endure when everything else collapses. It will equip you to bring peace, love, and encouragement to heavy-hearted circumstances where such acts seem utterly impossible. Hope does not disappoint, because its source is God Himself.

With hope, “You have a God who hears you, the power of love behind you, the Holy Spirit within you, and all of heaven ahead of you. If you have the Shepherd, you have grace for every sin, direction for every turn, a candle for every corner, and an anchor for every storm. You have everything you need” (Max Lucado).

You can do this. Not by your own power, but by His. By grace. The path of hope is difficult—but it is worth it. Do not give in to despair. Do not fall into presumption. Lift your head, set your eyes on Heaven, and press on. You’re not alone. Lift the sails of your soul so the Holy Spirit can fill you, and the winds of grace can move you—to rise when you fall, seek light in the darkness, and cling to the cross, trusting that dawn will eventually break upon the horizon, even when the night is long. For in the end, eternity awaits those who persevere in hope.

This teaching on hope shows how essential it is to the Christian journey—not as passive optimism, but as active trust in the promises of God, even in the hardest moments of life.

1. Choose trust when God seems silent. Hope doesn't deny hardship—it endures through it with confidence in God's plan. → Do you continue to trust in God's goodness even when your prayers seem unanswered?

2. Resist despair and press forward. Hope strengthens the soul to keep going when everything says to give up. → Do you let trials refine your trust in God—or do you let them pull you into hopelessness?

3. Avoid presumption and strive for holiness. True hope does not presume salvation without repentance or cooperation with grace. → Do you pursue virtue daily, or assume grace without cooperating with it?

4. Lift your eyes from the world to eternity. Hope fixes your gaze on Heaven, not the shifting rewards of earth. → Is your focus set more on worldly success or on your eternal destiny?

5. Let hope shape your habits. Hope doesn't just wait—it works toward the good it believes in. → Do your choices reflect a deep trust that God is preparing something better?

6. Live as a witness of hope. The hopeful Christian becomes a light for others in dark places. → In suffering, do others see in you a calm strength rooted in God's promises?

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOPEFUL

Those who cultivate supernatural hope walk with a strength and serenity that reflects their trust in God's eternal plan:

1. Resilient. They remain steadfast through suffering and uncertainty.

2. Patient. They wait on the Lord with confidence, not complaint.

3. Joyful. Their inner peace is not shaken by outer storms.

4. Humble. They trust God's timing over their own desires.

5. Active. They move toward holiness with the future in view.

6. Encouraging. They speak life and lift up others who are weary.

Signs of struggling in hope...

- Giving in to discouragement or despair during trials
- Living as if nothing will ever change for the better
- Becoming spiritually lazy or indifferent (presumption)
- Avoiding confession or growth, believing grace is automatic
- Seeking comfort in worldly things more than in God's promises
- Feeling cynical about the Church, Scripture, or eternal life
- Lacking peace, especially when things don't go as planned

Think: Hope anchors my soul in God's promises, especially when the path ahead is dark. I am called to lift my eyes beyond present trials and fix them on eternity. In hope, I find strength to endure, courage to press on, and joy that cannot be shaken. My future is secure—because my hope is in Christ.

Pray: Lord, anchor my soul in You. When I grow weary, remind me of Your promises. When I feel lost, be the light that leads me home. Teach me to hope, not just when life is good, but when it is hard—when I can't see, when I must wait, and when I want to give up. Let my heart stay fixed on Heaven, and let every struggle draw me closer to You. Grant me a hope that endures, uplifts, and radiates Your love to those around me. In all things, let me hope in You. Amen.

SELF-EVALUATION & ACTION STEP										
Rate yourself from 1-10 1 = I struggle to consistently live a life of hope 10 = I consider hopefulness one of my strengths	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Struggle ←				(avoid 5)	→ Strength				
Why did you give yourself this rating? (In what areas do you struggle the most?)										
What benefits will you obtain from raising your rating? (consider all aspects of your life)										
Of the opposing vices of despair and presumption, which one do you wrestle with the most and why?										
Of the areas you underlined throughout this teaching, which stood out to you most and why?										
What specific action step will you take this week to grow in the virtue of hope?										
Daily Affirmation: Today, I refuse despair. By God's grace, I hold fast to hope, press on through trial, get up from failure, and fix my eyes on union with Him.										

NOTES

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

Courageous Facilitator,

Your willingness to step forward and lead is a gift of grace to your community and a brave act of faith. God bless you for answering the call to inspire others to grow in virtue and pursue the character of Christ.

The Holy Spirit thrives in fellowship and community, working powerfully through the connections and shared experiences of small groups. That's why these lesson plans are designed to cultivate genuine relationships, inspire meaningful conversations, and foster a spirit of transformation through shared wisdom and grace.

Facilitating these lessons is both simple and impactful. While many forms of teaching rely on one-way communication, where one person speaks and others listen, true transformation happens through two-way communication. In this format, ideas aren't merely taught—they're explored together. You'll guide, but everyone will share and learn from one another, creating a rich environment where the Holy Spirit can move and grow each mind, heart, and soul.

These lesson plans succeed because they:

- **Encourage connection** in a collaborative small group setting that fosters action and accountability
- **Empower every voice** with opportunities for each participant to share and contribute
- **Inspire growth** through educational, inspirational, and transformational teachings

Your role as a facilitator is to:

- **Follow the instructions and trust the process**—the wheel is already built, you're here to guide it.
- **Honor the schedule** by being punctual and respecting the time of your group.
- **Lead with love** and rely on God's grace to inspire, guide, and uplift everyone in the group.

Your courage to create a space for growth and fellowship will not only bless others but will deepen your own journey of faith and virtue. Together, with God's help, lives will be transformed.

To God be the glory!

FACILITATOR CHECKLIST

Note: Because this is a longer teaching, consider sending it to the group in advance so they can reflect more deeply and come prepared to discuss.

1. Getting Started (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Give everyone a few minutes to join before getting started. Be friendly and greet people as they arrive. Get them talking! Come prepared with some good ice-breaker questions you can ask during this time.
- ☐ 3-5 minutes in, do quick introductions for anyone new to the group. What brought them to the group? Spend a moment getting to know them.
- ☐ Open with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).

2. Watch or Read the Teaching (15-20 mins)

- ☐ To stay within the allotted time, either watch the video of the teaching as a group (if video available) OR have a volunteer read each page aloud.
- ☐ Have everyone note what stands out to them most.

3. How it Applies (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Have a volunteer read all of page 8. Have others follow along and underline what stands out to them most.

4. Reflection & Discussion (15-20 mins)

- ☐ Have everyone quietly take 5 minutes to complete the "Self-Evaluation & Action Step" on page 9.
- ☐ Then, going around the group, have each person take a minute to share what stood out to them most about the teaching and why.
- ☐ If time allows, continue the discussion using the remaining self-evaluation questions as a guide.

5. Wrap Up (5 mins)

- ☐ Remind everyone to do the daily affirmation until you meet again next time.
- ☐ Ask for any prayer requests from the group.
- ☐ Close with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).