

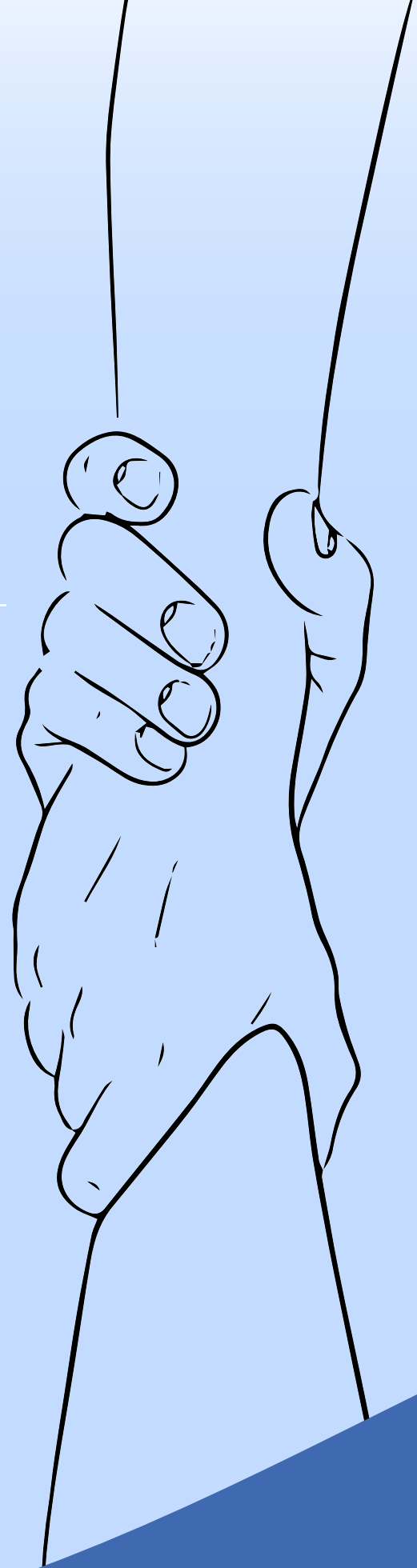
COME. FIND. HOPE.

A Guide To Finding Hope by the Rev. Joe Gibbes

Have you noticed that “Busy” is the new “Fine”?

Twenty years ago, if you casually asked someone, “How are you doing?”, the standard answer was “Fine.” Today, more often than not, the standard answer is “Busy.” Busyness is worn like a badge of honor, and I’m certainly not the first to point this out.

Constant activity from before sunup to well after sundown is the norm, as we have to figure out how to be in three places at once (now virtually possible, thanks to Zoom!), manage all the family schedules, exceed expectations in the workplace, choose all of our words carefully so we don’t get canceled, raise well-rounded and virtuous kids, stay up-to-date on the news without getting sucked into the media vortex, stay in touch with our aging parents, all with a smile, and wouldn’t it be great to get a workout in? Even when we do find a free minute, the siren call of Social Media and all of its inherent social comparisons beckons for our attention.



The result of the frenetic pace is very often a crushing sense of overwhelm. We have more tools for efficient productivity than ever before, but we are busier than ever. We are more connected to more people in more ways than ever before, but we are also more anxious and alone.

The irony is that we naturally try to cure our anxiety and overwhelm by working harder. We typically wear ourselves out to get affirmation that promises satisfaction. The problem is that even when we get the affirmation we seek, it never quite delivers on its promise. The rewards of success are often paired with greater expectations and higher stakes:

- Our kid makes the All-Star team, so now she has to play travel ball.
- We get the promotion we've been working for, so now we're put in charge of a division in crisis.
- We lost the weight, but now we've got to keep it off.

So we do the only thing we know to do – we double down in search of more excellence, more accomplishment and more affirmation, without even really knowing we're doing it. The anxiety and exhaustion get deeper, so we work harder. This is a lot like a truck spinning its wheels, only to get stuck deeper in the mud. Or as the theologian Sinclair Ferguson has written, "Anxiety can never be cured by getting more of what we have already." ¹ That truck in the mud isn't going to get unstuck by stomping on the gas. It's going to need a strength beyond itself, another more powerful truck to come and pull it out.

If you are stuck feeling anxious, overwhelmed, exhausted, or hopeless, you need a strength beyond yourself to pull you out. The Christian message is that there is HOPE for you, a Strength beyond us that has come to pull us out.

¹ Ferguson, Sinclair. *The Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Life in a Fallen World*; Banner of Truth Trust, Carlyle, PA, 1987. p. 146.

At Church of Our Saviour, we talk a lot about “the Gospel.”

“Gospel” is a word that means “Good News.” “Get yourself unstuck from the mud” is not Good News. It might be good advice, even if it is demanding and exhausting; but it is definitely not Good News. Good News would be, “There’s a big truck with a wench that’s come to rescue you, and won’t take a dime for it!” Good News offers a declaration, not a demand.

The declaration of the Christian Gospel is that Jesus Christ has come to love you, forgive you, and reconcile you to God. His love offers rest, not further demand; his forgiveness is free, without price or requirement; his acceptance of you is complete and without qualification. To further the analogy, he did not come for the clean, sparkly, tricked-out trucks with low mileage – they don’t need to be rescued. He came for the trucks like you and me – covered in life’s mud and in need of a tow. Here’s hope – Jesus came for you!

Christ’s gracious love is the affirmation we long for, and receiving it for ourselves is as simple as A...B...C.

A – Admit – Admit we’re exhausted. Admit that we’re spinning our wheels. Admit that people who say “God doesn’t give you more than you can handle” aren’t paying attention. Admit that doubling down and trying to get more of what we already have isn’t going to give us what we’re after. Admit it going to take a strength beyond ourselves to get us to where we know we need to be.

B – Believe – Church of Our Saviour is here to help people, wherever they are on their spiritual journey. We believe down to our toes that Jesus is the answer we're all looking for, that God's word can be trusted, and that the Gospel message is the great hope for our hurting world. But for now, you don't have to have all that settled in your heart and mind. For now, we just want you to believe that there is hope. And if you're too worn down to even believe there's hope, then let us believe it for you at first.

C – Come! – We'd love for you to come to one of the most beautiful and welcoming churches you could ever hope to find. Come sit in the back and soak, or come get as involved as you'd like. Come enjoy the view of the river from under ancient oaks. Come hear the Gospel of God's grace for stuck trucks like you and me. Come meet friends from all stages of life on the same journey as you. Come be refreshed by the merciful Spirit of God.

COME FIND HOPE!

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