



Opening Scripture in Times of Despair

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Scripture is crucial

Psalm 119 reminds us the Bible is:

- A blessing (v1)
- Our authority (v4)
- Something that spurs us to praise (v7)
- A path for godly living (v9) – fuel for change
- Something for us to dwell on and delight in (v16)

Scripture is hard to read during trials

- People are tired
- People struggle to concentrate
- People struggle to believe
- People struggle to obey

Our normal techniques don't quite work

- Preaching (whilst important) can be too hard to grasp – too impersonal
- Bible study (whilst important) can be too hard to get to
- Devotions (whilst important) can be too hard to concentrate on

So how do we open Scripture with those who are in despair?



Principles for opening Scripture in times of despair

- Be faithful
- Be clear
- Be humble
- Be patient
- Be brief (very brief!)

1. Scripture helps people express their pain

- Sometimes people don't have the words to express their despair
- Sometimes people worry they shouldn't express their despair
- But Scripture describes suffering well and it gives a vocabulary for believers to use in their prayers
- It is a privilege to take our suffering to the Lord

Scripture helps people express their pain

Psalm 42

- What suffering is coming at the psalmist?
- What is the psalmist feeling?
- How is the psalmist speaking to the Lord?
- How is that different to the ways you are praying in your hard times?

2. Scripture helps people see God

- Pain skews our view of who God is
- In despair, believers can imagine that God is unkind, inactive or absent
- In Scripture, we find metaphors / pictures that help us see God clearly

Scripture helps people see God

Psalm 23

- .What is a Shepherd like? What does a Shepherd do?
- What is it like to be led by someone you can trust?
- How is that similar / different to how you imagine God to be treating you?
- Our ultimately Good Shepherd is Jesus. What difference would it make if you truly grasped what a Good Shepherd he is?

Scripture helps people know themselves

- In despair, people can often feel worthless, pointless
- That is not how God made us to be
- We are in the image of God
- We are adopted as his children



Scripture helps people know themselves

Ephesians 1:3-14

- How would you describe yourself?
- Who does the Lord say you are?
- Where are the differences between what the Lord says and what you believe?



3. Scripture helps people find role-models

- We don't just need to know what to do – we need to know how!
- Following the stories of Bible characters can be inspiring and illuminating

Scripture helps people find role models

1 Kings 19:1-10

- How is Elijah feeling?
- What did God provide him with first? Is this what you would expect God to do first?
- How would you describe the way the Lord is treating Elijah?
- What, in this story, can help you as you persevere?

4. Scripture gives people hope

- There are promises in Scripture which, because of Jesus, can be ours
- Memorising Bible promises can bring hope in times of despair
- Verses can be like light in the darkness
- People will probably only be able to memorise something short

Scripture gives people hope

1 John 3:1

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

- Say it
- Repeat it
- Text it ... draw it! Put it on each other's phones



Scripture provides daily encouragement

Pick any passage

- What does it say about God?
- What does it say about you?
- What can we pray?



Scripture provides daily encouragement

- People will change
- People will grow

As the Lord does his work in the children he loves

BCUK has a short course: The Bible and Pastoral Care

[Bcuk.org/short-courses](https://bcuk.org/short-courses)