

**VOLUME III: CAMPAIGN**

- 9) *What Must This Campaign Proclaim?*  
10) *Becoming Messengers of Hope*  
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*Postlude*



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# BECOMING VANGUARDS OF HOPE

## How to Re-mobilize the Church Around the Supremacy of God's Son

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During World War II the German V2 rocket got things started. This was followed by the development of the Redstone/Jupiter missile by the United States around 1947. With that, the overture to the Space Age played its opening chords. In the early 50's the National Academy of Science concluded that within five to ten years satellites for geophysical research could become reality. Finally, in September 1955 the U.S. Department of Defense adopted a Navy proposal for a project given the code-name *Vanguard*, intent on launching a U.S. satellite as soon as possible.

As America's pioneer space venture *Vanguard* was the right word. Though plagued at first with serious mechanical deficiencies and frequent delays, the Vanguard Program pressed forward, driven by the reasonable hope that space exploration would open up an era of strategic discoveries, from military to mineral to medical. Vanguard was the USA's commitment to lead the way, not only for America but for the world. Finally, after two launch pad failures, on St. Patrick's Day 1958 the first successfully orbiting U.S. satellite was placed in space. Known as *Vanguard I*, it was

the first wave of some of the greatest advances in the history of global science.

Taken captive to a “solar system” of stunning promises orbiting around the Lord Jesus Christ, *Christians must develop Vanguard-like lifestyles to match.* Living out a hope based on the full extent of Christ’s supremacy, disciples ought to exhibit daily “previews of coming attractions”, foretastes of victories up ahead. The *trajectory* of our existence as believers is nothing short of the Consummation itself. Our destination is an eternity focused on Jesus as Lord. We will be caught up forever in the unending outpouring of His presence and power, reflecting back the glories of His reign in ten thousand different ways.

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#### QUOTABLE QUOTE

**An enterprise which aims at the evangelization of the whole world in a generation, and contemplates the ultimate establishment of the kingdom of Christ, requires that its leaders be Christian statesmen — men with farseeing views, with comprehensive plans, with the power of the intuitive, and with victorious faith.**

(JOHN R. MOTT)

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Into all ages to come we will never, ever stop living for the Son of God or ever cease operating under the sway of His Throne! Such expectations should “radicalize” every dimension of the day-to-day ministries of believers. God has a wonderful plan for the nations to reveal the full extent of Christ’s supremacy in all things, to all peoples, for all time. He loves His children enough to give each one a very significant place in it beginning right now. Every hour the hope of Christ’s supremacy should keep us on the cutting edge of His ever-expanding global cause while we serve Him moment by moment as “*Vanguards of Hope*”.

In every sense Christians live at the forefront of the future. We are part of a much greater plan than most have ever contemplated. To borrow from Brother Lawrence’s masterpiece on discipleship, *Practicing the Presence of God*, we are “practicing the presence” of the *future*. Such a hope in Christ can *empower* the Church’s everyday obedience to Christ with thoughts, words and deeds — a “vanguard lifestyle” — motivated by the anticipation of how God will magnify His Son for generations to come.

This final chapter will clarify the third major cure for the crisis of supremacy — the rest of our strategy for a Campaign of Hope, by:

- **exploring the empowering impact of *anticipatory discipleship*.**
- **applying this approach to a variety of issues in a believer’s daily walk with Christ.**

- describing a “daily discipline” that can transform you into a Vanguard of Hope.
  - demonstrating how hope fixed on Christ puts prayer at the frontlines of His Kingdom advance.
  - linking this third cure to the Campaign of Hope God’s people desperately need to see right now.
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## The Joy of “Anticipatory Discipleship”

(1 John 2:28-3:3, 14)

The Gospel of the Kingdom is more than “good advice”. It is the “good news” of a great hope. However, we need to do more than hear the hope, share the hope and grow the hope. We must remain *victorious* in the hope, learning to walk in the hope. This happens best by practicing what I call “*anticipatory discipleship*”.

The concept of *anticipatory discipleship* was suggested by our Lord, actually, in His original invitation (Mk. 1): “Leave everything. Come follow me” (His call to discipleship) “and I will make you fishers of men” (dramatic changes promised). In other words, obedience to Him *today* could anticipate significant transformations *tomorrow*. Following Him turned disciples into “vanguards” of the Kingdom, moving into a hope they would eventually proclaim to the nations.

### THINK WITH ME ...

#### **In what sense is this approach to discipleship truly *anticipatory* in nature?**

Athletes who trained for the 1984 Olympics were forced to experience something akin to anticipatory discipleship. Because of the American boycott of the 1980 Olympics in Russia (ordered by President Jimmy Carter) American Olympians had to postpone competition for eight full years. Having prepared from 1976 for the Russian Olympics in 1980, they were forced to press on for an additional four years of training to stay in shape for Los Angeles in 1984. What kept most going? One simple answer:

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 QUOTABLE QUOTE

**So let's not sleepwalk through life like those others. Let's keep our eyes open and be smart. Since we're creatures of Day, let's act like it. Walk out into the daylight sober, dressed up in faith, love, and the hope of salvation. Build up hope so that you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind.**

(1 THESSALONIANS 5 — THE MESSAGE)

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*the desire to win along with the confidence they could.* Convinced they could ultimately triumph, day after day for eight long years one hope drove them. Every part of their existence conformed to that vision. Dreams harnessed discipline. Hope dictated radical regimens. Future glories empowered them to stick with sacrifice despite the discouragement of unprecedented delays.

They became “vanguards” of the memorable victories America achieved when 1984 rolled around. You could define their pre-competition experience as “anticipatory *training*”, a perseverance of the highest order. In the end, this outlook paid off as scores of medals trailed them out of the L.A. Coliseum.

Imitating Olympian training, *anticipatory discipleship* shapes every aspect of Christian

obedience. We keep our eyes on the Prize! Anticipatory discipleship *integrates* the promises of God into our walk with His Son. Hope inspires and intensifies our desire to serve Him because we expect Him to prevail. Isn't that what John tells us? He writes that our hope in Christ should cause us to purify ourselves, even as Christ is pure, so that when He appears in glory we will greet Him without shame (1 John 2 and 3). Isn't that what Peter tells us? Describing the renovation of Heaven and earth by fire, he teaches that a vision for the Consummation ought to drive Christians toward purity of life right now, making it their commitment to live in a manner that hastens the coming of the Day of the Lord (2 Pet. 3). Isn't that what the book of Hebrews tells us when it says: “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess ... Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together ... Let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10).

By linking itself to the culmination of Christ's global cause, anticipatory discipleship impacts the most practical sides of service to our Master — which include everything from developing qualities of Christ-likeness, to worshipping God with abandon, to honing hallmarks of holiness, to standing with the poor, to increased missionary outreach — because we know we are moving from “here” to “there”. No steps are “small” steps under

Jesus' lordship. Every step sets the stage for even more of Christ's reign to break through for us, our churches, our communities and our generation.

### THINK WITH ME ...

#### **In what sense is anticipatory discipleship always preparatory in nature?**

The anticipatory approach to Christian discipleship naturally translates into a *lifestyle of preparation*. Grateful as we are for God's current blessings, hope in His Son keeps us preparing for His breakthroughs in new ways. He is the God-of-So-Much-More because He who "did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom. 8).

This is the God who, when it was time to cross Jordan, commanded Joshua to rally the people with this exhortation: "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you" (Joshua 3). Notice the sequence: A transformed lifestyle (consecrate) is motivated today by looking toward promised wonders for tomorrow — not years from now, but sooner: tomorrow! What if this vision were to fashion the agenda for weekly activities within every congregation? How many more groups of believers would become Vanguard of Hope as we followed our Joshua ("Yeshua" = "Jesus")?

We actually see this happening with the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 1-3). In His resurrection glory, Jesus stirred them to exhibit new levels of faithfulness and fruitfulness. He did it not by calling them *back* but by calling them *forward*. If you study the verses listed below, you will see that our Lord appealed to them on the basis of what was *coming*. He focused them, first of all, on the unfolding of His glory in the Consummation. He urged them to anticipate more of God's grace and obey accordingly — to become pacesetters of the promises His supremacy offered them. The life of each congregation could be revolutionized — whether they faced heresy, persecution or spiritual lethargy — as each made the ultimate revelation of Christ's Kingdom the driving ambition for obeying Him

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#### QUOTABLE QUOTE

**If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought more of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth thrown in. Aim at Earth and you will get neither.**

(C.S. LEWIS)

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on the spot! [See Revelation 2:7 (the church in Ephesus); 2:11 (the church in Smyrna); 2:17 (the church in Pergamum); 2:26-29 (the church in Thyatira); 3:5-6 (the church in Sardis); 3:11-13 (the church in Philadelphia); 3:21-22 (the church in Laodicea).]

Should we expect Him to do less with us in forming us into Vanguards of Hope? So, how will my (our) next step of obedience *this* moment open a way for Him to demonstrate His supremacy in the *next* moment? How will it not only glorify Him *now*, but also help me (us) get ready to enter into more of His Kingdom advances *tomorrow*? How will it not only reveal *more* of the His presence and power now, but also point to even greater promises to pursue?

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#### QUOTABLE QUOTE

**The Christian faith has always been characterized by a strong and focused sense of future, with belief in the Second Coming of Jesus as the most distinctive detail.... The practical effect of this belief is to charge each moment of the present with hope. For if the future is dominated by the coming again of Jesus, there is little room left on the screen for projecting our anxieties and fantasies. It takes the clutter out of our lives. We're far more free to respond spontaneously to the freedom of God.... (We are) to continue to live forward in taut and joyful expectancy for what God will do next in Jesus.**

(DR. EUGENE PETERSON)

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#### THINK WITH ME ...

**If you knew Christ was coming tomorrow, what would you do differently today?**

Apparently those are not priority concerns for many in our churches today. Most have probably never asked themselves such questions. Most simply strive to survive. There's little that's *anticipatory* about much that passes for discipleship. Ours is more "*maintenance* discipleship" with efforts to remain respectable church members, fulfilling basic Biblical obligations and maintaining morally respectable uprightness. By comparison, anticipatory discipleship nurtures a passion to prepare for — a readiness to receive — in-breakings of the powers of the Age that's ahead (Heb. 6). Christian disciples aren't saved to sit satisfied in ecclesiastical "dressing rooms" while fixing up for the Great Day coming. God wants so much more for us. He invites us to engage each day as one more "*dress rehearsal*" and "practice" the kind of holiness, and worship, and loving of others that will comprise our Command Performance when He appears.

To vary metaphors, someone has said the music of the future provides the tune to which

Christians are to dance right now. If we believe our Savior will be the theme of an eternal symphony of praise, then the way we live today must show it. We must “sing” and “dance” accordingly!

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **How is “acting as if” a helpful way to grow as Vanguards of Hope?**

Since by the Spirit the reigning Lord Jesus dwells among His people right now, it’s worth asking: Should not disciples “act as if” the End-of-the-World had already come? Named by Paul as “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1), He is as fully Lord today as He will be on That Day. As Son of God, He embodies at this moment all the glory of the Father He will ever have. In a very real sense the End is here, in Him — and *we* are in Him. What does that tell you?

Surely it is not far-fetched to encourage Christians to live-out each day ...

- *acting as if* Christ had raised us from the dead to reign with Him.
- *acting as if* Christ were magnifying Himself before the peoples of earth.
- *acting as if* Christ were destroying every form of Satanic rebellion against His name.
- *acting as if* Christ were receiving homage from inhabitants of Heaven and earth.

Because ... guess what? The New Testament teaches that *in principle* all of these dynamics are truly a part of our daily walk with God’s Son in tangible though preliminary ways. (Consider these texts for starters: 2 Cor. 4, Rom. 6, Eph. 1-2, Col. 3, Heb. 12, 1 Pet. 1, Rev. 2-3).

Today the Savior is defeating powers of Darkness. Today He is retrieving churches from deadly lethargy. Today He is rending the heavens in thousands of communities to display redeeming glory in unexpected ways, even with signs and wonders. Today He is advancing His reputation among unreached peoples who until now never knew of His name. Today He is the central theme of worship, devotion, prayer and sacrifice for millions worldwide from a myriad of tribes and tongues. Therefore, we need to “act as if” the Consummation is upon us ... *because in Christ it is*.

We were meant to act as if we had almost reached the Climax; to act as if we were about to physically enter the Throne Room of Revelation 4-5 at any

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 QUOTABLE QUOTE
 

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**The night is about over. Dawn is about to break. Be up and awake to what God is doing! We can't afford to waste a minute, must not squander these precious daylight hours in frivolity and indulgence. Get out of bed and get dressed! Don't loiter and linger, waiting until the very last minute. Dress yourselves in Christ, and be up and about!**

(ROMANS 13 — THE MESSAGE)

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moment. We should shape every response to Christ right now with that unavoidable hope clearly in view, because, in principle, we've already begun to taste the Final Triumphs in Christ. Forming the footstool of His throne (Ps. 110), Christians are commanded to reckon themselves alive with Jesus from the dead, seated with Him in heavenly places this day, co-laboring with Him in His reign, and wrapped up with Him in His ascended glory (Rom. 6, Col. 3 and Eph. 2). This is no "virtual reality" from some Hollywood movie studio. Christians are born again to be vanguards of an Eternal Kingdom already among us — to be precursors of a future in which we already have a stake.

This might also be called the "*principle of compatibility*". Any thoughts, words or deeds I know for sure would not be compatible with life

in Jesus' presence at the full unveiling of His Kingdom must be challenged aggressively even now. Any current activities or attitudes that do not submit to the rule of Christ in a way that's compatible with how all creation (including me) will one day submit to Him, must be confessed, put under His blood and put out of my life. Put another way: When Christ comes in glory, do I want my daily living for Him to be *vindicated* and not *repudiated*?

In Colossians 3 when Paul urges those whose "life is hidden with Christ in God" to "dress up" in new creation clothes, he is calling for compatibility. There he exhorts Christians to eliminate all rage, slander, unforgiveness, greed, superstitions of all kinds, divisiveness and spiritual apathy. These things have no place in a people who have been "raised with Christ" and should therefore "set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" (vs. 1-2). Anticipating the End, we should live *like* the End ... *until* the End. Believers choosing this path may expect substantial installments *of* the End's breaking in today by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Anticipatory discipleship could be compared to a woman's experience of pregnancy! A mother-to-be is easily motivated to take on whatever disciplines, diets, schedules, exercises and precautions would help ensure delivery of a healthy child. She fully cooperates with her doctors; she rarely complains. As each day brings her closer to the due date (the hope for which

she endures), she takes additional steps to be ready for the marvelous event. This might even include the designing, months ahead of time, of a nursery in the spare bedroom where the little one will sleep.

Even so, Jesus' followers are "pregnant" with promises as big as the Kingdom of our Savior. In a very real sense the same Holy Spirit who worked the miracle of conception in Mary's womb, "overshadows" God's people to conceive in them and birth through them ministries for Christ that are "holy" (Lk. 1). Like a mother-to-be with her doctor, every "serious disciple" seeks to give our Lord full cooperation as He brings forth the advance of His Kingdom. Keeping ourselves in readiness, we assume daily disciplines that look toward every new way He intends to display His dominion.

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **How could just four questions revitalize your walk with Jesus?**

Farmers plowing a field, I'm told, try to keep their eyes fixed on some distant point, such as a tree at the edge of the property, to help them maintain straight furrows. If they look only down where the blade meets the soil, they will inevitably plow crooked rows. In the same way, the following four questions have helped me "plow" a much straighter line toward God's purposes. Each consists of two words which make them easy to recall: *What goes? What stays? What's new? What's next?* Let's look briefly at how they work.

#### **1. WHAT GOES? In other words ...**

What things in my lifestyle, even now, are simply *incompatible* with the hope in Christ I profess? Incompatible with His Kingdom purposes? Incompatible with the focus, fulfillment, fullness and fervency of His supremacy? Incompatible with God's promises and with all I believe He is able, willing and ready to do to glorify His Son more fully in me? What steps must I take to remove these contradictions?

#### **2. WHAT STAYS? In other words ...**

What is going on in my life today that *is* clearly compatible with the unfolding of God's purposes in Christ, so much so that I must embrace those areas and then develop them more fully? How can I go about making my Christian walk more intentionally focused on revealing Christ's glory through me as His follower — for example: my devotional life, my witness to neighbors, my marriage, my worship on Sunday, my investments in world missions?

### 3. WHAT'S NEW? In other words ...

What new initiatives do I sense God is asking me to assume today in order to prepare for additional blessings and victories tomorrow? How can I pursue Christ and His supremacy in a manner that will enhance my involvement in His Kingdom as it unfolds in greater ways right where I live? What areas of obedience do I need to strengthen to shape a discipleship experience more in line with God's promises and purposes in Christ Jesus? How can I become more receptive to all that Christ wants to be for me, to accomplish in me and to share through me?

### 4. WHAT'S NEXT? In other words ...

Based on answers to the first three questions, what should be my very next move? What one step of obedience must be taken *today* in anticipation of God's purposes in Christ *tomorrow*? Far more importantly: What do I expect to be *God's* very next move with me? What immediate adjustments in my lifestyle should I make at this very moment so that I'm ready to respond as He acts?

I realize these four questions are stated in very personal terms. But don't forget, they provide categories that also must be addressed *corporately* — by the leadership of a local congregation, for example.

## VANGUARDS: Mobilized by the Scope of Their Hope to Live Every Day for Christ

*(Romans 4:16-24)*

Around Southern California huge man-made arroyos were built to drain torrents of rainwater from nearby mountains into appropriate reservoirs for safe keeping. In the rainy seasons these mammoth ditches mercifully prevent houses in the valleys from being washed away by the runoff. Arroyos may sit bone dry for ten months a year, like gaping gutters — seemingly of no use to anyone and taking up precious space. Yet once the spring downpours begin, the construction of the arroyos is fully justified as they swell with life-threatening currents.

Similarly, Vanguard of Hope serve as “spiritual arroyos”. Their obedience to God’s Word prepares them to receive the fresh revelations of Christ’s presence and power for the blessing and redeeming of others. To be sure, like empty arroyos at times we may experience spiritual dry spells. In those difficult seasons especially we must faithfully hold our ground, willing and wanting and waiting in hope for God’s promises to unfold for us, confident that Jesus reigns. In His perfect timing, like spring rains, fresh outpourings of the Spirit will arrive (Isa. 44), bringing a fuller reality of Christ’s supremacy to our lives and churches and communities in marvelous ways.

We need to live as if we believed that! So, let’s get down to specifics on “anticipatory discipleship”.

### THINK WITH ME ...

#### **How can hope in Christ empower your worship of God?**

We worship more accurately and more passionately when we do so in hope in Christ. Not only should we praise Him for who He is or what He has done, but we also must celebrate what He’s getting ready to do. We need to rejoice ahead of time over displays of Christ’s dominion we know are promised. After all, He is not only the God who is and was, but also the God who is to come (Rev. 1). *Our worship should say so!*

Properly understood, worship is designed not only to be Christ-focused but also *Heaven-focused*. Our worship can prepare us for, and even approximate, the worship we expect to experience in His presence for the rest of eternity. We’re called to be a vanguard of the kind of worship into which the entire universe has been invited!

Furthermore, hope-filled worship transforms every other aspect of discipleship. Take, for example, the Church’s missionary outreach. Worship

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### QUOTABLE QUOTE

**WORSHIP must recount divine action of the past in ways that anticipate divine action in the future. Whatever style of ownership you employ you should ask: “Does this worship recount the history of God’s gracious saving action in this world and proclaim that our hope both now and forevermore is to be found in Jesus Christ alone?” The great danger is to settle for petition, thanksgiving and proclamation that is almost completely focused upon the present moment and our present feelings. For us to live in the riches of full biblical worship, our prayer, praise and proclamation should be carried out as if we stand before a cosmic timeline of God’s actions, fully aware of divine faithfulness from the creation of the world to its full restoration in Christ.**

(DR. JOHN ARMSTRONG)

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among the nations is actually a “preview of coming attractions”, of an Hour not long from now when people from every tongue, tribe and peoples will shout their redemption before Him who sits on the throne and before the Lamb (Rev. 5). True worship, therefore, must stir up in us greater determination to extend His praises right now among friends or neighbors or unreached peoples. All evangelism is ultimately about expanding eternal adoration for God’s Son into the midst of those who do not know Him ... yet. Dick Eastman puts it well: “Missionaries are filling Heaven with worshippers of Jesus”.

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **How can hope in Christ reinvigorate your approach to scripture?**

We simply must learn to study and teach the Bible differently, by highlighting its themes of supremacy and hope. We must uncover in God’s Word everything we can about the four dimensions of Christ’s supremacy: who He is as the Son of God; where He leads in the Purposes of God; how He imparts the Resources of God; and what He receives from the People of God.

As noted in chapter 10, God cannot lead us on the basis of facts we do not have. As we bring a Biblical vision of Jesus’ greatness and glory to fellow Christians, they will discover a hope they may never have considered previously. Immediately the Spirit will have new possibilities to work with — facts in their hearts by which He can take them further with Christ than ever before. He will begin filling them with a holy anticipation that inspires hope-filled obedience to Christ. There are many effective ways to unlock the truth of Scripture along these lines. As you already know, chapter 10 suggests a variety of approaches from which to choose. (Also, see *Appendixes V and VII*)

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **How can hope in Christ reshape your financial strategies?**

Anticipatory discipleship empowers us to reevaluate the extent of our financial obligations. We ask: How do my giving patterns — to my church, to ministries, to missions, to the poor — reflect the supremacy of Christ? How do they mirror the values that will count with Him when the Consummation rolls around?

We’re often told that Christian giving should be “*proportionate giving*”. Proportionate to what? To our excess reserves? To our credit debt load? To

our social status? To our sense of obligation to church and society? To the pressing demands of the neediest people or ministries around us? To the snappiest fund appeal letters in the afternoon mail?

What if I measured my giving in proportion to major themes of Christ's lordship, instead? What if I asked myself:

- How does this particular expenditure or investment I'm about to make reflect to others my confident hope in the supremacy of Christ over all of my life?
- In what ways does my philosophy of consumption tie into what I expect to be doing with Jesus 10,000 years from now?
- What financial choices made today might free up funds to help promote greater "approximations of the Consummation" where I live? For example: By serving the homeless? By comforting the sick? By lobbying for social change like prison reforms? By educating teens on sexual abstinence? By providing care for the elderly?
- What material sacrifices should I be willing to make in order to help proclaim Christ's redemptive reign among peoples currently beyond the reach of the Gospel?
- What specific Biblical promises focused on God's Son should guide the consumption choices and material purchases I intend to make today?
- How might some form of renouncing or redirecting earthly treasures help me more effectively see, seek and speak about the supremacy of God's Son?

In the end, "simplicity" of Christian lifestyle rises best out of a discipleship full of anticipation, caught up with a view of the eternal Kingdom, taken up preeminently (thus, *simply*) on advancing current and future displays of

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#### QUOTABLE QUOTE

**Tell those who are rich in this present world not to be contemptuous of others, not to rest the weight of their confidence on the transitory power of wealth, but on the living God who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment. Tell them to do good, to be rich in kindly actions, to be ready to give to others and to sympathize with those in distress. Their security should be invested in the life to come, so that they may be sure of holding a share in the life which is permanent.**

(1 TIMOTHY 6 — PHILLIPS TRANSLATION)

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Christ's dominion. It is a way of ordering priorities and possessions so that we remain unencumbered. It allows us to stay flexible enough to respond adequately to all the new directions God may take us. It keeps us mobile the way any "vanguard" needs to be.

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **How can hope in Christ reinforce your efforts at evangelism?**

In terms of outreach, evangelism is about delivering a Message of Hope to unbelievers so they can be reconciled to God and begin to follow Jesus as the everlasting Hope of Glory. Gospel promises address the deepest longings in the heart of every sinner. Biblical hope brings lost people to the One who consummates those longings in Himself (Isa. 61).

At the same time, a vision for Christ's supremacy has significant impact on the *evangelizers*, too. It provides us the confidence we need to reach out to the lost. It instills faith for increased breakthroughs of the Holy Spirit. It fosters a liberty to take risks because we know the Son of God will back us and multiply our efforts. It stabilizes our resolve to move forward in outreach, even in the face of opposition, because we are assured of the ultimate victories. ("We will reap if we faint not", says Gal. 6.)

Caught up in an expanding hope in Christ, believers find themselves empowered to present God's promises to unbelievers in a much more convincing way. Furthermore, as Peter says, Christians can live in such a manner that even before we open our mouths to share the Gospel, people see in our words and deeds an incomparable confidence about the hope of eternal life that can only be explained by the sovereignty of the Savior. They sense our passion for the Kingdom. Therefore, Peter says, *they* end up demanding from us reasons for our hope (1 Pet. 3).

This is why Christians should learn to be witnesses by ministering the word of Christ *inside* the Church. That's one of the best ways to get equipped for sharing and defending the news of His saving supremacy to people *outside* the Church.

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **How can hope in Christ lead to acts of reconciliation?**

If we expect wholesale peace to reign at the End, should we not strive for a measure of it among ourselves even now? A vision for the *future* that shapes relationships in the present is what Martin Luther King appealed for

in his famous “I Have a Dream” message at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963. He was on to something. And the nation knew it.

As Christians we may not see eye to eye on many issues, but we can all turn and face the same direction. Since we hold to the same hope and are called to the same destiny, this vision should shape how we welcome one another as well as how we work for Christ with one another.

Anticipatory discipleship always drives us toward reconciliation, including racial and denominational. That’s because we’ve already begun to live in anticipation of a Day of unqualified unity that will those gathered around the Lamb on the Throne. The uniqueness of Jesus — the finality of His sovereignty — provides us common ground found no other place. Since He is the foundation on which lasting harmony will be built, His supremacy — as we enter into who *He* is, where *He* is headed, what *He* is doing and how *He* is blessed — creates the perfect platform on which believers can stand side by side in Kingdom work now. We should come together in coalitions — across racial, cultural, traditional, social boundaries — to labor for Kingdom agenda. We should strive to reflect in significant measure how we soon will be joined universally to serve Jesus at His return in glory. Doing so can help us fulfill our role as Vanguard of Hope. We can pioneer the “shalom” of the future, so to speak. Not only will we draw people into a foretaste of the promised reconciliation of Heaven and earth under God’s Son but also, in a very real sense, we will be inviting that future right into the present.

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **How can hope in Christ foster courageous decisions about congregational activities?**

In Luke 14 Jesus taught that even an ordinary potluck supper at church must be measured by its relationship to His final reign in glory. Listen: “When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (vs. 13-14). In equal fashion, the Day of Resurrection should challenge churches to re-adjust schedules, re-shape programs and re-organize activities in a way that focuses its members more directly on Christ’s consummate victory.

For example, when elders meet to handle church-related business (to review priorities and procedures and programs), a prime agenda might be: How can we prepare our people to become more strategically involved in

Christ's advancing Kingdom? Why not measure activities in your congregation by how well they help God's people pursue and experience "approximations of the Consummation" through their worship, or youth programs, or shut-in visitation, or capital campaigns, or prayer meetings, or community outreach?

Let me illustrate. One church on the West Coast begins every staff meeting by placing an empty chair in the middle of the room. They call it the "Jesus chair". (I'd probably call it the "King Jesus chair"!) As they begin in prayer, the staff declares to the Father that as far as they are concerned, His Son occupies that chair for the rest of the meeting. His throne is in their midst. From that point on, in all deliberations they refuse to lose sight of the chair and of the presence of the Lord who is in it. They see Christ as the One for whom the meeting is taking place, the One who is guiding all decisions, the One for whom decisions are made and the One prepared to lead their church where they have never gone before (and never would, if left to themselves).

Or, take another issue: How should we view Sundays? In New Testament times saints gathered on the first day of the week, resting and rejoicing in Christ's finished work in order to go forth the next six days to invest in Kingdom purposes. The fact is, the phrase for the Christian day of rest — "the Lord's Day" — hearkened back to Old Testament prophets who talked a lot about *the* Day of the Lord. It was one of the seers' favorite descriptions for the Consummation. For Christians, every weekly gathering was intended to be an opportunity to taste of, and prepare for, the coming Final Celebration. Sunday pointed them like a laser to the final *Son's-Day*, the culmination of all things when Heaven and earth would resound forever with praise for Him. Then it summoned them to live accordingly this day.

How could a local church develop activities on Sunday (the Lord's Day) to enhance everyone's commitment to, and training for, service as Vanguards of Christ's Kingdom purposes? How might holy hope, shaped by Jesus' reign, be re-ignited for them each Lord's Day? What would happen if members left your sanctuary fired up, eager to walk into the next six days looking for increased displays of Christ's dominion around them? What if, as a result, people returned the next Sunday full of reports on where they had witnessed revelations of Christ's supremacy — in their lives as well as the lives of others?

**THINK WITH ME ...****How can hope in Christ undergird your daily battle with sin?**

All sin (envy, anger, lust, greed, gluttony, to name just a few) detours believers from fully engaging Christ for all that He is. But hope in Christ supplies an effective antidote to the deceitfulness of sin. It defies sin by making much of God's promises to contrast with sin's enticements. Hope motivates us for holy living by reminding us of our ultimate destiny when Jesus will fully reveal Himself to be our all in all, leaving sin powerless to counteract. The promise of tasting now as well as later the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6) should fortify each of us to flee ungodliness and "lay hold of eternal life" (1 Tim. 6). We may need to "crucify the flesh". But we know that by "sowing to the Spirit" Christians will reap eternal life with all its fruits (Gal. 5 and 6).

In one sense, anticipatory discipleship encourages a form of *voluntary abstinence*, a phrase frequently used today to describe a young person's commitment to sexual purity. On a far more profound level, Christians are called to *abstain* from all counterfeit hopes offered them by the world, the flesh and the devil (1 Jn. 2). We are to renounce shallow substitutes for the promises of God. Backing off temporary gratifications, we are to allow God to fulfill our lives by His ways, in His timing and out of His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4).

Of course, if we're responding to Kingdom promises, the battle with sin forces us to tackle evils of other kinds such as social injustices, poverty, corporate greed, religious scandal, moral relativism, political oppression or domestic terrorism. Proclaiming hope in Christ to the poor, for example, must be coupled with efforts to overcome poverty at its systemic roots. Christ's battle-call includes a healthy combination of both telling and showing the full extent of His supremacy.

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**QUOTABLE QUOTE**

**New Testament  
Christianity is essentially  
two-worldly: not other-  
worldly in the sense of  
lacking interest in this  
world, but seeing life here  
as travel to, and prepara-  
tion for, and indeed a  
foretaste of, a life  
hereafter in which all  
without exception will  
reap what they sowed  
here in terms of their  
attitude and decision  
God-ward.**

(J.I. PACKER)

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 QUOTABLE QUOTE

**The last word will be resurrection and new creation. Satan just pretends he is the ruler of this world. It belongs to the crucified and risen Servant who will reign forever and ever. Because of this, I know where history is going. The final word is not injustice, oppression or a dead planet. The Almighty One who raised my Lord Jesus will have the last word. That is what keeps me going. I have, by God's grace, allowed Jesus' resurrection to shape the way I live. It certainly has shaped the way I hope ... disciples of the Resurrected One labor now, even in the worst of times, knowing that finally their efforts will not be in vain.**

(DR. RON SIDER)

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**THINK WITH ME ...**
**How can hope in Christ re-ignite your zeal for world outreach?**

A forward-looking obedience to Christ will always produce sacrificial service for advancing the Great Commission. Christians understand that the missionary task impinges on fuller demonstrations of Christ's lordship among the nations by the spread of the Gospel. We acknowledge, as well, that the task must be completed to usher in the fullest revelation of His consummate glory at His triumphant return (Matthew 24:14, 30-31). Since we endorse the chorus sung by the Church Universal in Heaven (Rev. 5), should not the highest priority of the Church Militant be the planting of congregations among every people group on Planet Earth? Shouldn't we resolve to bring the Gospel especially to those currently beyond its reach?

For generations missionary statesmen have urged the Church consistently to pursue their goal by this appeal: "*Finish the task, in order to bring back the King!*" This motto has challenged thousands to become Vanguards of Hope by embracing the missionary enterprise as the straightest road to travel in order to reach the Day when our Supreme Commander returns to put everything under His feet (Ps. 110).

I wonder how many local churches in America today have set priorities on the basis of how congregational life will ultimately connect with unreached peoples — and, how the church's efforts will further the spreading of Christ and His reign among the poor — and, how their activities may help bring our generation closer to the Grand Finale among the nations? Should not hope about the culmination of Christ's global cause shape how a church defines success? Would not effectiveness be measured best by how many people a congregation *sends* rather than by how many people it seats?

**THINK WITH ME ...****How can hope in Christ inspire the way we love one another?**

Worship, Scripture, possessions, evangelism, reconciliation, church activities, righteous living, world outreach — all of these find new meaning in the context of anticipatory discipleship. Preeminently, however, hope expresses itself best in how we *love* one another. Hope in Christ and His supremacy will cause Christians to explore Christ's love in fuller dimensions.

“Vanguard love” might show itself uniquely as:

- A constant longing for other people to discover with us all the hope we were meant to have, in order that together we might enjoy every purpose God has for us in Christ.
- A willingness to do whatever it takes as Messengers of Hope to help God's promises come alive for others.
- An investing in others by using the gifts God has built into our lives in order to help others discover and hone their own gifts, to fulfill their destiny in Christ.
- The effort to view all people not only for who they are today but also for who the Father intends them to become for eternity — and then to serve them with that grander perspective.
- A commitment to settle for nothing less than God's best in Christ for others, no matter what price God may ask of us to bring it to pass.

Maybe the most telling demonstration of a “vanguard love” is this: Responding to you here and now in a manner reflective of how I would expect to show you my love *if we were both suddenly standing together in glory, in the Final Hour, in full view of the Savior on His throne*. One day that is precisely what will happen to both of us! Should I not determine, therefore, how God would expect me to love you *there* (in That Day) and then strive to show you no less of a love *now* (even though I fall short of that goal many times)?

Among other things, I've found that this perspective provides whole new incentives for seeking and giving forgiveness. After all, do I really expect to hold grudges toward brothers and sisters in Christ in that Glorious Appearing when we all behold our glorious Lord? Will I be able to close my heart to them once we all surround Him in His everlasting triumphs? If not

in that moment, then how can I justify holding unresolved grudges toward any of them in this moment?

True, Paul concludes three godly qualities will remain with us forever: faith, hope and love. He also says the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13). But let's not forget that *love* is the outworking of *faith* (Gal. 5) which is, in turn, the evidence of things *hoped* for (Heb. 11). To follow New Testament logic, therefore, the *starting point* for love must be hope — hope which incites a daily faith in Jesus and His purposes that leads me to want to love anyone the way Jesus does, as well as the way He always will. After it has had its full impact, hope “morphs” into love.

Bottom line: Wherever the Spirit of Christ abides, you will find hearts passionate for others, along with a desire for God's promises to unfold for others, and a sensitivity to help others discover a fuller vision of God's Son for all He is. Hope-filled disciples are uniquely empowered to reach out, to forgive, to serve, to bless — and to stick with their efforts with the knowledge such labors never will be in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15). Vanguard of Hope spread a “preview” of the love that will someday fill the entire universe!

## Vanguards of Hope: Blast Off with the “20-Minute Ticker”!

(*Matthew 5:3-12; 7:21-25*)

Sleep is a condition in which the real seems unreal and the unreal real. The Bible summons us to put off garments of sleep, to be armed instead for the coming Day. We're to wake up, to live every aspect of discipleship in the light of Christ's coming. We're to put on Christ as we walk in the broad daylight of His victories — past, present, future (Rom. 13). So how might Vanguard of Hope fire up more aggressive involvement in the sunrise of Christ's global cause? What are some *personal* applications of anticipatory discipleship that can get a vanguard off the launch pad, sooner rather than later?

Consider the possibilities offered by the following daily discipline. It's arbitrary, I know. But for the moment, view it as training wheels for a child's bike. Learning to ride requires the devices for a time to keep

one's balance. So the first thing Dad does is bolt the wheels onto the bike. Before long such crutches are no longer necessary. The youngster achieves enough skill to stay upright entirely on his/her own. And the training wheels can go into storage until the next child is ready to learn.

The same applies regarding the ***Twenty Minute Ticker*** I'm about to give you. This discipline has proven to be quite useful for Vanguard of Hope eager to blast into new orbits in following the Lord Jesus. Often all they needed was a way to get their balance. The *Twenty Minute Ticker* did this for them. Here's how it works:

#### **6 – Build ...**

For *six minutes a day*, using Scripture primarily, build your own vision of hope — your personal outlook on the supremacy of God's Son. Review some of the thousands of texts that look at our God-given hope. (See *Appendix V* for suggestions.) Consider how each one ultimately exalts Christ, amplifying some aspect of who He is as God's Son; or where He's headed in God's purposes; or how He imparts God's resources; or what He receives from God's people. At the same time, don't hesitate to make use of supplementary literature (such as this book) to help open your eyes and reform your Christology! (You might read portions of key books listed in *Appendix III*, too.)

#### **5 – Pray ...**

For *five minutes a day* pray hope-filled prayers of your own making. Ask God to unleash His promises in greater ways for you and for others, both now and in ages to come. Pray particularly about some of the perspectives you uncovered in the previous six minutes of reading God's Word and/or other Christ-exalting literature. (Feel free to draw on insights for prayer explored toward the end of this chapter.)

#### **4 – Strategize ...**

For *four minutes a day* reflect on how you might combine your hope in Christ more fully with one particular area in your walk with Christ. In other words, *apply* what you discovered the first six minutes, and prayed about the next five minutes, to some practical dimension of discipleship. Be as specific as you can. Then go out to make it happen the rest of the day.

For example, you might ask: What adjustment in the use of my finances is needed to prepare the way for the Father to reveal more of

His Son in me? Or, how do I need to love my spouse better to encourage him or her to enter more fully into the promises of God? Or, how might my growing vision of Christ's supremacy impact this day how I answer one or more of the decisive questions explored earlier? ("What goes? What stays? What's new? What's next?")

### **3 – Proclaim ...**

For *three minutes a day* share with another Christian the hope in Christ you've uncovered that day as you studied it, prayed over it, and incorporated it into your walk with Him. Become a Messenger of Hope to someone during the course of the day. You could be a messenger by writing a Christian friend a brief note; or phoning someone to give a short report on what God is teaching you; or by striking up a quick conversation with a friend at church or on the job. For many there's the option of sharing a growing hope with one's family around the evening meal. The point is this: Let the supremacy of Christ increasingly become an issue in your interaction with other believers.

### **2 – Listen ...**

For *two minutes a day* sit quietly at the feet of your Lord Jesus. (This might work best at the close of the day.) In absolute silence, based on all that has happened in you throughout the earlier eighteen minutes of your *Ticker*, let your King speak into your heart by His Spirit deeper insights into who He is as the Hope of Glory. Keep this question in mind: "What more has the Father revealed in my life *this* day of the glory of His Son and the work of His Kingdom?"

This might be a good time to start a *diary*. Take one of your two minutes of silence to write down in a couple of sentences a thought that best summarizes God's work in you that day. Record how you've grown as a Prisoner of Hope. Document whatever sense of promise is bubbling up in you about some facet of your life in Christ. Summarize what more of Christ you have discovered today that wasn't there yesterday?

After a month of doing this, review your diary. Look for common patterns or themes. Identify how you have grown in various aspects of anticipatory discipleship. At the same time, rejoice over how the Holy Spirit is transforming your vision of God's Son and increasingly delivering you from the crisis of supremacy.

*Twenty minutes a day.* That's just ten hours a month. But notice, *in the end it adds up to a 120 hours a year!* Ask yourself: All other things being equal, between now and a year from now, if I were to add to my life 120 hours of growth as a Vanguard of Hope, what kinds of delightful changes might I expect in my vision of Jesus, my hope toward Him and my service to Him?

## Vanguard Praying: Shaped by Hope in Christ's Supremacy

*(Ephesians 3:14-21; 4:1-6)*

Dag Hammarskjöld, former Secretary General of the United Nations, was a strong follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. He defined prayer's agenda one time by simply stating: "For what has been, pray *thanks!* For what shall be, pray *yes!*"

Let's call this *anticipatory* praying. Taken up with Christ's supremacy, our prayers should be marked not only by spontaneous thanksgivings for previous Kingdom blessings but also by strong affirmations for promised Kingdom advances. Every hope-filled prayer meeting should ring with the "Yes!" of God's people.

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **Why is a church's prayer life a barometer of its hope in Christ?**

Prayerfulness and hopefulness are inseparably linked. First, God gives us a vision for the future that is so wonderful we conclude we cannot live without it. But then He helps us realize that it is so wonderful we cannot personally produce it. Can't live without it, can't produce it? That's when our primary option becomes to seek it — to pray for it.

To say it another way: The joy of the blessings He promises convinces us we never want to *go back* to wherever we were before Christ opened this vision to us. But the magnitude of the blessings He promises also convinces us we never can *go forward* into their fulfillment by our own strength, apart from Christ. We have no other option but to *go down* onto our knees before

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 QUOTABLE QUOTE
 

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**Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it.**

(1 PETER 4 — THE MESSAGE)

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the Throne. We are compelled to ask the Father to accomplish for us the hope we long for and the promises we are so helpless to produce by ourselves.

That's what makes prayer such a dependable barometer of what's happening with hope inside any congregation. An *absence of prayer* in church priorities — corporate prayer and prayer as a way of life — should ring an alarm. The pall of hopelessness may be hanging over us more than we thought. Previous disappointments, for

example — what seemed to us like God's failures to be faithful to us regarding some of His promises — may have taken more of a toll than we suspected. Fears of defeat fasten onto a people clutched by the crisis of supremacy.

The good news is that we don't have to remain stuck in these waterless pits. If I've learned anything over the past 30 years of working with prayer leaders and prayer movements all over the world, it is this:

The single most important ingredient  
for igniting and sustaining a united work of prayer  
is simply to clarify for everyone, at every opportunity,  
the hope that Christ's supremacy calls us to pray toward.

That's why Messengers of Hope inside a congregation will usually double as *mobilizers of prayer* without hardly trying. Prayer becomes the necessary response of anyone who seriously heeds a message of the hope the supremacy of Christ is for us.

**THINK WITH ME ...**

**In what sense is prayer always at the vanguard of God's purposes in Christ?**

Prayer is more than a scheduled *interlude* in Christianly activities (though in many churches that's what it has become). Prayer is the *prelude* to a fresh work of God. As we call on Him to come and do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, prayer makes room for Jesus to take center stage. When we use phrases like "in Jesus' Name", "for Jesus' sake", or "for Christ's glory alone" in our prayers, we signal our desire for God to unleash His promises in a

way that opens wide the door for more of Christ and His supremacy. When we pray “Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”, we lobby the Throne of the universe to give fullest expression to every facet of Christ’s lordship. We appeal to the Father to stamp the very nature and character of His Son on everything that matters to us — to mark with His Kingdom concerns all of our personal concerns.

Throughout history, concerted prayer movements have provided launching pads for major advances of Christ’s Kingdom. This was certainly true with four major religious awakenings in our nation the past two centuries. As God’s people *kept* praying, each awakening overflowed into revitalized churches and denominations, significant social reforms, widespread evangelistic in-gatherings, and the creation of scores of new mission sending societies. Today the scope and urgency of prayers going up from literally millions of saints in many nations is committed to a similar awakening to the glory of God’s Son. The historical pattern should forewarn us: Get ready! Extraordinary new displays of Christ’s dominion are on their way!

In fact, it would be correct to describe prayer as one of the most hopeful *signs* God gives His people. Nothing in our natural selves (the flesh) wants to seek God at all. Left to ourselves our wayward hearts want to run from Him. Whenever Christians intensify their praying, therefore, you know that *God* is up to something. Only He can create soul-hunger for more of Christ in our hearts, and He never moves His people to pray in vain. He fully intends to answer them. Every prayer meeting in every local church is the vanguard of coming advances of Christ’s Kingdom. None of His praying saints will be disappointed.

During the “First Great Awakening” Jonathan Edwards exhorted his readers in his 1747 volume on “concerts of prayer”: “For undoubtedly, that which God abundantly makes the subject of His *promises*, God’s people should abundantly make the subject of their *prayers*. It also affords them the strongest assurances that their prayers shall be *successful*” (italics his).

To better understand the unique outlook that supremacy and hope give to prayer, let’s explore briefly the **four dimensions** of prayer, **six responses** of prayer and **three answers** to prayer which encourage Vanguards of Hope in their life of prayer under the lordship of Jesus. (*Appendix VII* puts the dimensions and responses in the form of a tool to help you grow your experience of “anticipatory prayer”.)

**THINK WITH ME ...****Are you incorporating the *four dimensions* of vanguard praying?**

Hope-filled prayer draws on the **four major dimensions** of Christ's supremacy as a summary of all God's promises to us:

- **Focus**
- **Fulfillment**
- **Fullness**
- **Fervency**

Recall what we learned about each in chapter 1:

Who Christ is as the Son of God

makes up the FOCUS of His supremacy.

Where Christ leads us in the Purposes of God

speaks of the FULFILLMENT of His supremacy.

How Christ imparts the Resources of God

comprises the FULLNESS of His supremacy.

What Christ receives from the People of God

defines the FERVENCY of His supremacy.

When Vanguards of Hope pray, they lay hold onto four concerns to shape their praises and prayers before the Throne. Put simply:

- Many of God's promises encourage us to seek Him for a fresh ***focus*** on Christ Himself, that we might know Him better for *ALL* that He is. Our prayers must seize on this grand prospect, asking the Father to reveal more of His Son's glory to us, in a whole variety of ways, as well as to our churches and the nations.
- Other passages reassure us that God intends to grant greater ***fulfillments*** of Christ's mission — in evangelism, justice, healing, church planting, feeding the hungry, etc. Our Father encourages us to intercede for powerful in-breakings that can advance Christ's redeeming work. We're even told to pray for the Consummation itself. Anticipatory praying asks the Father to carry us on into the completion of His ultimate Kingdom purposes in His Son.
- A host of other promises invite us to pray for fresh experiences of Christ's ***fullness*** in our lives and in our churches as He lives out His

reign among us. Our prayers should ask the Father to pour out on us everything for growing in the life of His Son — including Christ’s gifts for ministry (1 Cor. 12), the fruit of His Spirit (Gal. 5), His wisdom and counsel (Eph. 1) and His empowerment for outreach (Acts 1).

- Other texts compel intercession for renewed **fergency**. We ask the Father to ignite within us deeper devotion for His Son, to strengthen us by His Spirit to live for Jesus, and to impact others through all the gifts and resources He has given us. Not only do we pray for the Lord of Glory to bless us (fullness), but also for us to be a blessing to Him and for His Kingdom, none of which is possible apart from the grace of God working through us in resurrection power.

Every Biblically-based prayer a Christian expresses must incorporate one or more of these primary dimensions of Christ’s supremacy. In similar fashion, we may expect every answer to our prayers to advance Christ’s glory in one or more of these same four dimensions.

The next time you conclude a season of prayer, either alone or with others, debrief the time by asking:

- Which of these four dimensions surfaced most often in my/our time of prayer?
- Was there a good balance among all four as I/we prayed?
- What adjustments do I/we need to make next time I/we pray to ensure greater accuracy, balance, breadth and effectiveness in my/our prayers?

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **Are you practicing the *six responses of vanguard praying*?**

On top of the four dimensions of prayer, Vanguard of Hope should also incorporate the *six major responses* of prayer. Let me highlight them with six words — six “R’s” that summarize all that Scripture teaches on the major ways we can *express* hearts of hope when we pray:

- **Rejoice**
- **Repent**
- **Resist**

- **Request**
- **Receive**
- **Recommit**

Let's look at what each response might include:

❖ **REJOICE means that you:**

- Praise the Father as the God who is, who was, and who is to come — the God of all hope.
- Celebrate the various dimensions of hope that He has set before you.
- Rejoice in the prospects of greater glory for Christ up ahead, both in this world and in the world to come.
- Thank Him for so many promises already fulfilled in the past.
- Praise Him for what you believe He is getting ready to do, even before you see it all accomplished.
- Celebrate how He will bring greater honor to His Son as He accomplishes His purposes in the Church and among the nations.
- Delight in the prospects you hold to, inherent in both the Consummation as well as current approximations of the Consummation.
- Above all, proclaim in prayer all that Christ means to you — who He is to you, for you, over you, within you, through you, before you, upon you.

❖ **REPENT means that you:**

- Make specific confession of both the individual and corporate sins that quench your passion for Christ's glory, diminish your spirit of hope in Him, hinder your enthusiasm for His Kingdom, or diminish your joy over the Consummation itself (the final display of His Lordship).
- Declare your willingness to turn away from everything that might hinder the full realization of God's promises in your life in Christ.
- Repent for whatever you find in yourself or in your church that is incompatible with the hope Scripture sets before us.

- Make similar confession over the besetting sins of your nation as well.
- Acknowledge how your sins, relationships, ambitions, even Christianly traditions, may hinder the outworking of God's promises by quenching, grieving and resisting the Holy Spirit.
- Plead for God's mercy for all His people because we have diminished, distorted and dishonored Christ for who He really is.

❖ **RESIST means that you:**

- Intercede over every situation where you sense the Enemy seeks to thwart the unfolding of God's promises.
- Pray for thorough victories over Satan's strategies against advances of Christ's kingdom.
- Combat strongholds raised up against the vision of Christ and His supremacy, both inside and outside the Church.
- Resist Satan's efforts to rob us of hope and distract us from the Consummation as well as from approximations of it now.

❖ **REQUEST means that you:**

- Offer bold prayers for the promises of God to be fulfilled in greater measure. Apply specific promises to specific situations.
- Intercede for the supremacy of Christ to be more clearly revealed in your life, your church, your community, your nation, and the world.
- Seek God's outpouring of refreshing encounters with any and all four dimensions of God's promises: Focus, Fulfillment, Fullness and Fervency.
- Target many prayers on your desire for God to increase specific "approximations of the Consummation" among us.
- Ask for renewal, revival, awakening in the Church.
- Plead for a powerful increase in the worldwide missionary endeavor.
- Remember always to intercede for the return of Christ in glory!

**❖ RECEIVE means that you:**

- Pinpoint periods of silence simply to listen to what God may want to say back to you as you pray. Prayer is a two-way conversation!
- Let Him enlarge your understanding of the hope that stirred you to pray originally, expanding your vision of Christ and the fullest implications of His reign *while you pray*.
- Expect Him also to reinforce your hope about what you've already prayed by increasing your confidence in what the future holds as the answers come.
- Prepare for Him to summon you to new acts of obedience in anticipation of those answers as He calls you to get ready to engage what is coming.
- Receive fresh clarifications from the Holy Spirit for your daily discipleship and ministry so that everything you do will be conducted in anticipation of more to come.
- Above all, look for your passion for Christ to be fanned aflame as you listen while waiting to receive His responses to your prayers.

**❖ RECOMMIT means that you:**

- Offer yourself anew to the Lord Jesus Christ in view of the promises that you have just prayed about.
- Express readiness to be involved in the answers to your prayers, no matter what it may cost.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to empower you for everything that ongoing anticipatory discipleship may demand of you.
- Seek the Spirit's (re)filling so that you can live consistently with the vision and concerns around which you prayed.
- Above all, surrender to the Spirit to re-ignite your passion for Christ alone and for the great hope you have in Him — a passion consistent with the rest of your prayers.

Combined with the *four dimensions*, these *six responses* of prayer represent everything a Vanguard of Hope would ever choose to pray! When

Vanguards of Hope put the four and six together (as *Appendix VII* illustrates), the power of their actions places them at the frontline advance of the Kingdom of God's dear Son. We move forward with Him in all directions. We step into all the hope we are meant to have.

### **THINK WITH ME ...**

#### **Are you watching for the *three answers* to vanguard praying?**

Whatever we pray for, from now to eternity, ultimately has only *one* answer: increased manifestation of the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as He is our hope before we pray, so He embodies the final outcome of all our prayers. This truth will be thoroughly vindicated in the Last Day. But it also holds true all along the way as the Father gives us approximations of the Last Day — *because* we have prayed. As noted before, God's promises are always "Yes" to us *in Christ Jesus* (2 Cor. 1) because Christ Jesus is His ultimate answer to all of our prayers. All the promises of God are summed up in Him.

Accordingly, we could say that God answers *every* Biblically-grounded, hope-filled, Christ-exalting prayer with a plain and simple "Yes!" However, this "yes" must manifest itself in one or more of three ways:

**Immediate Answers**  
**Intermediate Answers**  
**Consummate Answers**

Let's look at each briefly:

#### **1) IMMEDIATE ANSWERS ...**

The Father is eager to reveal more of His Son *while we pray*. Since the Kingdom-vision around which we pray is about Him, the simple act of praying causes us to engage with God's Son more fully during the very activity of praying. Because all answered prayer results in decisive demonstrations of Christ's dominion to someone, somewhere, it should come as no surprise that God begins to grant that ultimate answer to His praying children in more *immediate* ways the very moment we begin to seek Him. When we draw near, He draws near (James 4). When we ask, seek and knock, the Father's initial answer is to open to us deepening encounters with the very One whose Kingdom and glory we are praying about.

Christ will meet us *personally* in prayer even when wider, more tangible out-workings of our requests don't seem to occur, at least in our timetable. The greatest answer to *any* prayer — whether it comes at this very moment or in some future age — takes the form of an increased manifestation of the person and purposes of our preeminent Lord every time. The good news is this: The supreme answer of all answers can begin to unfold the very hour we start to pray, if not for others (and often it *does* for others) at least within the intercessor's own heart — as firstfruits of more to come. What encouragement to keep praying this holds for all of us!

## 2) INTERMEDIATE ANSWERS ...

As laid out in chapter 4, God enjoys granting His Church approximations of the Consummation. Every day the Church may expect substantial foretastes of how His promises will be culminated. Therefore, we may watch also for preliminary installments of those promises as answers to prayers whenever we set ourselves to the task.

Heaven's initial breakthroughs — even if it is not yet all we are longing for, all we know Jesus is reigning for — are evidences of God at work for the intercessors. He is giving “down payments” on the Age-to-Come, as it were. Miracles, healings, financial supplies, restored relationships, opened doors for ministry, relief for the poor, victories over besetting sins — we must be vigilant so we don't miss any such *intermediate* answers. We must remain on the lookout for the ways God is accelerating, expanding, multiplying and deepening the advance of Christ's Kingdom. Then, we must praise the Father every time intermediate answers appear. This can become an act of extraordinary worship, especially if, in the midst of our praises, we also proclaim to the Father our longings for so much more of His Son exalted among us and among the nations. As we continue to seek Him for more of what He has promised, we bring Him even greater pleasure.

## 3) CONSUMMATE ANSWERS ...

*Every Christ-exalted, Biblically-grounded prayer we have ever prayed will be thoroughly answered.* Count on it. It will happen on the day Christ returns. In this life no prayer has ever been answered to the *full extent* that Christ's supremacy guarantees. In the

Consummation, however, there will be no disappointment with God or with how He has responded to our cries. Whether prayers for justice, or for defeat of dark powers, or for racial reconciliation, or for unity in the Church, or for revival, or for unreached peoples — all of them will finally and fully be realized. All of them will be consummated in a manner exceedingly beyond what we might dare to imagine today (Eph. 3). Just as the saints at the Throne praise the Lamb for answered prayers that touch nations, so we too will be utterly satisfied!

Now, let me give you one example that incorporates all three forms of answered prayer:

When Jesus visited Lazarus' tomb (Jn. 11), He gave to Mary and Martha an *immediate* answer to their pleas for Lazarus: He revealed to them that He Himself was “the Resurrection and the Life” walking among them (that is, He claimed to be the “consummation” of their hope). In Him their eternal future stood in front of them. They met Him in a new way. In one sense, this was all they needed at that moment to find comfort — by knowing Him more fully as Lord of all. But, in addition, Christ gave them an *intermediate* answer by raising their brother from the dead right before their eyes. A marvelous miracle to be sure. It was a true “approximation” of their ultimate hope!

Yet, a few years later Lazarus died again of old age. At that point, what would we expect the sisters to do? Fall into despair? Interpret his death as unanswered prayer for them? Charge Jesus with betraying them? Not at all!

In the Eternal Kingdom when Lazarus is raised physically into immortality at Christ's return, Lazarus' siblings will behold the greatest answer to their petitions for healing — the *consummate* answer. No questions or concerns will be left in their minds when that moment rolls around. Instead, they will enter with Lazarus into the ceaseless joy of the sovereign Son's presence. They will find their Lord to be the same Jesus who came to them as resurrection hope during earthly days, thousands of years before. He brought them an *immediate* answer, followed by an *intermediate* answer, all of which pointed them to the *ultimate* answer for which their hearts longed.

Which leads to the most crucial insight on hope and supremacy as it relates to answered prayer: Everything we pray for is, in one way or another, an appeal for the Consummation to prevail. All prayers, spoken in a thousand different ways, are ultimately one prayer, echoing the final prayer of the Bible: “*Come, Lord Jesus*” (Rev. 22).

In other words, *every* petition is a cry for Christ to take the pre-eminence and reveal His glory, whether in a marriage, a ministry, a career decision, in physical sufferings, justice for the oppressed, or, in the reach of Muslims and Hindus. No matter the issue, we invite Him to work as thoroughly with us now as He is willing to. We anticipate that His responses will be similar, though preliminary, to what He promises to unleash before all Heaven and earth at His coming again. Furthermore, when the Consummation dawns, we will discover to our great joy that our work of intercession became one of *God's chief means* to reach that wonderful End.

Plain and simple, all prayer is about extending the supremacy of Christ from here to eternity. Therefore, all prayers to the Father about the Kingdom can be distilled into one word: *Come!* And all answers — immediate, intermediate, consummate — boil down to one person: *Christ!*

God has ordained the End. He also has ordained the means to that End. And chief among those means is the powerful impact of our prayers — especially when we pray together as Vanguards of Hope.

## Back to the Future: Vanguards on a Campaign of Hope

(Habakkuk 3)

Now and then in our walk with Christ it is important for us to take time to survey the great parade of hope-filled saints who have served so sacrificially in Christ's mission among the nations. Vanguards of Hope — the multitudes of believers over the centuries who have been able to lay their heads on the pillow at night and say:

**I know that this day  
my life has counted strategically for Christ and His Kingdom,  
promoting the hope of His supremacy,  
in the Church and among the nations,  
for my generation as well as for the ages to come.**

As we near the close of *Joyful Manifesto*, I pray that each of us will have discovered the excitement of living with Christ in such a way that this

conviction defines *every* day we walk with Him.

I wrote in chapter 8 about how I gave my life to Christ while sitting on a tombstone in a 200-year old Moravian cemetery. Let me tell you a little more about the Moravians.

As a result of a 24-hours-a-day prayer watch for revival and missions, an effort that eventually continued every day for over 100 years (!), these German missionaries circled the globe throughout the 1700's. First, they sent out teams all over Europe to spur Christians toward prayer for a Christ-awakening in their churches. This raised awareness across many nations that God desired spiritual renewal for His people. Additionally, at tremendous sacrifice they launched teams to evangelize unreached peoples in Asia, Africa and North America.

In both endeavors the Moravians (named for an area of Germany called Moravia) labored to reclaim a more comprehensive Christology for themselves and others. Hundreds eventually lost their lives for the cause, especially on the mission field. They did so joyfully, however. They were convinced about the triumphs of God's grace yet to come. Their eyes were constantly focused on the supremacy of His Son and the power of His Cross. We may rightfully call them *Prisoners of Hope*, who sent forth *Messengers of Hope* to begin a *Campaign of Hope* among Christians around the globe.

It is no surprise, therefore, that their sending base developed into a *Vanguard of Hope*. Together their community pioneered fresh works of renewal and mission for Jesus' sake, based on Jesus' right to lay claim to all the promises of God. They inspired subsequent generations to follow in their wake.

In fact, they practiced "anticipatory discipleship" to such a radical extent it even transformed the way they *died!* Anywhere they were buried Moravians asked for their bodies to be laid facing *east*. They interpreted Scripture to teach that at the Second Coming Jesus would reappear in the eastern sky to bring in the consummation of the ages. They were so anxious to meet Him, so set on the Climax, that they decided to avoid any need to "turn around" to greet Him when their bodies were raised incorruptible. What magnitude of vision for Christ's supremacy! It propelled one of the greatest "Campaigns of Hope" of all time.

**THINK WITH ME ...****Are you “facing east” as you serve God’s Son?**

The Moravians challenge me to examine carefully how I want to position my relationship with the King of Kings. Even before Jesus comes back, long before we enter Heaven, Vanguards of Hope “face east”. Are you “facing east”? Ask yourself:

- Do I believe that what I’m doing right now will truly matter when that Final Hour arrives? In other words: *Am I facing east?*
- Do I believe my activities today have a direct bearing on what my life will be about ages from now? Again, *am I facing east?*
- Am I committed to developing a greater capacity to know Christ and to enjoy Him forever by the choices I make moment by moment? *Am I facing east?*
- Am I increasing my ability to worship and serve the Lord ten thousand years from now by how I give myself *today* to Kingdom business? *Am I facing east?*
- Am I seeking to live more fully in the power and presence of God’s Son, engaging His supremacy on all fronts, just as I expect to do when I join Him in glory? *Am I facing east?*
- Am I determined to know and love the Lord of Glory in His coronation splendor, not waiting until I die but doing so now with every move I make, day after day? *Am I facing east?*
- Am I willing to help others “face east” with me? Am I willing to labor among God’s people, beginning with my own congregation, to call Christians back to a hope and passion that’s shaped around the full extent of Christ’s supremacy? *Will we face east together?*

Countless saints throughout the ages have lived like the Moravians, “facing East” — serving Christ in the sunrise of His coming Kingdom, and finding Him to be their “all and in all” (Col. 3).

Learning to live “facing east” — experiencing in practical ways what it means to give Christ the supremacy in everything because He is our hope of glory (Col. 1) — is what sustains every Campaign of Hope. It is key to the cure for the crisis of supremacy.

Now I invite you to take a few moments to meditate on the last couple of pages of *Joyful Manifesto*. **Postlude: Refrain for a Campaign** can help you identify your level of readiness to join in a Campaign of Hope. It will bring you back to reason for the title of this book:

# Christ is All!



# POSTLUDE

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## REFRAIN For a Campaign

***“Let this motto be upon your whole ministry: ‘Christ is all.’ ”***

*(Cotton Mather, c. 1720)*

*“Christ is All!”* Surely, among the nations this phrase represents the most profound truth a human tongue can express. Surely, within a Church caught up in a crisis of supremacy, this phrase must form the clarion call from Christians to Christians everywhere. Surely, there’s no better message for any Campaign of Hope to proclaim ...

**We must aim our campaign  
toward those who name the Name,  
to reclaim in them the flame  
of this radical refrain:  
*“Christ is all!”***

In many ways these three words mirror the chief confession of another great campaign: the historic Protestant Reformation. Their cry was *solus christus* — declaring that eternal salvation could come through *Christ alone*. “*Christ is ALL!*” provides a motto for reforming 21<sup>st</sup> century believers. The vision is the same. Since God imparts every one of His promises through *Christ alone*, in the final analysis *only* Christ could ever be called our *all*. How could it be otherwise?

## “Christ is All!”

### Refrain for a Campaign of Hope.

Should this be our refrain? Think about it:

- *Christ is all!* He brings life down to utter simplicity. Everything that matters is reduced to this one Person. Therefore, He is the only hope we *can* proclaim.
- *Christ is all!* He is thoroughly sufficient for the needs of a whole universe. He can satisfy the longings of the nations. He can infuse the saints with the power of resurrection life. Consequently, He is the only hope we *should* proclaim.
- *Christ is all!* He’s everything we have. He’s everything we need. We can actually make it with Him alone. So He is the only hope we *need* to proclaim.
- *Christ is all!* He belongs fully and equally, in His totality, to all who trust in Him, without exception. He is the only hope we could ever *want* to proclaim.
- *Christ is all!* He is our destiny. His throne is our home. He is the one with whom we will be preoccupied forever. That’s why there is *no other hope* for us to proclaim.

# “Christ is All!”

## Refrain for a Campaign of Hope.

So, what is this Campaign of Hope inside the Church *really* about? Is it about fostering a vision of the full extent of the supremacy of Christ? Is it about encouraging an awakening to the greater glory of Christ? Is it about re-converting God’s people back to Christ for all that He is? The refrain holds the answer. It’s about all of the above! Here’s why.

- In the Savior we have become eternal beneficiaries of the Triune God. Through Him we have inherited precious provisions — given by the Father to the Son to be endowed lavishly on the redeemed by the Spirit. **But** ... many Christians today have little sense of what this means and express little desire to seek God for more. Therefore, we need a Campaign of Hope that declares to them: “*Discover how fully Christ is all. Recover the hope you are meant to have!*”
- In Christ the promises and the Promise-er are forged inseparable. All of Heaven’s riches are bound up in our Lord *exclusively*. Each of God’s purposes will be culminated in our Lord *conclusively*. **But** ... many Christians today fumble in fogginess of vision while wandering in a wilderness of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, self-absorption, self-promotion. To reverse this trend, our Lord is worthy of a Campaign of Hope that urges believers: “*Discover why Christ is all. Recover the hope you are meant to have!*”
- Christ is able by virtue of Who He is to permanently and wondrously transform hosts of saints in Heaven and earth. No prospect of lasting blessings for any one, anywhere, at any time, exists outside of God’s Son. **But** ... many Christians today have put their hope in a vast array of other resources, even Christianly ones, and have made Christ mainly supplemental. How vital, then, is a Campaign of Hope that exclaims: “*Discover that only Christ is all. Recover the hope you are meant to have!*”
- The Kingdom that Christ brings is absolute, universal and all-encompassing. He is both the consummation and the consuming passion of every form of Christian hope. **But** ... many Christians today are more zealous for personal dreams and ambitions. They

often pursue Christ only as He is useful for achieving those goals. That is why a Campaign of Hope must sound the warning: “*Discover now that Christ is all. Recover the hope you are meant to have!*”

The time has come. We must spread a vision of the magnificent greatness of Jesus among *Christians* once again! The time has come. We must help *one another* be consumed with His glory as a way of life. The time has come. We must focus on reforming *disciples* into strategic bases of operation, men and women who are passionate for the advance of His Kingdom among the nations.

Soon, “*Christ is all!*” will bear witness to a fresh movement of God across the Body of Christ. Soon, “*Christ is all!*” will define the greatest answer to the prayers of an entire generation. Soon, “*Christ is all!*” will resound throughout the Church, heard on the lips of all who have re-engaged their Savior in the full extent of His supremacy. Soon, “*Christ is all!*” will become the trademark of those who have recovered the hope we are meant to have.

“*Christ is All!*” proclaims even more, however. It announces the consummation of all things just ahead. It composes Heaven’s testimony of triumph to be sung for ages to come. It’s the pledge that will emblazon our banners on that unending Day when we rally to this uncontested Conqueror — when every hope will be perfectly consummated in Him.

## “Christ is All!”

### Refrain for a Campaign of Hope.

If you intend to claim such a refrain for your campaign, you must respond first the way John did in Revelation 1. On Patmos Island he encountered an unexpected revelation of his majestic Master looming before him as Alpha and Omega. What did John do? He fell down like a dead man — *in silence*. Trembling, in silence. Overwhelmed, in silence. Surrendered, in silence. Expectant, in silence. Waiting, in silence.

So it must be for you. To prepare for the Campaign of Hope that beckons, I invite you to respond the same as John did — in a moment of absolute, awe-struck ...

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## ... SILENCE.

Set aside this book. Quiet your soul before the living Lord of Glory. Kneel, even. Worship your Supreme Commander. Be joyful in the courts of His Royal Highness. But, before anything else, be silent ...

*Silent* — alert for Him to come near to you as the hope we are meant to have ...

*Silent* — looking for Him to shine on you with the hope we are meant to have ...

*Silent* — listening for Him to speak to you about the hope we are meant to have ...

*Silent* — waiting for Him to draw you on toward the hope we are meant to have ...

*Silent* — eager to join Him to promote the hope we are meant to have ...

*Silent* — ready to help other believers recover the hope we are meant to have ...

*Silent* — poised for the rest of your life to proclaim the full extent of His supremacy because it is all the hope we are meant to have.

Then, as you begin your very own Campaign of Hope right where you live among those you love, make sure this one refrain remains the message you share and the identity you bear:

# “Christ is All!”

