

Hope and joy

What Does This Mean?

Both anxiety and hope are future related in different ways. The anxious person has the present ruined by their fears for the future; Christian hope lets faith in God and his future change the present. Hope is a deep knowledge that evil does not have the last word, because Christ was victorious over sin on the cross. One day the world will be made anew, and it will be a place of justice, joy, love, and peace. Biblical peace is about wholeness and things being right in our relationships, bodies, minds, and world. Having peace and hope does not mean that life will be easy (John 16:33). Faith involves living in a way that points to that future now. Faith in God's goodness can allay worries and allow people to live with hope even if life is difficult (1 Peter 5:7). Jesus points to God's care of the birds and the flowers—how much more will he care about people (Matthew 6:34)!

A Christian's freedom from anxiety is not due to some guaranteed freedom from trouble, but to the folly of worry and especially to the confidence that God is our Father, that even permitted suffering is within the orbit of His care. John Stott

Joy often surprises us, just as the shepherds were surprised by "glad tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:10). Some of the biblical words for joy are about movement and sound. Joy may seize us and leave us wanting to dance or shout. Christian joy is not dependent on what happens to us, since it is founded on hope in Christ (Romans 15:13). Joy can persist in a quieter form through difficult times; it is a taste of heaven.

Joy is the serious business of Heaven. C. S. Lewis

What Does This Mean in School?

It is easy for students to feel overwhelmed by the bad news they hear on the media as well as by negative experiences in their own lives and contexts, because they might not have the experience of life to put it all into perspective. This is particularly true of young children, who may find it hard to distinguish between what is happening far away and what is nearby. Teaching and learning can change this.

- Many parts of the curriculum look the negative side of life: environmental concerns, economic problems, war and poverty in history, and evil. Check your teaching and its overall story and tone. Are you putting the negative in the context of the Christian message that evil does not triumph in the end? Are you providing moments for celebration and thankfulness?
- Balance the negative by providing positive examples when possible and appropriate.
- Are joy and hope expressed in teaching and learning through dance, music, art, and language?
- Is a broad understanding of peace being communicated, or is peace just seen as the absence of war?

Think of a time when you became aware of students' worries in class. Identify a lesson where teaching and learning could help with this. For example, in modern foreign languages, do students learn the forms they would need to express comfort to those who are worried? Check your own language: Do you need to change how you present material? Do you need to balance examples?



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