



## JESUS CENTER

1297 Park Avenue, Chico, CA 95928

DECEMBER 2019

Dear < First name >,

My husband, Greg is a professor at Chico State. He is well trained, well prepared and really cares about his students' learning. Yet, sometimes it seems his students just aren't interested. Instead of reading the assignments, they get lazy with their preparation and simply "Google" a topic. The information they gather ends up in their papers and often adds little to their understanding of the topic at hand.

Sometimes we get lazy too. And when we are depressed or discouraged, we "Google" for answers. A recent Google search on the word "Hope" was such a scavenger hunt for me. Now, admittedly the purpose of my search was to write this letter, not to really learn about Hope. However, I was truly curious. Where does the average or the not-so-average person learn about hope these days? I'm pretty sure they "Google" it.

My first finding from Psychology Today was not surprisingly a linear process to building hope: 1. Find a clear path, 2. Look for role models who have found solutions, 3. Do what you know you can do, 4. Perform an act of kindness, 5. Turn to your faith, 6. Practice mindfulness while doing acts of kindness and in your everyday life. Karyn Hall, Ph.D., the author of the entry, carefully thought through this path. And, it's a decent set of instructions. Of course, I have my favorites: "5. Turn to your faith" being the best.

As a high functioning person today (not all days are the same!) I can take this path and probably be successful at bolstering my hopefulness quotient. You may be able to as well.

However, the folks we meet day in and day out, aren't going to find this path encouraging, enlightening, or in most ways helpful at all. You just can't Google your way to hope if you've had enough trauma, mental illness, bad luck, bad debt, family crisis or a loss of a job.

Now four years after assuming my role at the Jesus Center, I focus on hope a lot when I talk about the people who come to the Jesus Center. Most of those who come are deeply hope-less. They don't believe in themselves or in those around them. They barely can see beyond their immediate need or crisis. They are often depressed, angry, retreating, sullen, and desperate.

*Hope is what they need. Now. And, a lot of it.*

We often think of helping someone in need as addressing their physical needs, their housing needs, giving them something tangible. And help often includes and even starts with these things. But, our team is

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convinced that if the Hope tank is empty, that our focus needs to be quickly turned to filling that tank over and over so it will grow.

Psalm 42: 5-6 is a favorite of mine. It reminds us that we are not alone and that God's aid is near.

*"Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God."*

There is someone out there who created you, loved you, was born in human flesh for you, died for you. You are not alone. There is no better time than Advent and Christmas to remember the source of hope in Jesus Christ. God goes to great lengths to remind us of His love, His power, and His joy in His creation by sending us His son in the form a baby to live and die for us. We now can hope in Him as the source of our true joy, true love, and everlasting peace. (I think I hear a choir of angels!)

Amanda and Sarah\* were sisters who came to Sabbath House many years ago as teenagers. They came angry, hopeless, and bound in generational poverty. Yes, we gave them shelter and services. But more than that, from the first day and every day until today we have spoken hope upon them. Today they are radiant, functional, skilled, employed young women who after years of fighting for their lives are off to a new adventure: both dependent and independent. Filled with hope in God and confidence in themselves.

**The work of the Jesus Center is relational: we are standing next to those who drag themselves into our space. We speak words of hope and cover them in encouragement.**

Our staff member, Mike, shared how he recently got a "thank you" from a participant. Mike was thanked because he carried hope for this person even when the person didn't have hope for themselves. Sometimes, that's what's needed around here!

Your support this Christmas is your way of living out the hope within you. As our Google author reminded us, we create hope when we do a simple act of kindness for another. The folks we serve are often left along the road as hopeless. Your offer of financial support is a tangible way of redefining help and restoring hope.

Thank you and Merry Christmas!



Laura R. Cootsona  
Executive Director

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*"For I know the plans I have for you,  
declares the Lord, plans to prosper  
you and not to harm you, plans to  
give you hope and a future."*

—JEREMIAH 29:11

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*\*To protect their stories, these names are fictitious.*