The Church Doctor® Report

CHURCH DOCTOR MINISTRIES

Multiplying Hope Through Healthy Churches

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Purpose: To connect with those who have an active relationship with Church Doctor Ministries as peers in ministry, clients, and partners in prayer and support.

The Church Doctor® Report provides a quick read of strategic and influential information.
(To sign up: email tracee@churchdoctor.org)

The Power of Spiritual Hope

The Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization released this startling reality: “Hopelessness and isolationism have the same physical impact as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.”

So, as a Christian, where is your place on the “hope scale”? What challenges your attitude and hopefulness? It seems—at this time in history—there is so much trouble in our fractured world.

Are you hopeful—full of hope—for the future? What is the impact of world wars, disruptive politics, declining church attendance, growing violence, financial struggles, or health concerns? All of this sounds so negative!

Napoleon Bonaparte said, “A leader is a dealer in hope.”

In the face of so much hopelessness, does your faith—*can* your faith—bring hope to you and your church? What can the Christian movement provide for the massive hopelessness that seems to have invaded our world?

Dr. Kent Hunter is founder of Church Doctor Ministries, now led by Dr. Tracee Swank. Kent is the author of *Who Broke My Church?* and *A Nation Reclaims Respect: One Person at a Time*.

www.churchdoctor.org
Email Kent: kenthunter@churchdoctor.org

Scripture on Hope

The Bible is not silent about the power of divine hope. In Psalm 130:7, the real source of hope is in the Lord: “O Israel, *hope* in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plenteous redemption.” This is not a shallow catchphrase: “I hope so.” That sounds like “maybe I should be more hopeful.” Instead, it is a spiritual reality and a divine promise.

Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Spiritual hope is not a simple platitude, a nice saying, or wishful thinking. Spiritual hope is the real deal, a divine miracle from the Ruler of the universe.
In Jeremiah 29:11-13, God declares, “I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you *hope* for. Then you will call to me and I will answer you. You will seek me and you will find me, because you will seek me with all your heart.”

This is way beyond “wishful thinking” or “I hope so” uncertainty. This is the Ruler of the universe, the Savior of the world, the Holy Spirit within you. This is the real deal—God Himself driving the power of hope into your personal challenges and igniting a positive influence in your life, your family, your church, and the Christian movement. You have a powerful message for our troubled world: *There is hope!* No matter what the circumstances, you have divine hope that rises above every challenge and every difficulty.

In 1 Peter 3:15-16, the Scripture gives you—and every Christ-follower—direct orders: “Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the *hope* you have in you…but do it with gentleness and respect.” You can't force-feed hope. It is gentle, yet powerful!

The Climate in Your Church

We live in a challenging time for the Christian movement. Many pastors have been well-trained in how to be faithful servants who maintain their congregations. For decades, training institutions for pastors often focused on “doing church well.” And that is great. It just isn't enough. Somehow, many church bodies subconsciously defined mission strategy that applied only to missionaries—those who were called to serve in other countries. Meanwhile, most pastors were never trained in missiology—the biblical dynamics of reaching lost people.

In my journey, I was trained in four years of college, three years of seminary, and three years to obtain a Doctor of Theology degree. As a new pastor, I quickly learned I had almost no training in this theology—the biblical teaching and strategies that “real missionaries” receive. So, I took three more years and learned the theology, and it changed my life. I became a missionary to my own country.

In his book *The Last Arrow: Save Nothing for the Next Life*, Erwin McManus wrote:

> “The church has become an institution that preserves the past and fears the future. It's not an overstatement to say that the church has become more of a reflection of what we are running from than what we are running to. No wonder we have lost our power to change the world. No wonder the church has lost its magnetism to a world searching for hope. We are seen as the guardians of tradition. The church is known for fighting the future rather than creating the future that humanity desperately needs” (pp. 139-140).

When our Church Doctors work to help congregations become mission strategic, our passion is to instill hope. With proper direction and encouragement, mission effectiveness can be developed in every church.

In my book *Who Broke My Church?* I focused on the need to seek God's power of hope: “Where there is no hope for the present, there is no faith in the future. Where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present” (pp. 39-40).

My friend Todd Stocker says, “Sometimes you find hope. Sometimes hope finds you.” When we inspire hope in our churches, it fuels an epidemic of effective outreach. Churches grow. A nation is impacted by the Gospel. Hope is the key that unlocks the unbeliever’s heart.

In *Who Broke My Church?* I shared: “A positive attitude generates energy. Attitude is your posture toward God. Faith in Christ gives you hope. Divine hope fuels energy to do the impossible, overcome distractions, and persevere through challenges” (p. 210).

What Is the Future for Your Church?

Perhaps spiritual reconstruction becomes possible when you discover nothing else works. There are many struggling churches in that position today. There is nothing left. Yet, this is when God acts—and renews hope in people like you and me.

Our hope in Christ carries us to an awakening in the future. This is not a theological construct or compartmentalized belief. If you take Christ at His word, you, by definition, accept Him as the head of His body, the church. If you accept Him as the head of the church, you subordinate the culture of your congregation to Kingdom culture. Erwin McManus reminds us, “You can't fight the future, but you can create the future.”

Jonathan Swift once said, “Vision is the ability to see things invisible to others. Leaders are called to see potential, hope, and opportunity.”

What does your church look like when Jesus is in charge?