



[**Author Note:** I open by talking about *Star Wars* and how watching those movies is a Christmas tradition for me. Whether you use a similar story or not is up to you, but the title of the series does come from a line in *Rogue One*, so you may still want to reference that.]

Watching *Star Wars* movies is a Christmas tradition for me. For me, it started as a child. We would go to my dad's cousin's home every year. She did not like kids, and she wasn't alone. His relatives were all much older than us, many of them didn't have children, and none of them had patience for the Selph children. So we would just hide in the den, watching TV to pass the time and keep out of trouble.

When I was 8, *Star Wars* was on TV. I mean the original: Episode IV. After that, Episode V came on. I had to quit watching for dinner. I got back during Episode VI. I was shocked to learn that Darth Vader was Luke's dad. I hadn't seen that part! Watching these movies became a routine for me. I saved up my own money and bought them on VHS. I watched them regularly, and I'd bring them with me to my dad's cousin's house every year, so I could hang out with Luke, Han, and Leia instead of getting in trouble.

I believe it's becoming more of a tradition for people now, since they seem to release a new movie every year around Christmas. Who doesn't want to spend time in a galaxy far, far away every December?

In 2015, the movie *Rogue One* came out, and something struck me. When Jyn Erso was trying to compel the Rebel Alliance to take a risk and go get the Death Star plans, someone called her out. They asked if she really expected them to risk their lives—not over a solid fact, but over a hope.

She said, "Rebellions are built on hope." And she's right. Rebellions—the willingness to be different, to fight for something different—begins with hope.

What is hope? Is it just wishful thinking? Is it synonymous with making a wish? Well, the word is used in the Bible, and I'd like to look at that and see the definition there.

Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Faith is assurance in what we hope for, which means it is a certainty. The definition of that phrase “hoped for” is, “in a religious sense, to wait for salvation with joy and full confidence.” Hope isn’t wishful thinking. This is absolute confidence that what we hope for will be. It is absolute faith. It is a conviction that whatever we hope for will happen.

There are two great ways to keep people in line: fear and hope. Fear works, but only so long as the threat of consequence is reiterated. If the consequence is distant and not tangible, fear doesn’t work as well.

Elf on the Shelf is a brilliant way to keep the fear tangible with kids. Right? If you’re not good, Santa won’t give you presents. That’s motivation through fear. How do the kids remember that Santa is keeping watch of their every move? The Elf on the Shelf. He’s a snitch who reports everything you do to Santa. It’s a visual reminder of the consequence.

Hope, on the other hand, is a positive motivator. It’s not a punishment for bad behavior, rather it’s a positive outcome to strive toward every day. Instead of looking at sin—or the bad things we do—and trying desperately to not do them for fear of punishment, we instead look at the right thing—the God-honoring thing—and we strive to do that. Because we have hope that God is real, God is good, and He wants what’s best for us.

The Old Testament is filled with godly, rebellious people who refused to accept things for the way they were. There was plenty of opportunity to not follow God, to sin and break God’s laws, and some of “God’s people” took those opportunities.

But throughout history, there have been faithful men and women who refused to follow status quo. They chose to rebel because they had hope. Based on the hope they had in God’s promises, they refused to conform, to walk away, to be like everyone else. They believed God and His promises were real, so they lived for Him, even in the face of opposition.

Genesis 12:1–3 (ESV)

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

In this passage, God promises Abraham that He will give Abraham and his family a land that God would later reveal to him. Abraham moved out of an area where he was wealthy and successful—away from his family—to go to this land, even though he didn't know where he was going.

He eventually came into the land of Canaan, and God revealed a little more about His promise to the Jewish people.

Genesis 17:8 (ESV)

And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

God was going to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants. It wasn't theirs yet. They were living there, but it wasn't theirs.

They were *sojourners*. That's an important word. A sojourner is a person who lives somewhere, but they are not from there. They were strangers in a foreign land. A sojourner doesn't assimilate to the land they are in. They don't become like the citizens of that nation, because they are just temporary residents. They have a different home, with a different culture expectation, and there's no reason to assimilate to this other place when they're not staying. They're heading home.

This idea of sojourning was important to the people of Israel. The ones who really got it, who really trusted God, lived like they were sojourners everywhere they went. When they were in Egypt, Persia, and Babylon, they remained faithful to God's laws, because they saw themselves as His people. They were Israelites, regardless of where they were. No matter what happened, they were going to remain faithful to God. They had hope in God, so when they were somewhere that didn't worship Him, they rebelled.