



GUEST SPEAKER LEISA AITKEN

Hope is essential for a flourishing life but in our anxious and overwhelmed post-pandemic world, many are struggling to be hopeful. What can we do to nurture hope in ourselves and in young people?

This talk explores recent psychological research as well as the wisdom of philosophers and theologians through history on the nature of hope, what is currently hindering our experience of it, and practical strategies to foster it.

Leisa Aitken is a Clinical Psychologist with a Bachelor of Science (Psychology) and Masters in Psychology (Clinical) from UNSW. She has done further training in ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy), a type of CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) which she found extremely useful, both personally and professionally. Her post graduate training has also been in Bowen Family Systems Theory which explores couple relationships, parent child interactions, and most importantly, looking at how all of these individual relationships are part of a much bigger whole. Leisa finds this to be a wonderful framework for looking at the complexity of how relationships impact us. Her thesis is on the topic of Hope – what is it that makes some of us, in the midst of chaos, able to look to the future with hope whereas others of us struggle to see the light at the end of the tunnel?

Leisa works in private practice. She has more than 20 years experience in counselling and also supervising in psychiatric hospitals and providing workplace support. She has spoken at many schools and churches with the aim of applying psychological research to real life dilemmas. She is about to finish a PhD on the psychology of hope, which incorporates philosophical and theological reflections of hope with her own research on hope in Australian society.

Leisa is married and has young adult children. She finds these relationships are a great personal testing ground for her research.

“While my practice is informed by the laboratory of life experience – my own and many others older and wiser than me – I am also passionate about keeping up to date with recent research and best practice in psychology.”