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Women Keeping Hope Alive

BY JACKIE KENDALL



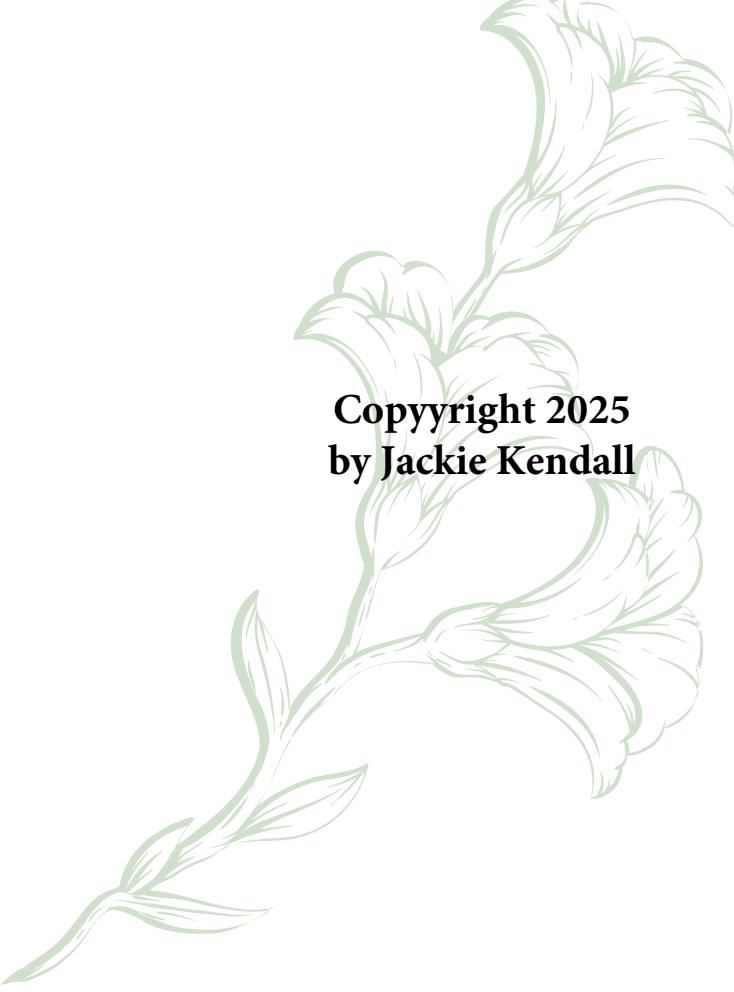


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Graphic Design by Stacy Wiggins and Christina Stolaas



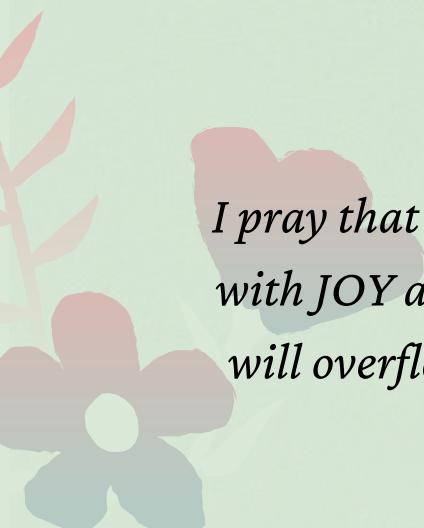
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WOMEN KEEPING HOPE ALIVE

Women Keeping Hope Alive is a collection of demonstrations of HOPE from the Bible and faithful Christian women, designed to train 21st-century women to be filled with UNSHAKEABLE HOPE. The intention of *Women Keeping Hope Alive* is not only to fill your soul to overflowing but also to assist you as you encourage others to experience “the full measure of their faith” (Phil.1:25).

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide, we might have HOPE.

~Romans 15:4



*I pray that God, the source of HOPE, will fill you completely with JOY and PEACE because you **trust in Him**. Then you will overflow with CONFIDENT HOPE through the power of the Holy Spirit. ~Romans 15:13*

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Eight-Week Study Schedule

If you are reading through this book with a group, here is a recommended outline for an 8-week study. These sessions might include 20-30 minutes of teaching and 20-30 minutes of discussion and prayer. You might also want to include weekly sections from the Appendix, reviewing some of the study tools each week.

Week 1: Introduction and Hope Deferred (pp. 9 - 13)

Week 2: Facing the Unfathomable (pp. 14 - 25)

Week 3: Studying God's Word (pp. 26 - 46)

Week 4: Fasting and Prayer (pp. 47 - 53)

Week 5: Serving (pp. 54 - 58)

Week 6: When God Says "No" (pp. 59 - 62)

Week 7: Self-Deprecation, Weakness, Helplessness (pp. 63 - 74)

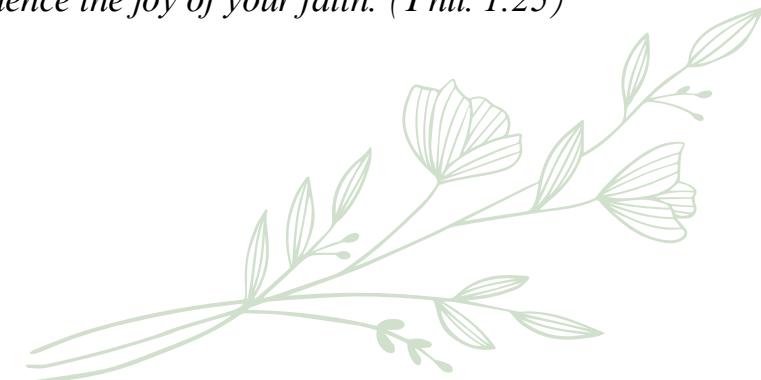
Week 8: Spiritual Mothering (pp. 75 - 87)

Introduction

In the late 1990s, at a leadership conference for women, John Maxwell highlighted a fascinating point: “Eighty percent of what is being done in the local church is being done by women.” He went on to tell a story about this phenomenon in action during the years of the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union. The Berlin Wall, which was called the “Iron Curtain,” was erected almost literally overnight in 1961, cutting off entire families from their loved ones and old friends one from another. Armed guards stood atop the wall, preventing passage from East Berlin into the West for twenty-eight long years! In that oppressive and hopeless situation, a group of deaconesses in East Germany set their faces toward Jesus and put their hearts and hands to work to serve the LORD. These faithful women served others, shining the love of God into that dark place, seeking to *keep hope alive* in the most hopeless of times.

The ultimate intention of this book is to provide living demonstrations of hope for women in the 21st century. The women presented throughout this book are from the Bible and from history’s record books. They were women who, like the deaconesses behind the Iron Curtain, endured the unfathomable and still had HOPE. Throughout the centuries, there is a clear pattern of hope demonstrated by faithful Christian Sisters in dramatically hopeless situations—and we women in the 21st century surely need this encouragement from those who have gone before us! And while this collection is a mere glimpse of the witnesses who have preceded us, this view from life’s balcony can help train your soul to be a woman from an unshakeable kingdom (Heb. 12:28) filled with potential for unshakeable hope. May the many stories in this book fill gaps in your faith and fill you up to overflowing! And not for your soul only, but for those you have been chosen to impact while on this earth as you encourage them to experience the full measure of their faith.

Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith. (Phil. 1:25)



Hope Deferred

People are born for trouble as readily as sparks fly up from a fire. (Job 5:7 NLT)

Before we look at the biographical sketches of the women who will help us keep hope alive, let's consider what inhibits hope in our lives. Too many Christians have given up hope because they have been crippled by the surprise of so many trials in their life. They do not even consider that the Word of God clearly states that many are the trials and troubles of God's children: "The righteous person faces *many* troubles but the LORD comes to the rescue each time" (Ps. 34:19). The word many in this passage means "continuous flow." Have you found yourself in a constant flow of trials that robbed you of hope? Such a torrent of trials would threaten to drown one in justifiable hopelessness. Yet, Psalm 34:19 declares that the LORD delivers us out of every trial we face. God's grace flows right along with the continuous trouble.

Have you had moments of what seemed like justifiable hopelessness in the past few years? Let's look a little deeper at what happens without hope. Proverbs 13:12 states, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." When hope is deferred, it is delayed, prolonged, dragged out; and this leads to a *sick heart*—WHY? Unless we are truly focused on God and his will, when we hope for something, we tend to set up expectations. Expectations can be easily fueled by presumptions and entitlement, and when this is the case, our expectations actually become *pre-meditated resentment*. It is resentment that makes the heart sick and breeds so much unnecessary bitterness.

Scripture tells us, "Surely resentment destroys the fool, and jealousy kills the simple" (Job 5:2 NLT). Our level of frustration with people's offenses is directly proportionate to our expectations of their behavior. Indeed, our own expectations set the very framework for being offended again. And, while life provides predictable trouble, God provides equally predictable vouchers of grace (see James 4:6). Sometimes, though, we resist God's grace and stay in our anger. Rather than sip God's refreshing grace, we guzzle down a glass of toxic bitterness. As stated so many centuries ago by Augustine, "Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die."

Can you think of situations from your life where you can trace the expectations that preceded the resentment in your heart? If our expectations are inextricably linked to premeditated resentment, then we poison ourselves when we don't immediately commit those expectations to God (Ps. 62:5). Just as we are encouraged in the Word to take our thoughts captive (II Cor. 10:5), we should envision carrying a leather lasso so that we can take captive any *expectation* that comes into our hearts and tie that expectation to the cross!

As the LORD brings to your mind times when resentment has trickled down in your heart, consider Ephesians 4:31: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger.” Why? Because these grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). *Bitterness* in this verse refers to something being “pressed down”; *anger* refers to “desire, violent passion.” Aristotle called this kind of anger “desire plus grief.” When one’s violent desires are not met, when expectations are not fulfilled, the grief that follows is ultimately converted into resentment. We cultivate so many expectations of ourselves, of others, of life... making for so much material that can be pressed down into bitterness.

With all our premeditated resentments, it is no wonder we are prone to offense! The author Brennan Manning described it like this, “Expectations are our subtle attempt to control God and manipulate mystery.” We must begin with God, asking His forgiveness for our controlling expectations. Then, ask His forgiveness for any slow-burning resentment in your heart because of desire mixed with grief.

Consider the daily reality that expectations keep us from the amazing gift of abounding in hope. Paul wrote, “I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in Him. Then you will overflow with *confident hope* through the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13). This abounding is an over-the-top, aggressive confidence that exceeds all limits. Expectations must be monitored to prevent the suffocation of the abounding hope that God’s Word gives us during our daily reading. This fortified hope means being full of the Word and Holy Spirit (Col. 3:15,16; Eph. 5:18).

HOPE DEFERRED

HOPE deferred makes the heart sick ~ Proverbs 13:12

Hope Inhibitors

- Trials
 - Many give up hope because they are surprised by trials in their lives.
 - *The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to rescue each time ~ Psalm 34:19*
- Expectations
 - Expectations keep us from the amazing gift of ABOUNDING IN HOPE.
 - I pray that God, the source of HOPE, will fill you completely with JOY and PEACE because you trust in Him. Then you will overflow with CONFIDENT HOPE through the power of the Holy Spirit ~ Romans 15:13

HOPE



EXPECTATIONS



*Fueled by **PRESUMPTION AND ENTITLEMENT***



*Results in **PREMEDITATED RESENTMENT***

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- 1. What moments have you had that seemed like justifiable hopelessness in the past few years?*
- 2. Can you think of situations from your life where you can trace the expectations that preceded the resentment in your heart?*

NOTES

Hope Kept Alive Facing the Unfathomable

Hope as Oxygen for a Woman's Soul

When we read the biographies of courageous women, it is like a dose of oxygen for our souls. Consider women like Amy Carmichael and the impact she had on thousands of women and children in India. She fought to save girls from the most despicable of fates—being made into temple prostitutes, what we would now call being trafficked. She went up against the spiritual leaders of the temples and was persecuted mightily. Then, she took a terrible fall and was so injured that she lived as an invalid for the rest of her life—twenty years! Yet, in that context, Amy wrote more than 35 books, inspiring Christian women all over the world.

Elisabeth Elliot's book *Through Gates of Splendor* can also blow fresh oxygen into your soul. In her early 20s, she lived as a missionary in the jungles of Ecuador with two other women. During her first years there, she was the only person with the skills to begin translating certain tribal languages, and there was only one man who spoke Spanish and could work with her. Elisabeth saw her translator murdered! After that, all of her translation work was stolen. Once she married Jim, she clung to hope after her husband and his four closest ministry friends were martyred on a sand bar by a river as they sought to bring the gospel to tribes deep in the jungle. This woman, fueled by hope, would return to this very place and minister to the very men who slayed her husband. These and more were the unfathomable circumstances she lived through and kept hope alive.



Hope while Facing Profound Evil: Bettye Stam's Story

Another young woman of deep faith in a hopeless context was Bettye Stam. Her martyrdom was profoundly sobering. Bettye was a young missionary in China with her husband, John Stam, and a new baby girl. Bettye and John were marched naked through the village they were sharing Jesus in, Miaoshou, to the top of the nearest hill, where they were both beheaded by the Communist Chinese. Their baby had been hidden by the villagers during the execution. The fact that their baby was saved was such a miracle—followed by an even greater miracle! Like Elisabeth Elliot, this young woman returned to China with the gospel in spite of the martyrdom of her parents. Consider the faith that led this daughter to be full of hope rather than bitterness, and let this miracle be an inspiring example to your heart!

Biographical Sketch of Justifiable Hopelessness: Hannah Whitall Smith

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (Rom. 15:4)

In 1875, a book was published that became a best seller and is considered a devotional classic. That book is titled, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*; and the author was a woman named Hannah Whitall Smith. When you read Hannah's biography, you realize that her life and books are Romans 15:4 on display. Her life was challenging, to say the least, and a cursory glimpse of her life story shows circumstance after circumstance that should have suffocated her hope. Let's take a look at some of her story.

Hannah was raised as a Quaker and then banned from her entire family and Quaker community when she became a follower of Jesus. Her delightful little girl, Nellie, died just before Christmas at only five years old. She delivered another child stillborn. Then, her first-born, a son named Frank, who was a beacon of light for the gospel in college at Princeton, died from typhoid fever. Another of her seven children would die, also.

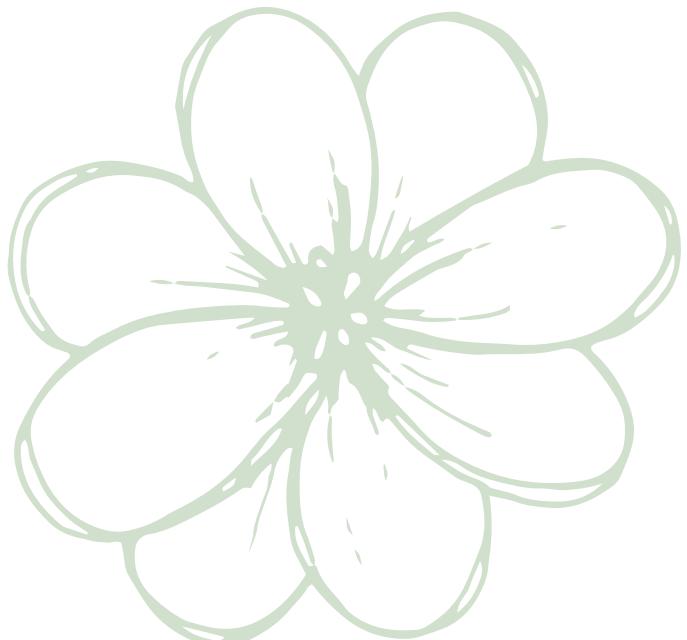
Hannah described her efforts to keep her children from wandering from the faith like trying to stop an avalanche with her bare hands! Three children survived into adulthood, one who married the very famous atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell, a man who distained his Christian in-laws as much as he distained their God.

Hannah's preacher husband suffered from what we would call today bi-polar disorder and was tormented by manic episodes and ultimately a nervous breakdown. His career in England was interrupted by one of many sexual scandals, and, in fact, at the time their beloved Nellie was dying, her husband was in the middle of an affair. Hannah's faith in God imbued her with a strong sense of duty, though. That duty kept her faithful to this troubled marriage. Further, she considered that devotion to duty "as likely a road to success as to have a feeling of inspiration."

Hannah applied perspiration and inspiration to all aspects of her writing. She was ridiculed and laughed at during her bold talks and Bible teaching, gaining the name of the "Wild Woman from America" when she spoke in Europe. When she was older, she suffered from crippling arthritis; but it did not stop her. She would even hike with her grandkids with the aid of two canes. It was in such a hopeless context of all this and more that Hannah put her pen to paper to write about the "secrets of happiness." Certainly, then, by being comforted by the holy scripture, she learned patience and perseverance and epitomized Romans 15:4: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Consider putting this verse on an index card or a post-it-note to memorize the frame and foundation of confident hope.

Perfect Answer for an Unfathomable Situation

In Ezekiel 37:3, the chapter where a valley of dry bones is described, God asked Ezekiel a difficult question: “Son of man, can these bones become living people again?” Ezekiel’s reply was perfect. “‘O Sovereign LORD,’ I replied, ‘You alone know the answer to that.’” We can imagine Hannah Whitall Smith not only read this but learned the critical lesson from it. Facing challenges that would leave most people stunned and speechless, this faithful woman exemplified such a heart posture toward her Papa God: “You alone know the answer.” As you face difficulties daily, you can remember Ezekiel’s profound response that as long as Papa God knows...that is all you need to know!



HOPE

Facing the Unfathomable

Read biographies of courageous women ~ it is like a dose of oxygen for the soul!

Amy Carmichael

Elisabeth Elliott

Facing Profound Evil

Bettye Stam - missionary - martyred in China

Bettye's daughter - returned to China with the Gospel, full of HOPE

Justifiable Hopelessness

Hannah Whitall Smith

The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life

Hope Kept Alive in a Heinous Prison Camp: Darlene Deibler Rose

The inspiring Hannah W. Smith had a counterpart, born a century later, who also lived a life of stunning courage and hope. Darlene Deibler Rose was a newlywed American missionary in New Guinea during World War II. She survived four years in a notorious Japanese prison camp where she suffered the hunger, beatings, molestation, deprivation, and the death of her husband. However, her hope never failed because she knew that hope was not dependent on a situation but a person—JESUS. Her relentless hope did not allow the cruelty of their lives to suffocate her faith, as described in her book *Evidence Not Seen*.

Confident hope is a by-product of faith in the source of all hope—God. We have heard many times that faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God. So many women want to have strong faith that produces confident hope, yet they have spent too many years without spending time in the hope-producing Word of God.

Young Girl with a Big Impact

We have all read about the healing of the leprous commander Naaman. But do you remember the young girl who was an instrument used by God in this miraculous context?

Now Naaman was the commander of the army of the king of Aram (Syria). He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria. He would cure him of his leprosy."

(II Kings 5:1-3)

This kidnapped teenager was a light in a dark country, and God used her to speak truth boldly to her master. Such boldness by a hostage was teeming with hope in the God of Israel. A teenager taken hostage to a foreign land turned a small light on in a dark room, like Miep in the next story! This young hostage was filled with confident hope. Her joy was not dictated by her circumstances.

Hope Kept Alive During the Holocaust

Now we can turn our attention to another young woman who saved *others* from becoming hostages! This remarkable young Dutch woman was named Miep Gies; and she helped hide the Frank family from the Nazis. She saved Anne Frank's diary, which later was published and read around the world for generations. Miep worked so hard to keep eight people hidden for two years before they were discovered, sadly, only two months before the Allies liberated the people of Holland. Miep became an inspirational speaker, living until she was one hundred years old. She spoke often to young people, challenging them about making a difference in this dark world. She always ended her talks with this quote: "Even an ordinary secretary or a housewife or a teenager can in their own way turn on a small light in a dark room."

It might be difficult to imagine that a young woman could do something so courageous in a time of such oppressive darkness—Nazi occupation. Miep and her husband, Jan, as young newlyweds, helped relocate Jewish children, jeopardizing their lives for others! Barely married, and the battle began to help save Jews in Amsterdam from the invading Nazis, risking their own lives. Interestingly, only a few miles away, other Jewish families were being shielded by another courageous Christian woman, Corrie ten Boom. These women were not content to stand on the sidelines. Their commitment was reminiscent of A. W. Tozer's comments about two types of Christians: There are those doing something and then those just watching from the balcony. God's Hall of Fame will be full of *doers* like Miep and Jan, Corrie, and a brave little Hebrew girl who, even as a hostage, was an instrument of great healing for leprous Naaman.

The Frame and Foundation of CONFIDENT HOPE

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through PATIENCE and COMFORT of the Scriptures might have HOPE. Romans 15:4

HOPE Kept Alive in a Prison Camp

- Darlene Deibler Rose - missionary to New Guinea during WWII
- *Evidence Not Seen*

Faith in the SOURCE of all HOPE

→ **CONFIDENT HOPE** ←

faith comes by hearing and hearing by the WORD OF GOD

A.W. Tozer ~ There are two types of Christians: those doing something and those watching from the balcony.

Don't be content to stand on the sidelines

BE LIKE....

CORRIE TEN BOOM
MEIP (ANNE FRANK)
NAAMAN'S SERVANT GIRL



Battle Buddies and Nurses

The stories just shared are extraordinary examples of keeping hope alive when facing the unfathomable. In those times, we need to be reminded that we are NOT ALONE. God promises that he will never leave us and he will never forsake us (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5). Not only is his Holy Spirit our constant comforter, God supplies us with companions to face the storms and the battles. Sometimes we need a “battle buddy” to fight alongside us in this life outside the Garden. Sometimes, we need a “nurse” who ministers hope to us. And always, we need our greatest supplier of hope—the Holy Spirit.

Do you have a battle buddy? We all need someone (or lots of “someones”) who will fight in prayer with us! The prophet Isaiah came alongside King Hezekiah, and they both cried out to the LORD in prayer together (II Chron. 32:20,21), which led to the defeat of their terrible enemy, the Assyrians. We also need people who can bring hope to us and offer care like a skilled nurse. You might never guess where the image of a nurse comes from—it’s actually the meaning of the Greek name Titus! In II Corinthians 7, Paul writes: *When we arrived in Macedonia, there was no rest for us. We faced conflict from every direction, with battles on the outside and fear on the inside. But God who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus. (II Cor. 7:5, 6)*

Just as God led King Hezekiah to the battle with Assyria, Paul and his team were led to this hard place—Macedonia. And similarly to how God provided Hezekiah a battle buddy, he sent Paul a comforting nurse: their brother in Christ, Titus, who was the embodiment of encouragement.

Finally, consider Jesus himself who was led into wilderness to fast and to be tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1). The Bible states that he was “led by the Spirit.” It’s critical to remember that hope is not prohibited by God in trying—even unfathomable—circumstances. In fact, these situations are permitted by God. And in Romans 5:3-5, we are reminded that hope actually *grows* in such challenging contexts. Consider also Psalm 66:10-12:

*You have tested us, O God; you have purified us like silver. You captured us in your net and laid the burden of slavery on our backs. Then you put a leader over us. We went through fire and flood, **but you brought us to a place of great abundance.***

Whether antagonistic Macedonia or the wilderness, our loving God never abandons us, rather, he supplies us with all that we need to endure. The Holy Spirit, our *paraclete*, the comforter, borrows people’s bodies to deliver messages and gifts of comfort to the frightened, depressed, discouraged! The Holy Spirit is the perfect example of hope.



KEEP HOPE ALIVE

BATTLE BUDDIES AND NURSES

I will never leave you or forsake you
~ Hebrews 13:5

He will not leave you or forsake you
~ Deuteronomy 31:6

God supplies us with companions to face the storms and battles of life

***Battle Buddy** ~
someone who will fight in
prayer alongside us in life
outside the Garden*

***HOLY SPIRIT** ~
Greatest supplier
of HOPE*

***Nurse** ~
someone who
ministers HOPE to us*



QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- 1. What biography have you read that has impacted you with hope (it may be time to read one!)*
- 2. Who are your “battle buddies” and whose “battle buddy” are you? (it may be time to find one!)*

NOTES

Keeping Hope Alive through Studying God's Word

Hope's Fuel Line

"God bless your mother, the womb from which you came, and the breasts that nursed you." But Jesus replied, "But even more blessed are all who hear the Word of God and put it into practice." (Luke 11:27,28)

Do not snatch your Word of truth from me, for your regulations are my only hope. (Psalm 119:43)

One of the blessed aspects of reading and obeying God's Word is the by-product of hope. Hope that lasts is contingent upon knowing and obeying God's Word. Several verses on hope are ironically found in the book of Job, where one can't imagine even a shred of hope amidst the unfathomable pain he was living in. But it was especially because of the tragedies that came upon him that Job knew his only true hope was in God (Job. 6:11; 13:15; 14:14; 29:21; 29:23; 30:26; 32:11; 32:16). Please also note in Job 23:10-12, where Job references treasuring God's Word. May we all be those who are MOST blessed, as Jesus said, who hear God's Word and put it into practice!



Is Your Theology Based on God's Word or TikTok Memes?

Is your theology drenched and saturated with God's Word, or is it a shallow caricature of the truth? Fewer and fewer people in America are in love with God's Word, and the fallout is becoming increasingly apparent. Far too many Christians build their lives around a theology that is based on what could be called a voyeuristic view of God, by relying heavily on the opinions of others and not a theology based on God's Word. Far too many Christians claim they want to know Jesus more intimately, but they still do not spend time each day in God's Word—the ultimate textbook for theology. Reading God's Word daily is not an optional activity. A voyeuristic spirituality does not result in vibrant intimacy with Jesus.

It is an amazing work of God that the underground church in China is thriving, but a grievous fact that the church in America is shrinking. Philip Yancey reported that one of the underground church leaders shared with him about the fifty house churches he oversees. He shared that several of the house churches are being led by girls between the ages of 16 and 20! The passion and dedication of teen girls in the underground church in China stands in great contrast to the Christian teens in America who often seem more concerned about finding the right pair of jeans or getting a pedicure than they are about making a difference in their high schools. Too many teens in America are imitating the adults they are around—more concerned about burning candles before the god of mammon (stuff) then loving God's Word and sharing it with others.

Messengers of the Truth as God's Microphone

The following women are just a few of the many women in the Bible that God has used to inspire generations of faithful students of the Word. Why, we might ask, of all the millions of women in the history of the world, did God choose *these* women to be in his Bible? These women played pivotal parts in keeping hope alive among God's people through the ages. Let's consider some of these women and glean the *why* beyond God's sovereign choice.

Miriam: Moses's Courageous Older Sister

When Moses was a little baby, the Pharaoh of Egypt issued a decree to kill any Hebrew boys that were born. Moses's mom hid him for as long as she could, but then she had to put him in a little basket and send him down the Nile River in hopes that someone would save him. Moses's brave sister, Miriam, watched him as he floated down that great river; in fact, she watched the basket float right up to Pharaoh's palace. Young Miriam bravely approached the princess and offered to help with the baby who had been discovered in the basket. Moses's mother had prepared a little ark to save his life (Exod. 2:1-10), and his sister helped save the baby who would grow into the man called to lead millions out of slavery in Egypt and across the Red Sea.

Did you know that Miriam was the first woman in the Old Testament referred to as a prophetess? Prophets were always microphones for the disbursement of truth—sharing the good news with God's people. Because Miriam was raised in the house of Levi, she was spiritually influenced throughout her time at home. When the Hebrew people arrived safely on the far side of the Red Sea, it was Miriam who broke forth under sudden divine impulse in a lofty discourse of praise for God's divine counsel. She led the women in dancing and singing as a celebration to God: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron took a timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances (Exod. 15:20)." Micah the prophet refers to Miriam as one of the leaders of Israel.

For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed thee out of the house of servants, and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. (Micah 6:4)

Vulnerability of all Gifted Woman: Miriam's Leprous Mouth

Just as we can be inspired by the profound faith and actions of God's women, we must also pay attention to learn from their mistakes and weaknesses. There is much to learn from the "good bad examples" we observe in others. In Exodus 15, we saw Miriam leading thousands of women in praise of the King of Kings. Yet, in Numbers 12, we learn about harsh comments made against her humble brother Moses—and the leprous consequences of her words. Blessing and cursing from the same mouth should not be, but often does happen (James 3). Ironically, Miriam, who helped save her brother's life, became jealous of her humble brother. Jealousy often leads to slander and gossip. *Jealousy* in Greek is defined as "to look upon good and declare war." Jealousy can lead to a war of words, which is all too common among women. Though it should be noted that men are not excluded! In Acts 13, it was religious men who were jealous of the disciples and spoke abusively against them, with jealousy foaming from their hearts (Acts 13:44, 45). Be aware that a jealous heart will often manifest itself in gossip.

Hope Kept Alive in a Troublesome Marriage: Abigail

His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite. (I Sam. 25:3)

Another amazing woman in scripture who kept hope alive was Abigail (I Sam. 25). Through her wisdom, generosity, and patient kindness, she not only saved her life but saved the lives of all the workers on their enormous estate.

She even saved the life of the fool she was married to—that in itself is a mercy gift. Hope always has mercy in its caravan. I Samuel 25 depicts the story of this beautiful woman married to a mean man. This man's very name, Nabal, meant “fool.” In Hebrew the name Abigail means “a father's joy.” When a woman behaves wisely and patiently, she will not only bring her heavenly Father joy, but she could even save lives around her. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to act wisely. And remember, one of the fruits of the Spirit is joy. When we make choices that show our heart is pure, we bring joy to the Father. We can choose to live like Abigail who was patient and loving even when those around her were not wise or kind.

Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him... (I Sam. 25:25)

Through the story of Abigail, God shows us that a woman can do what God wants her to do, even when married to a fool. Some believe that Abigail was not being respectful of her husband by “calling him out” in front of David. In fact, though, when Abigail spoke with the future king of Israel about her husband's poor choice, it simply evidenced that she was not in denial about the man she was married to. Many women defend their husbands' foolish choices and do their best to create an image of their husbands that will impress others—until they spend time with him. Controlling women think that they are the defense attorneys for their husbands. These same women will use what they can't control in their husbands' lives as an excuse to not do what God has planned for their lives. Ironically, the controlling woman ends up being controlled by the fool she is vainly trying to control. Now that is a tongue twister!

Abigail did what was right without using her husband as an excuse to passively accept the destiny of the killing of her husband and all the men on their ranch by David and his army of men. Some women who have misunderstood biblical submission would find Abigail's bold and wise choice of standing as a mediator between David's fury and her husband's foolishness as indicative of woman who is not submissive.

In fact, one might even see Abigail herself as controlling; yet, I Samuel expounds on the wisdom of her choice, including encouraging the future king of Israel.

David said to Abigail, “Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.” (I Sam. 25:32- 34)

A woman’s faithfulness to God is not contingent upon her husband being wise, loving, or kind. Be a woman like Abigail, who knows how to walk in the joy of doing the very thing she was created for and not allow her circumstances to keep her from being fruitful. Be a woman who has learned how to thrive and not just survive.

Furthermore, we can consider Abigail’s actions as ministry. Women like Abigail engage in significant ministries, even if those ministries are unofficial. Abigail was not a prophetess and had no other official ministry that we know of. Nevertheless, her humble and gentle advice to David persuaded him not to kill Nabal. How many unrecorded events there must be of women persuading men, humbly and gently, to pursue a more righteous course! What a good model this story is for anyone who thinks that being a leader means they must always know the truth (or that their opinion is always right.) David was certainly the leader in this account, but his humility is evident in that he listened to Abigail and was persuaded. For women, Abigail is a meld of gentle and humble persuasion, of godly character that validates the significance of this noble though sometimes ignored woman.

Ministry of War—Modern Abigails

Many women are crazy about Jesus even though their husbands are either apathetic spiritually or modern Nabals. There are plenty of Christian women married to men who are more passionate about their hobbies than they are about Jesus. Twenty- five years ago, a wise woman named Sandy started an amazing ministry to women in marriages where the husband and wife are not compatible spiritually. The ministry is titled WAR, which would seem like a fitting description of a challenging marriage. Yet WAR stands for the total opposite: Women at Rest (<https://womenatrestministry.com/>). This ministry knows how to encourage women to be wise and courageous like Abigail even when their husbands do not share their passion for spiritual things. These women have learned how to let go of the longing to control their husband's walk with the LORD. So how does a woman control a fool? She doesn't! But she can always control her choice to make the kingdom of God her primary concern and leave her husband and family on God's transformation list. Here's a quote from a woman who is learning this exact lesson:

"I am straight exhausted today of the situation, and I realize it's because I'm wearing a junior God badge and trying to change someone...and that's not in my job description! And doing anything not in my job description will wear me out!"

Have you ever been distracted by daily demands or crippled by circumstances or become exhausted emotionally? These are common excuses for immobilized women. Abigail was a woman in the Bible who did God's will in spite of her difficult circumstances!

Keeping Hope Alive on a Battlefield: Deborah, Bold and Courageous!

Deborah was a prophetess and a warrior. People went to her daily to hear the counsel of God. She fought against compromise with the Sword of the LORD—His Word—and she fought with an actual sword, leading the army of Israel into battle against terrorizing Sisera and his army. Her faith to lead an army against a daunting evil leader was profoundly grounded in supernatural power from God. Deborah must have learned as a little girl to replace fear with faith in her great God. Why can we infer that? Because when the leader, Barak, was too afraid to lead by himself, she stepped in to lead. Deborah was a bold and courageous woman! Did you know that even little girls in Israel today grow up to serve two years in the Israeli Army? What is more amazing was that before she went into physical battle, she spent years in spiritual battle with idolatrous Israel. God installed her as the fifth judge of Israel during a reckless and ruthless time when “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judg. 21:25). Reckless times are utilized by women like Deborah who keep hope alive.

There is no reason to fear when God is on your side. He can help you do great and mighty things! At the time Deborah was a judge, the children of Israel were in trouble. They were at war; and even though they had God on their side, all the people were afraid. All the people except Deborah! When warrior Deborah led the army in battle, God gave them the victory! Deborah is proof that we can conquer our fears and face difficult situations with confidence because God can help us do mighty things! Not only are you a princess—a daughter of the King—by His power, you can be brave enough to be a warrior. You can be a Warrior Princess like Deborah!

KEEP HOPE ALIVE ~ STUDY GOD'S WORD

*Do not snatch your WORD of
truth from me, for your
regulations are my only HOPE.
Psalm 119:43*

***Theology is to come from
GOD'S WORD ~
not the opinions of others!***

Messengers of HOPE in the Bible

- Miriam
- Abigail
- Deborah
- Jael
- Rahab
- Mary ~ mother of Jesus
- Mary ~ at Jesus feet
- Mary ~ at the cross
- Ruth
- Esther
- Hannah
- Rebekah
- Anna
- Lydia
- Phoebe

BE LIKE ABIGAIL ...

Walk in the JOY of doing the very thing you
were created for ~ don't allow circumstances to
keep you from being fruitful.

BE LIKE DEBORAH ...

Conquer fear and face difficult situations with
CONFIDENCE because God can help you do
mighty things!

Become a Hope Agitator

Herbert Lockyer referred to Deborah as an *agitator*. While we usually think of that term as a trouble maker, one can be an agitator for the good. Consider a similar term in Hebrews 10:24: “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” The Greek word translated as *spur* refers to stirring up, provoking, and inciting movement. Women who keep hope alive are constantly stirring up other women to make a mark on their world for Jesus. When a woman walks in the purpose God has scripted for her, her soul fills with hope, and the by-product is “agitating” other women unto hope, love, and good works.

Hope in the Face of a Goliath-Sized Challenge: Jael

I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takes shall not be thine honor; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.
(*Judg. 4:9*)

Another woman of Israel who was courageous in battle was Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. This woman faced a David vs. Goliath situation when the commander of the enemy army, Sisera, showed up on her doorstep! She convinced him to come in and rest, and then this woman took a tent peg and smashed it through his head. Can you even imagine taking a tent peg and pounding it into a man’s brain? It’s gruesome to imagine, but it’s important to consider the depth of the courage exhibited in that act! Her courage was fueled by the hope in the ultimate commander in chief—Jehovah Sabaoth—Lord of the Mass Army. This was the name of God that David shouted as he ran toward Goliath (I Sam. 16:45). Jael knew that the incomparable God of Israel would enable her to defeat Sisera and was given the clarity and courage in that very moment to act. How awesome to consider that a champion of the battle field, the enemy’s commander, was defeated by a woman.

Sustained Hope When Your Name Does Not Make the List

The courage of Deborah and Jael were the instruments of victory for Israel over their enemy! Now, when Samuel refers to this victory, neither Deborah nor Jael is mentioned (I Sam. 12:11). However, the Word of God chronicles Jael's role in the voice of Deborah the prophetess who praised her bravery when she declared, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent..." (Judg. 5:24). This brings up an interesting question that we should pause and ponder: How do you respond when you do not get credit from certain people for all the holy sweat you poured out to bring about the success of an event? Do you immediately buy a ticket to Cranky-ville when your efforts are not acknowledged in the way you think they should be? Ask yourself, can I continue to hope and give hope when my name does not make the winners' circle list?

In situations like this, remember that our hope is in God as our rewarder, not people. It may be that the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the voice of encouragement we hear. Or, it might be that someone we never imagined speaks up and blesses us, as Deborah did for Jael. And most importantly, remember that when the LORD returns, the heavenly army is coming with Him along with the rewards for our holy work in His earthly kingdom (Isa. 40:10; Ruth 2:12; Heb. 11:6).

For God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you showed for His name when you served the saints and you continue to serve them.
(Heb. 10:6)

Another Amazing Hannah: Hannah More

Her Battlefield was High Society, her Weapons were her Words

Taking a brief detour from the women of the Bible, here is a somewhat shocking incident where a woman did not get any credit for the profound contribution of her life. Yet a lack of recognition did not quench her passion for God and doing what is right. She was used profoundly in high society and politically. Who is this woman who did not make the list? Her name was Hannah More. Many people know who William Wilberforce was, the man credited with leading the abolitionist campaign against the slave trade in the British Empire. The movie *Amazing Grace* (2006) captures much of his story. However, few people know the amazing force behind Wilberforce! That was Hannah More, the woman who wrote many of the speeches he presented before Parliament. She also wrote incessantly for the society page to convince the rich of the error and evil of slavery. In his book *Seven Men and Seven Women and the Secret of Their Greatness* (2015), Eric Metaxas wrote that ending the slave trade—including changing minds and hearts about slavery—was the “great calling” of Wilberforce’s life. And Metaxas emphasized that it was Hannah More who was his “closest collaborator” in this world-changing endeavor (p. 306). In fact, the author goes on to write: “How Wilberforce came to be the chief champion of abolition—and how he was able to succeed in ending the slave trade in Great Britain in 1807, after twenty years of battling—has everything to do with Hannah More” (p. 306).

Hope for Those with a Less Than Perfect Past: Rahab the Harlot

Many people know the story of the harlot hiding the two spies that Joshua sent to Jericho. This was an act of extraordinary faith, putting her own life on the line if she had been caught. Consider the power of hospitality that Rahab exhibited by hiding her guests: it was courageous and lifesaving. Listen to her words:

I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us...I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness that you also will show kindness to my father's house.
(Josh. 2:9,12)

Women who keep hope alive have room in their lives for gracious hospitality through which many a heart has been captured by Jesus.

Now, if her outburst of faith was not enough to thrill your soul, consider the reality that a former harlot ended up in the lineage of Jesus Christ! Not everyone knows the rest of Rahab's story of faith. Rahab was not only rescued as Jericho was being conquered, but she ended up being the wife of one of the men in that battle. She would eventually become the great-grandmother of Israel's great Shepherd King—David. And this is how she was woven into the lineage of our Lord Jesus.



BECOME A HOPE AGITATOR

*Hebrews 10:24 ~
And let us consider how
we may SPUR ONE
ANOTHER ON toward
love and good deeds.*

SPUR ~
Stirring up,
provoking, inciting
movement

Walking in the purpose God has scripted

→ **Soul filled with HOPE** →
“Agitating” others unto HOPE, LOVE, GOOD WORKS

*For God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you
showed for His name when you served the saints and you continue to
serve them. - Hebrews 10:6*

GOD is our REWARDER

Women who **Keep Hope Alive** have room in
their lives for GRACIOUS HOSPITALITY through
which many a heart has been captured by Jesus



Hope Kept Alive through the “Stubbornly Obstinate” Three Special Marys

Did you know there were three very special Marys in Jesus’ life? The first Mary was the mother of Jesus. The second Mary was Lazarus’s sister who loved sitting and listening to Jesus teach God’s Word during a time when only the men and boys were supposed to learn the scriptures. The third Mary stayed near the cross as Jesus died, when all his disciples but one ran away. Mary loved Jesus too much to leave him even when He was dying a shameful death (Matt. 27:56). This Mary was the woman Jesus cast a demon out of (Luke 8:2) and was the witness who saw Jesus first after his resurrection. Jesus did not wait for John or Peter or James, but a woman who was forgiven much to be given the first glimpse of the Messiah.

The name these three special woman have in common has a fascinating meaning: *Mary* means “rebellious,” and rebellion has to do with the capacity to rise up in opposition, to be stubbornly resilient. Each of these women exhibited godly stubbornness in her own ways, and all of them were empowered by God to endure with hope, opposing the confusion, chaos, and evil that swirled around those who followed Jesus.

Let’s give particular attention here to the first Mary, the mother of Jesus. Millions of people have been taught to worship Mary throughout the centuries. Too often the focus has been even more on Mary than Jesus. *Honoring* Mary is a legitimate choice, but it should not be as a co-savior or eternal virgin. Now, Mary deserves notice for many reasons. But first and foremost is that Mary was assigned the privilege to carry the Son of God in her womb. She was just a little older than a child when she was entrusted with the task of bearing Jesus and raising him. She was an amazing girl who was obedient and full of trust in her heavenly Father. God is looking for those who are eager to obey and trust him like Mary did. Are you ready to stand up and shout, “Whatever, LORD”!

In Nazareth there lived a young woman named Mary. Mary was engaged to marry a man named Joseph. One day God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, to visit Mary. Mary was very frightened. But Gabriel said, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. You will give birth to a son, and you shall call him Jesus.” Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. Gabriel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. The child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” And Mary said, “Let it be according to your word.” Luke 1:26-38

How could a little girl grow into such a trusting teen that she was able to move from fear to faith when the angel said she would have a child? One of the reasons is that Mary had the heart of a princess. She learned as a little girl how to obey her mom and dad. Her obedience as a little girl prepared her to surrender to God’s will for her as a teenager. A princess knows the Tiara Truth of Obedience, and the wisest thing a princess can do is to shout a big “YES” to God! “Yes and Whatever, LORD”!

In saying “yes” to God, Mary’s name was absolutely prophetic. God knew that Mary’s faith would allow her to resist the opposition she would face in a tiny village where everyone knew everyone else’s business. This inwardly strong teen was able to withstand a lifetime of accusation of immorality that her own son would confront three decades later: “We weren’t born of sexual immorality,” they said; “We have one Father—God” (John 8:41). Jesus’s reply to this old gossip was to turn their attention to their origin, the “Father of Lies” (John 8:44). Being able to withstand false accusations, gossip, and slander is critical for any woman who wants to go the distance in keeping hope alive. We, as hope givers, were chosen because of our confidence and stubborn commitment to the ultimate source of hope—El Elyon, the most High God, incomparable and full of mercy and compassion.

Filled with Hope by God's Word

Before the arrival of Jesus, in a moment of deepest praise, Mary spoke what is called the “Magnificat,” a hymn of praise to the LORD (Luke 1:46-55). Most astounding about this moment of praise is that in ten verses, Mary alludes to some thirty-five scriptures from the Old Testament. Mary references scriptures that declare God’s covenant faithfulness, his steadfast love, his exaltation of the humble and judgment on the proud. She concludes with God as Divine Warrior (Jehovah Sabaoth). Be impressed that a teenager was not only going to carry Messiah in her womb, but also have God’s Word wall-papered in her soul. She knew enough of the Old Testament that her praise was saturated with truth. How does a young Jewish girl know so many Old Testament verses? She obviously came from a home where the parents obeyed God’s outline for parental discipleship:

And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. (Deut. 6:7,8)

Mary did not simply endure the discipline learning the Word, but she found delight in the Word that allowed for the wall-papering of her heart with the Word of God. This delight in the Word of God was on display when she so willingly said “yes” to such a stunning task. Her cousin Elizabeth praised her when she saw her and declared what made Mary distinctive from every other teen girl. “You are blessed because you believed that the LORD would do what He said” (Luke 1:45).

The discipline of Bible study fuels the faith that allows even a teenager to believe that God will do what He said. Deep faith that results in such surrender is the blessed benefit of the discipline of Bible study. Bible study, viable faith, and courageous surrender to the will of God are inextricably linked together.

Hope Kept Alive through a Widow's Faith: Ruth's Irrefutable Demonstration of Hope

Ruth came from a background that did not worship the one true God. As a little girl she worshiped a false god. Then, through the example of a loving older woman, Naomi, Ruth was introduced to the true God. The book of Ruth tells the story of this very young widow who made the critical decision to turn her back on her own people, her country, and her false gods to follow the one true God of Israel. Ruth lives in history as a model of womanhood, willing in joy and confidence to break with her past on the basis of God's revelation taught to her by a loving mother-in-law. God uses the faithfulness of ordinary women to accomplish His extraordinary plans. Ruth declared her conversion in this famous passage:

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." (Ruth 1:16)

When Ruth told Naomi, "Your people shall be my people," she understood that she would not be able to grow closer to the God of Israel if she remained among her people, the Moabites. In choosing to wholeheartedly follow the God of Israel, Ruth left her hometown and moved with her widowed mother-in-law back to Bethlehem.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for My sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matt. 19:29)

Ruth was not only from an ungodly background, she lived during a time in Israel defined as the age of Judges. A time when many people were not doing what God wanted but doing whatever they wanted. "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25).

Ruth's choice to leave her people and cling to the true God of Israel was significant. She eventually married an honorable Hebrew man named Boaz, and the first child they had was Obed, who became the grandfather of King David. Through this gentile woman from Moab, God provided a great king of Israel and inclusion in the lineage of Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Ruth 4:13; Matt.1:5).

In the third chapter of this love story, Ruth approached Boaz with the request that he become her kinsman-redeemer. This was not the bold move of an impatient single woman. This was a request guided by Naomi, who understood the legal obligations of family based on Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Boaz was surprised and pleased by Ruth's request. His godly character and respect show in his reply to her request: "The LORD bless you, my daughter. . . I will do for you all you ask" (Ruth 3:10-11). Boaz obeyed the law God gave in Deuteronomy. As the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz was willing not only to buy the land that had belonged to Ruth's dead husband, but he was also willing to honor the name of the dead husband when he married Ruth. The cost, financially and emotionally, did not cause Boaz to hesitate. Ruth 4 reveals that another relative was a close kinsman. But this relative was not willing to accept the "baggage" that came with marrying Ruth; therefore, Boaz was granted the privilege of being Ruth's kinsman-redeemer.

The book of Ruth is a wonderful love story of honor and virtue. This book will be a blessing to every woman in your family and church. For example, in chapter 2, Boaz interacts with the stranger, Ruth, with such respect and honor—a model behavior for all men. Boaz is a man of integrity. There are characteristics of Boaz that are ideal for any man.

Wallpaper your
heart with God's
Word

Bible *STUDY*

→ *Viable FAITH*

→ *Courageous SURRENDER*

God uses the
FAITHFULNESS
of *ordinary* women
to accomplish His
extraordinary plans

BE LIKE MARY ~ mother of Jesus ..

Be eager to OBEY and TRUST Him.
“Let it be according to Your Word”

Luke 1:38

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. *Which messenger of hope from the Bible challenges you the most? Why?*
2. *How do you spend quality time studying God's Word? (is your theology based on God's Word or Social Media??)*

NOTES

Discipline of Fasting

Hope Kept Alive through a Beauty Contest Winner: Esther

Esther was one of the most beautiful girls in Persia. She entered a year-long beauty contest, and the winner would be chosen as the next queen of the nation. Esther won this beauty contest, and her inner beauty allowed her to be chosen by the King of Persia. What is so amazing about Esther is although her dad and mom both died when she was a little girl, she grew up to be a loving young woman. Her lips matched her pure heart; she was beautiful inside and out.

And the King loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. (Esther 2:17)

There were many beautiful young women brought before the King, but Esther was chosen because her heart was full of love for God and his people. An evil leader named Haman devised a plan to have the Jews destroyed—young and old, men and women and children. God used Esther to block the plan of this evil man. Read the book of Esther and see how God used the courage of a beautiful woman to prevent the slaughter of thousands of God's people.

Pay attention to Esther's immediate response to handling the terrifying situation in which all the Jews' lives were under threat by decree of the King! She called on her people to fast and pray and then she would act. Fasting is too often seen as an ancient practice of mystics. But Jesus himself presumes that his followers would fast: "But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast" (Luke 5:35).

The Discipline of Prayer

Hope Kept Alive in Barrenness and Widowhood

Imagine how it would feel if you were not able to have children, and not only did others tease you about it, but your husband treated you like a second-class citizen. Imagine if you married your true love when you were young, lived a mere seven years together, and then he died. For decades and decades you live as a widow, never to remarry. To say there was material for resentment in each of these situations would be an understatement! But these are the stories of two women, one from the Old Testament and the other from the New Testament, whose main characteristic on display is their faith, exhibited in prayer and worship. Two women who could have been bitter but were better because of their confident hope in God: Hannah and Anna.

In I Samuel 1, the Bible presents Hannah, wife of Elkanah. She was indeed barren, year after year, and she grieved this openly, “She was deeply distressed, and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly” (I Sam. 1:10 RSV). Ultimately, her faith-filled praying resulted in the gift of a son for this previously barren woman. That son was the prophet Samuel, who anointed both King Saul and King David and served the LORD powerfully throughout their reigns.

When Hannah faithfully dedicated Samuel at the Temple—and in fact kept her vow to “give him to the LORD all the days of his life” (I Sam. 1:11 RSV), she broke forth in a magnificent song of praise that scripture conveys in ten verses. If this sounds familiar, it is because we have already accounted for such outpourings of praise from other faithful women, Miriam and Deborah. Hannah would have known those songs...and centuries later, another young woman would have known them, too, including Hannah’s. The Gospel of Luke conveys Mary magnifying the LORD, quoting Hannah’s psalm of praise, for the son she would have, like Hannah, by divine intervention.

Also like Hannah, who worshipped the LORD as she gave her long-awaited son back to God, Mary's worship came forth as she understood that her son would be the long-awaited Messiah, and she would surrender him to his heavenly script on earth. Following this path of prayerful faith, when Mary presented the infant Jesus to the Temple for his dedication, they were met by the eighty-four-year-old prophetess Anna (a derivative of "Hannah"). Anna was the women mentioned above who married young, but had now been widowed for sixty years or more. In her widowhood, she gave herself to prayer and fasting at the Temple. Anna could have buried her hope in the grave where her young husband was laid, but she turned her focus on her heavenly bridegroom (Isa. 54:5) and served him, faithfully, declaring that the heavenly bridegroom, the Messiah, would come. Anna not only prayed, she also fasted. She knew that fasting represented the best meals ever missed. She knew that fasting intensified her prayers. Knowing that prayer can do what God can do—she fasted willingly.

Faithfulness in Prayer and a Backstage Pass to Baby Jesus

Anna daily proclaimed what the prophets had said, and then one day, during her faithful prayer, fasting, and proclaiming—the one that she had been speaking about for decades was carried into the Temple. The promised Messiah! Her faithfulness got her a backstage pass to see the Lamb of God. Moreover, Anna became the first female missionary declaring that Messiah had arrived (the shepherds had been the first male missionaries).

Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem. (Luke 2:37,38)

Anna had been “waiting expectantly,” displaying decades of hope while waiting for the Messiah. She was widowed young, but still had hope. Too often a woman puts God on a timer, and when the timer rings and God hasn’t done what she has prayed for, the pre-meditated resentment of dashed expectations rears its ugly head!

Hope in a Prayer-Warrior Businesswoman: Lydia from Thyatira

On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshipped God. As she listened to us, the LORD opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. She was baptized along with other members of her household, and she asked us to be their guests. “If you agree that I am a true believer in the LORD,” she said, “Come and stay at my home.” And she urged us until we agreed. Acts 16:13-16.

Lydia is described as a maker of expensive purple cloth, which is evidence in that culture that she was a successful businesswoman, but she is also described by Luke as a worshipper of God and a prayer warrior. Lydia’s name in Greek means “travail/labor.” When Paul came to Philippi, he looked for a prayer meeting and met Lydia, the leader of the gathering. This was a woman who knew how to labor at work and in prayer. Paul led Lydia to Jesus, and she was the first convert to Jesus in Europe!

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1)

Hope Kept Alive while Being Burnt at the Stake: Joan of Arc

Certainly you have heard about the French heroine Joan of Arc. In the year 1430, at merely eighteen years old, she led an army of men into a victorious battle that was a critical win for France during the Hundred Years' War. Joan's courage was fueled by a very strong prayer life and full devotion to Jehovah Sabaoth. In fact, the phrase emblazoned on her shield was, "By Command of the King of Heaven." Her effective weapon of war was her confidence in the One she prayed to incessantly. Her astounding life of only nineteen years ended in torturous fire when she was burned at the stake by those who were jealous of her courageous faith. Witnesses said that the last word she screamed in a high voice in the fire was "JESUS"!

Such courage provides oxygenated hope for those who live in fear but desire to have courage like a Joan of Arc. It is also worth noting that many soldiers and leaders took credit for the clear directions God gave to Joan; they claimed the directives and appropriated the credit. As we discussed previously, it does not escape God's attention when people plagiarize the efforts of others, and our hope is in the LORD!



KEEP HOPE ALIVE ~ THROUGH FASTING

BE LIKE ESTHER ~ Full of LOVE for God
and His people!

FAST PRAY ACT

KEEP HOPE ALIVE ~ THROUGH PRAYER

BE LIKE HANNAH and ANNA ~ Better because of
their CONFIDENT HOPE in God ~ WAIT
EXPECTANTLY

BE LIKE JOAN OF ARC ~ Desire COURAGE and
PRAY with CONFIDENCE

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. *Reflect on a time you fasted and the result of it. Consider a situation you may need to incorporate fasting before acting.*
2. *Do you pray with confident hope and wait expectantly for an answer or do you give up when things don't happen as you planned?*

NOTES

The Discipline of Service

All disciples of Jesus are called to be like their Master, who was the ideal servant. True servants are excited about making someone else successful. They are Philippians 2:3-5 on display in their world:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your interests, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ.

Something else to keep in mind when pondering the discipline of service, Paul the apostle described the dress code for a godly woman as “good works.”

I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. (I Tim. 2:9,10)

Hope Kept Alive in a Leather Satchel: Phoebe, Brave Carrier of God’s Word

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the LORD in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; she has been a helper of many and of myself also. (Rom. 16:1,2 NKJV)

In these verses, Paul was praising a woman named Phoebe, whom he called a sister, servant, saint, and helper. How did Phoebe help the great apostle? She was given the enormous responsibility of delivering a letter to the Roman church. Phoebe, a woman in the first century, was a courier for a letter from Paul to the church in Rome. She carried a letter that would someday be a major letter in the New Testament—none other than the book of Romans. How wonderful that God used a woman to bring this most significant letter to the Christians at Rome.

Hope Kept Alive through Clothing the Poor: Dorcas, a Woman Busy Serving Others

In the New Testament, in the book of Acts, there is a story about a lady named Dorcas. She was a very kind woman who loved God with all of her heart. The Bible says, “There was a believer in Joppa named Dorcas. She was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor” (Acts 9:36). Dorcas spent her life diligently serving the needs of others. She stitched beautiful garments and distributed them generously to the city’s widows and children, the most pitiful victims of life’s storms and trouble (Prov. 31:13, 20). God wants us to be like Dorcas and have a heart full of compassion and kindness! The book of James exhorts us that true religion includes visiting widows and orphans in their afflictions (James 1:27).

Hope Kept Alive through Pom-Pom Waving Cheerleaders

Women who keep hope alive by encouraging others are like the Old Testament prophets who, themselves, were like cheerleaders waving pom-poms among God’s people. When you cheer others on as they serve God, you are a modern-day Haggai. Hidden in this prophet’s name is the very spirit of enthusiastic cheering, because the name Haggai means “festive”! Can you picture this prophet walking the Temple job site and waving pom-poms at all the workers dripping holy sweat for God’s glory?

So the Jewish elders continued their work, and they were greatly encouraged by the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo. The Temple was finally finished, as had been commanded by the God of Israel and decreed by Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, the kings of Persia. (Ezra 6:14)

Hope Kept Alive through a Shepherdess: Rebekah, a Kind, Hard Worker

Consider the story of the beautiful and diligent Rebekah. She was chosen to be the wife of Isaac and the future mother of Jacob, who was the patriarch of the twelve tribes of Israel.

She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up again. Running over to her, the servant asked, “Please give me a drink.” “Certainly, sir,” she said, and she quickly lowered the jug for him to drink. When he had finished, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels, too, until they have had enough!” So she quickly emptied the jug into the watering trough and ran down to the well again. She kept carrying water to the camel until they had finished drinking. The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not she was the one the LORD intended him to meet. (Genesis 24:16-21)

Rebekah is clearly described as a hard worker, carrying a jar on her shoulder, caring for her dad's sheep. Her respect for others showed in her kindness to a stranger in verse 18, “Drink, my lord”; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. This was no lazy girl, but one who cared for the needs of others. Rebekah did not stop after one act of kindness either! Do you see what she did next? She said, “I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking” (Gen. 24:19). Can you imagine how many buckets of water those thirsty camels could drink? Look at her diligence in verse 20: “So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.” Rebekah decided to put someone else's needs ahead of her own. She shared the water and served without even being asked! When you decide to put someone else's needs ahead of your own, it's the best way to have a happy heart! Serving others is a source of true joy, and that joy can be explained as J = Jesus first, O = Others second, Y = You last.

KEEP HOPE ALIVE ~ THROUGH SERVING

***BE
KIND***

**JESUS
OTHERS
YOU**

***BE
COMPASSIONATE***

***ENCOURAGE
OTHERS***

***SERVE
OTHERS***

Philippians 2:3-4 ~ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in HUMILITY consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the SAME AS THAT of CHRIST.



BE LIKE....
PHOEBE
DORCAS
REBEKAH

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Evaluate your attitude regarding serving others.

Is it a “have to” or “get to” attitude?

2. *How are you living out the “one anothers” in Scripture?*

Are you serving your family, friends, church?

NOTES

How Does a Woman Keep Hope Alive When God Says “No”?

An amazing child of God was given a “NO,” and his response was so impressive. He did not whine or rant or disregard God’s guidance, instead he went to a quiet place and worshiped God. How many women would register for a conference titled, “When God Says No”? Take time to study the following passages, and you will find a valuable nugget of truth.

David summoned all the officials, the leaders of the tribes...David rose to his feet and said: “My brothers and my people. It was my desire to build a temple where the ark of the LORD’S covenant could rest....But God said to me, ‘You must not build a temple to honor my name, for you are a warrior and have shed much blood.’” (I Chron. 28:1-3)

Can you imagine how all the leaders felt when they heard that God said “no” to their awesome king? David had a dream, vision, provisions, and the approval of a prophet, yet God’s response was “no.” In Acts 13:22, God refers to David as a man after his heart who would carry out all God’s will, even when God said “No.” David sought to follow the full counsel of God’s will, even when he was prohibited from pursuing an honorable dream and desire and vision.

God spoke to David’s dream and desire in II Chronicles 6:8 by saying, “Your intention was good, but you are not the one to do it.” When Nathan the prophet told him that God said “no” to his dream, David’s response was to go before the LORD to worship, not to argue (I Chron. 29:13-15). David goes into the Temple and rehearses God’s goodness and praises him for all he had done for David (II Sam. 7:18-29). How you respond to a “no” from God reveals your heart more than all you do for God.

Here is how Paul Tripp once said he responds to “no” from Papa God: “Thankfully I am not the author of my own personal story. My story isn’t an autobiography but a biography of wisdom and grace written by another” (Ps. 139:16). This same principle was profoundly expressed by a mom named Sharon Hughes as she battled cancer: “The story has already been written, so each day I just turn the page” (II Tim. 1:9). Remember, do not forge God’s name on the script you have written!



KEEP HOPE ALIVE ~ WHEN GOD SAYS NO

Follow the full counsel of God's Will ... Even when it prohibits you from pursuing an honorable DREAM, DESIRE, and VISION

Your intention was good, but you are not the one to do it ~ II Chronicles 6:8

“I am not the author of my own personal story. My story is not an autobiography but a biography of WISDOM and GRACE written by Another”.
~ Paul Tripp

Do not forge God's name on the script you have written.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. *Reflect on a time you wrote the script and forged God's name on it. How did that work out?*
2. *What helps you move forward when God says no ~ even to honorable desires, dreams, and vision?*

NOTES

Hope for the Self-deprecating Woman

In our conceptions of ourselves, we humans have two opposing tendencies: to be completely enamored with ourselves, thinking more highly than we ought (Rom. 12:3), or to demean ourselves, not seeing the great value we have being made in the image of God. As Christians we have the privilege to see ourselves through God's eyes of love, which is a balanced image that recognizes we are sinners who were once enemies of God and that we are redeemed heirs with Christ. Ironically, when a woman does not see herself through Papa God's eyes, her self-deprecating mentality can actually become overly self-focused and even narcissistic.

So, what is God's balanced, loving perspective of us? Among many descriptions in scripture, let's look at one profound image he gives us in II Corinthians 4:7 (NLT): "We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure." You might think, "Clay jars were the cheap, everyday vessels! I thought that in Christ we would be fine china!" But Paul goes on to write, "This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves." The amazing reality is that we are mere clay pots, easily cracked and broken; but it is into these vessels the God of the Universe has poured his love and set up residence in his Spirit! Perfect vessels bring glory to themselves not God. However, his strength is continually made perfect in our weakness (II Cor. 12:9,10). And so, like Paul, we can actually brag being humble, cracked jars, because the power of Jesus shines through us!

When we choose daily to believe what God thinks about us (see Ps. 139:14) rather than our self-deprecating mentality, we can be full of hope. We have already taken a look at a few of the “fragile clay jars” the LORD included in the lineage of Jesus, but here are some reminders that the bloodline of our Savior was full of mere humans, just like us. Tamar was the mother of Perez (Matt. 1:3) who was conceived when Tamar tricked her father-in-law, Judah, to sleep with her (Gen. 38). Rahab the former harlot was the mother of Boaz who married a woman from the nations, Ruth (Matt. 1:5). Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah, conceived Solomon in adultery with David (Matt. 1:6). And, of course, there was Mary, who would have been publicly shamed for being pregnant while she was engaged (Matt. 1:16).



HOPE for the SELF-DEPRECATING Woman

Romans 12:3

Completely ENAMORED with SELF ~ thinking more highly than we ought

Psalm 139:14

Completely DEMEAN SELF~ not seeing the great value of being made in the image of God

BALANCE ~
seeing SELF through
GOD'S eyes of LOVE

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great TREASURE ~
II Corinthians 4:7

My grace is sufficient for you, for my POWER is made perfect in weakness ~
II Corinthians 12:9

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What is God's balanced and loving perspective of you?

2. What do you think contributes to self-deprecation in women and how can it be overcome?

NOTES

Hope Kept Alive in Weakness

No Need for Polished Pretending

The women named in Jesus's genealogy give us hope and encouragement to know that God is very aware that we are mere flesh. Only the Man Jesus was perfect, and he had no twin. Therefore, we are called to live by faith, not by perfection. In other words, *it is okay to be not okay*. God wants our reliance to be in him, in loving dependency, by the power of the Holy Spirit. We will have hard times and sorrows. We will stumble and we will fail. In every state we face, we don't need to pretend we are polished silver when we are clay jars. If you ever find yourself doubting your worth or capacity to be a woman who keeps hope alive, remember, you are in good company. The great prophet Isaiah faced such a moment and probably several times. He cried out, "But my work seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose. Yet I leave it all in the LORD's hand; I will trust God for my reward" (Isa. 49:4 NLT).

Here's another word picture to convey this principle. Most people know the story in the Gospel of Mark about Jesus and the fig tree:

Now the next day as they went out from Bethany, He was hungry. After noticing in the distance a fig tree with leaves, He went to see if He could find any fruit on it. When He came to it He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And His disciples heard it. (Mark 11:12-14)

This may seem like a harsh judgment on the fig tree. Bible commentator David Guzik sheds some light on what Jesus may actually have indicated. He suggests that Jesus cursed the fig tree for "looking full" when it was empty. Leaves are present when the tree is full of fruit. Jesus had no tolerance of looking full when one is empty.

Looking righteous when one's heart is far from him is grievous to the Holy One willing to live in us. As portable tabernacles, Jesus does not want us to glue on leaves when there is no fruit. Doesn't this immediately bring to mind a certain couple who made the same mistake with fig leaves (Gen. 3:7)?

A version of such a "fig tree warning" is when a woman piles many good works on top of an unhealed heart wound. Have you ever met a woman in ministry with great competency but very little tolerance of weakness or any measure of compassion? We need daily time in God's Word to sink deep roots that allow us to not only be used but also grow deeper into the hope that is in him and not in our accomplishments (Rom. 15:4,5). Here are just a few scriptures to read and ponder as you consider that it is okay to be not okay: Job 23:10-12, Path for the not okay; Romans 15:4, Hope for the not okay; Hebrews 12:2, Reality of the race run by the not okay.



KEEP HOPE ALIVE ~ IN WEAKNESS

*Live by FAITH not by
PERFECTION*

Don't pretend to be
POLISHED SILVER.
You are a
JAR OF CLAY

*It is OK to NOT
be OK!*

Daily time in God's Word

Deep Roots

Deeper HOPE in Him

Job 23:10-12

Romans 15:4

Hebrews 12:2

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. *Reflect on a time when you pretended to be “polished silver” rather than a “jar of clay.”*
2. *Why do you think “it’s ok to not be ok” is not widely accepted among Christians?*

NOTES

Hope Kept Alive in Helplessness

There are times in life when we feel worse than “not okay” or more than weak. We face circumstances that can bring us to feeling absolutely helpless. These are the times when we are tempted to turn to despondency. Yet, rather than despondency, here is what the Word of God calls for in helplessness: *dependency!* You can actually find the ultimate hope in helplessness because God’s strength is most on display when his children are helpless (II Cor. 12:9,10).

Think about the Israelites at the Red Sea. The Egyptian army was charging in on them, the sea was before them—and what could they do? Jump in and swim? The throng was in an all-out panic! And what did the LORD instruct Moses to do? Raise up his rod and march forward. This was when the unbelievable happened and that great sea was parted in two (Exod. 14). In that moment of utter helplessness, God’s faithful power was on display for both the Hebrew people and the Egyptian army, which was swallowed up by the sea. Over and over again, the LORD shows himself powerful when his people are powerless.

O our God will you not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude...nor do we know what to do...but our eyes are on You... (II Chron. 20:12)

Helplessness Provokes the Abba Cry

“Abba! Father!” He cried out, “Everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” (Mark 14:36)

Certainly there is no greater example to us of helplessness fostering full dependence on God that Jesus himself. When he called out to Father God in Gethsemane, he cried with the most intimate of names: *Abba*, which mean Papa or Daddy. This is our model of our privileged relationship with God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth! He calls us beloved children, and he is our beloved Papa. Repeatedly the scripture reports that Jesus went off on his own to pray to his Father, and not least, when things were a chaotic mess all around him.

At this, the enemies of Jesus were wild with rage and began to discuss what to do with him. One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and He prayed to God all night. (Luke 6:11,12)

The Apostle Paul exhorts Christians in more than one letter to turn to God with this same familiar name: “And because we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us all to call out, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal. 4:6). In his letter to the Romans, Paul instructs us that the Holy Spirit in us affirms we are children of God and not slaves to sin when we cry “Abba! Father!” (Rom. 8:15). Helplessness, you see, is the gateway to a strong prayer life and the path to a waterfall of hope. If you are frustrated through helplessness, that very struggle and suffering, in Daddy’s care, can be transformative: from frustration to compassion. Romans 8:18 shows that Abba God replaces the frustration with compassion. And in Romans 8:37, Paul proclaims that helplessness can be transformed to unconquerable: “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” When you are hurting and overwhelmed, you need only cry out to your Daddy or whisper “Abba” repeatedly until God replaces your heartache with hope!

KEEP HOPE ALIVE ~ IN HELPLESSNESS

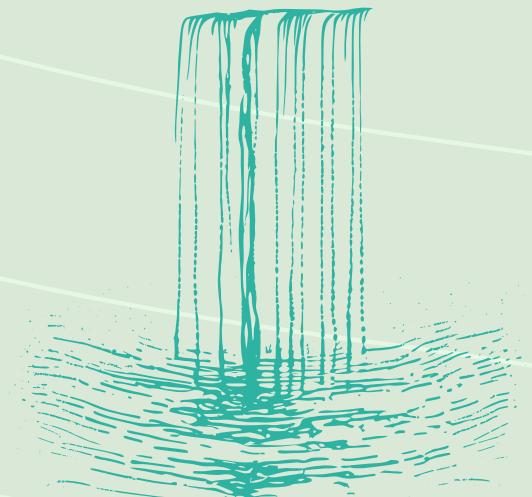
Ultimate HOPE is found in helplessness because God's strength is most on display when his children are helpless.

II Corinthians 12:9-10

**Helplessness
is the
gateway to
a strong
PRAYER life
and the
pathway to
a waterfall
of HOPE**

Mark 14:36
Romans 8:15
Romans 8:18
Romans 8:37

And because we are His children , God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us all to call out, ABBA! FATHER!



The Lord shows Himself powerful when His people are powerless

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Reflect on a time God showed Himself powerful when you felt powerless.

**2. Is it hard for you to relate to God as your Father, Daddy, Papa? Why?
How can you change your mindset?**

NOTES

Hope Kept Alive through Spiritual Mothering

Older women...are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be reviled. (Titus 2:3-5)

This description of “Titus Time” is not a clever church program but a necessary part of fulfilling the Great Commission of making disciples. This passage is for all the older women in the local church—it is not a suggestion for a few volunteers, but it is *for every older woman* who is a follower of Jesus. An older woman teaching younger women is part of the Master’s plan of spreading the good news from generation to generation. The term *spiritual mothering* could easily be used as the definition of mentoring or discipling. When an older woman invests time in a younger woman, they both are capable of mutual encouragement in the LORD. “That is that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine” (Rom. 1:12).

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done...so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. (Ps. 78:6-7)

Classic Example of Spiritual Mothering—the Mary Miracle

The relationship between a wise older woman and a young teenager was demonstrated perfectly in Elizabeth and Mary. When Mary found out that she was miraculously with child, she immediately fled to her cousin who was also carrying a miracle in her womb. This spiritual mothering relationship had been set up by an angel of the LORD.

And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren”... Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country.

(Luke 1:34-36,39)

It is interesting that we are not given an account of how Mary informs her mother about her pregnancy. What the Bible does tell us, however, is that Mary goes “with haste” to her cousin Elizabeth. The LORD compels the young woman with the “womb miracle” to get to her aged kinswoman with her own womb miracle. Elizabeth can spiritually mother Mary because she is a little further along in her miracle. In spiritual mothering, the one who is further along in her personal miracle with Jesus is the best one to encourage and guide the one who is newer to the process.



KEEP HOPE ALIVE ~ THROUGH SPIRITUAL MOTHERING (MENTORING AND DISCIPLESHIP)

Older women are to teach what is good, and so train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive...that the Word of God may not be reviled.

~Titus 2:3-5

Titus 2

- ~ necessary part of the Great Commission of MAKING DISCIPLES
 - ~for every older woman following Jesus
- ~a part of the Master's plan of spreading the good news from generation to generation
- ~mutual encouragement in the Lord (Romans 1:12)

That we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine ~ Romans 1:12

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done... so that the next generation would know them... Then they would put their TRUST in God and would not forget His deeds but would keep His Commands ~ Psalm 78:6-7

Elizabeth and Mary
The one who is further along in her personal journey with Jesus is the best one to ENCOURAGE and GUIDE the one who is newer to the process.

Emotional Vampires

Among the many ways that spiritual mothering can encourage women is to help us recognize what can effectively siphon out hope from our soul. Sometimes there are people whose attitudes drain you, and sometimes there are situations that wear you down. A good name for these hope drainers is “emotional vampires.” Mentors can aid us to discern how to not cast pearls before swine, being aware of emotional vampires who suck the life out of you but are not fruitfully responsive to truth.

Sometimes emotional vampires come in the form of consecutive heartache. These consecutive painful situations leave a person drained, bitter, and sometimes cynical. For example in the book of Ruth, Naomi, meaning “pleasant,” asked to be called Mara, meaning “bitter.” She boldly declared in front of the Bethlehem welcoming committee, “I went out full and I am returning empty” (Ruth 1:19-22). This hopeless widow was whining about loss while she was standing right next to the greatest gift, Ruth, who would be a part of the lineage of Jesus. To keep hope alive, one must be careful to resist being drained by emotional vampires who keep you from your God given purpose. A woman brings God glory by finishing the work she has been assigned (John 17:4). An emotionally drained woman will not be volunteering to keep hope alive in a crisis!

Jesus himself encountered plenty of draining people in his earthly ministry—many of whom he ministered to and healed. Many he loved with forbearance, as we are called to do repeatedly in the New Testament. But take note of one person that Jesus actually had to discharge from his presence: Judas Iscariot. Judas’s heart had been infiltrated by Satan (Luke 22:3; John 13:27), and Jesus told him to hurry out and do what he was intent on doing. Once Judas was removed from their gathering, Jesus shared the most comforting, hope-filled directives, the most incomparable words of wisdom for his inner circle who would be used to change the world (John 14-17). In the words of author Gary Thomas, “Dismissing the one toxic person was like opening up the flood gates to some of the most powerful teaching this world has ever seen. These chapters rival the Sermon on the Mount in their power, majesty and truth” (Gary Thomas, *When to Walk Away*, Zondervan, 2019, pg. 72).

WARNING

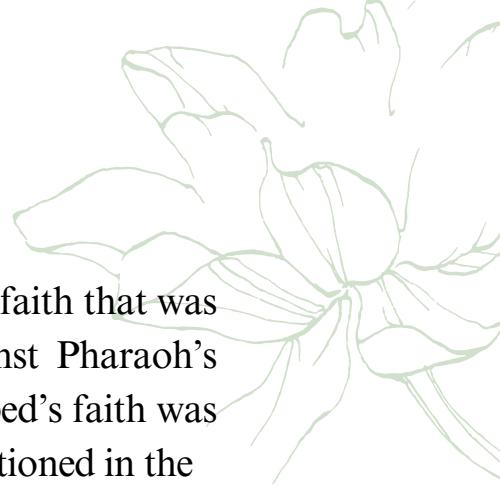
BEWARE OF
EMOTIONAL
VAMPIRES

When to Walk Away
by Gary Thomas

EMOTIONAL VAMPIRES effectively siphon out HOPE from the soul...

- ~ draining attitudes
- ~ situations that wear you down
- ~suck the life out of you~not responsive to truth
- ~consecutive heartache

RESIST emotional vampires who keep you from your God GIVEN PURPOSE



Hope Kept Alive through a Brave Mother: Jochebed

Moses's mother, Jochebed, was a woman of great faith that was manifested in her courage to protect her son against Pharaoh's edict to destroy all the male Hebrew children. Jochebed's faith was considered so important that she ended up being mentioned in the famous Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict" (Heb. 11:23). Jochebed wisely made an ark of bulrushes and daubed it with asphalt and pitch, preparing a safe little boat for her dear baby Moses (Exodus 2:1-3). By faith she placed him in a floating ark and trusted God to steer the little child to someone who would have mercy on him. God directed the little ark right to the feet of a princess of Pharaoh. In fact, Jochebed gave Moses up to God *twice*: first in the floating ark and then to the arms of a princess (Exodus 2:5,6). She made a choice without guarantees. Jochebed did what she could and left the rest with God (Exod. 2:7-10).

Hope Kept Alive for Paul the Apostle by a Spiritual Mother

Did you know that Paul tells about his own spiritual mother in his letter to the Romans?

Greet Rufus, whom the LORD picked out to be His very own, and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me. (Rom. 16:13)

Rufus was the son of Simon who helped Jesus carry the cross. And so this Simon was the husband of the woman Paul considered his spiritual mother. Do not underestimate the hope you can bring to another's life by being a spiritual mother to them, nor the hope you can glean from aligning yourself with a spiritual mom.

These relationships offer “bonus kids” and “bonus parents” in the kingdom of God. Indeed, mentoring and discipling is a form of parenting.

This spiritual mothering and fathering is given significance in the fifth book of the Bible.

And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. (Deut. 6:6,7)

Further, Jesus called for this profound work of mentoring in one of the last sentences he spoke before ascending into heaven. He told his followers to go and make disciples. The word *disciple* is the Greek word for “mentor.” Mentors—spiritual parents—keep hope alive in this dark world, and they have for over two-thousand years!

A Wet Nurse for Many of God’s Kids

The Hebrew name for God, El Shaddai, was used when demonstrating the nurturing aspect of spiritual mothering. This reference to God being El Shaddai—the God with breasts—can provoke thought about another aspect of spiritual mothering. We are to be abundantly nourished by God, daily, in his Word (Isa. 50:4). When we are well fed, God can use us to “suckle” many of his children who are malnourished and not being fed. Mothers who are malnourished are not capable of nourishing their own child; so a wet nurse is summoned to nourish the child. Now, in the Body of Jesus so many of the “more mature women” are spiritually malnourished, while many of the younger women are in need of an alternative. This is when a spiritual wet nurse, who is so full of El Shaddai, can suckle many of God’s hungry children.

Neglecting Spiritual Mothering Harms not only the Church but also our Nation

In the book *Spiritual Mothering* by Susan Hunt, the author makes a classic remark that is key to the frustration in the lives of so many daughters of the King. Susan writes, “For many women today, their purpose in life is shaped by their desire to attain the personal happiness they are told they deserve. So they are not only disappointed by unrealized expectations, they are defeated” (p. 43). She highlights the significance of Titus Time between older and younger Christian women, “It is interesting that of all the ways Paul could have told the women to combat the decadence of their culture, he told them to invest their energies in training the younger women to live Christianly in their society” (p. 42). Now, the society of Paul’s day was as sex saturated as our society today. He knew women strategically impact the morals of a nation. President John Adams was famously quoted saying, “The morals of a nation rise and fall on the manners [virtue] of women.” When a woman neglects her privilege of encouraging younger women to live a Christ-like life, she is not only harming the church, but this neglect of her role as a spiritual mother ultimately harms our nation.

Oswald Chambers underlines this spiritual axiom, a woman or man will never have true joy until they are doing the very thing they were created for—not from doing something of their own choosing. One must realize that discontentment in so many women is the result of a kind of disobedience, a neglect of God’s imperative. We can witness so many Christian women working for the American Dream rather than living for the Master’s Dream. Spiritual mothering is not merely a clever idea: it is a holy assignment.

Spiritual Mothering in the Heart of Our Resurrected LORD

As stated above, this was the last thing Jesus said: “Go into the world and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19). In that little verse, “make disciples” is the only imperative. It is like Jesus is simply saying, “Listen, go make disciples.” *Disciple*, you recall, means “mentor.” Mentoring is not just a 21st century cliché. Everybody talks about needing a mentor, and there are organizations trying to get mentors for everyone from businesses to schools to sports to the church: men, women, young people—everyone is told to find a mentor! But two-thousand years ago, Jesus himself told his disciples to go forth and mentor people all over the world.

Imperative Principles to Stamp into the Mentee's Life

Jesus's imperative to make disciples set the framework for spiritual fathering and mothering to teach the principles that he had taught his disciples. In her book *The Mentoring Mom*, Jackie Kendall expounded on the word *mentor*, noting that it is also defined as "to stamp an image." Jesus called his followers to stamp an image on this world. Spiritual mothers are to stamp the image of the hope that is in Jesus Christ on the hearts of those whom God brings into their lives. Jackie presents some common practices that spiritual mothers can teach, disciplines that will inevitably produce hope in the lives of those mentored. Using the metaphor of ink stamps, here is a list of what godly discipling can impress on others:

Stamp the Image of Love for God

Stamp the Image of a Praying Woman

Stamp the Image of a Student of God's Word

Stamp the Image of Soul's Emotional Health

Stamp the Image of Loving People to Christ

Stamp the Image of Your Heart's Passion

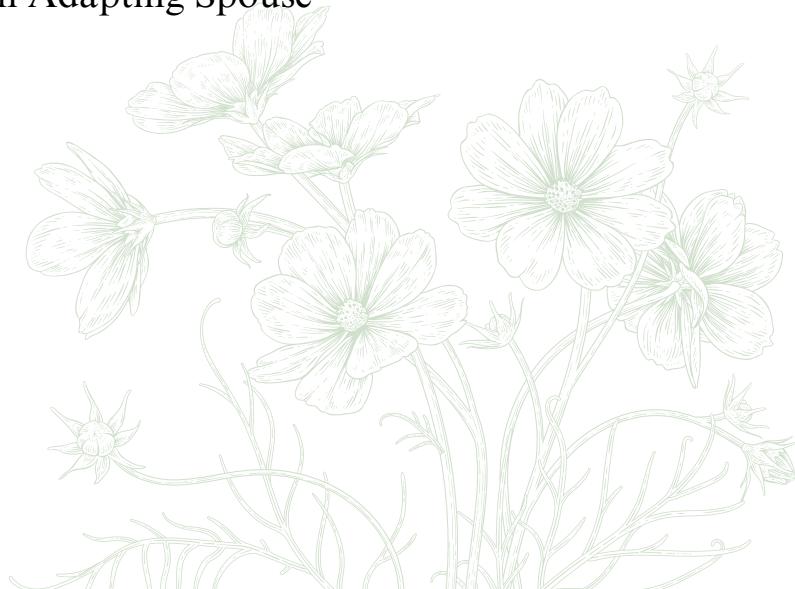
Stamp the Image of a Noble Life Purpose

Stamp the Image of Teachability

Stamp the Image of Perseverance

Stamp the Image of Reckless Abandon to God

Stamp the Image of an Adapting Spouse



Hope Kept Alive through Mother of the Year: Susanna Wesley, Benefactor of Hope

Spiritual mothers who keep hope alive regularly practice the disciplines of Bible study, prayer, and fasting. The word *mother* in Hebrew is sometimes translated “benefactor”: A woman who is an emotional benefactor to one’s soul in a crisis; a woman who provokes the will to continue in a trial. Certainly a spiritual benefactor can blow fresh oxygen into the souls that one inspires. In this case, the woman we are highlighting is Susanna Wesley. If the surname sounds familiar to you, it is because she was the mother of the famous Wesley brothers, John and Charles.

Susanna Wesley lived from 1669 to 1742. She gave birth to nineteen children! Although only ten of them lived past birth or infancy. Homeschooling ten children and running a busy household, her prayer closet consisted of covering her face and head with an apron. She lived in a profoundly difficult marriage, but the difficulty never kept her from impacting her children spiritually. Her children would tell others of their mother’s nightly appointment with God that she never missed from the age of eighteen until seventy-two.

Another aspect of this benefactor, Susanna, was that she scheduled time every week with each child individually for sacred heart-to-heart sharing in the LORD. What this indicates is that the profound discipling of her sons, who would leave an immeasurable stamp on Christendom, was not undertaken by the father but by the mother. Spiritual mothering was a full-time job for Susanna, which made her many daily activities even more remarkable. Her husband, Samuel, was constantly away and rarely sent home money, so Susanna had to be creative to feed her children, body and soul. Reportedly the Wesley brothers did not hold much respect for their father because of how often he neglected their mother.

What is most important is to realize the eternal impact Susanna had on her children, especially John and Charles, that subsequently impacted the world. Susanna's sons are credited with being used by God for an historic and cultural earthquake referred to as the Wesleyan Revival. Eric Metaxas summarizes this perfectly:

Most of the dramatic social advances of the nineteenth century—including all that Wilberforce and his friend Hannah More were able to accomplish—were a direct result of that unprecedented outpouring of faith. It can be said without exaggeration that John and Charles Wesley's efforts, their evangelism and service to the poor, the disenfranchised, and the hopeless, changed the world. It also can be said without exaggeration that who those great men were and all they did in their lives had everything to do with the extraordinary woman who raised them. (Seven Men and Seven Women, p. 265)

Too often women neglect the privilege of discipling their own children, not aware of the eternal by-product of such spiritual mothering. On the other side of the equation, too often women do not seek out spiritual mothers. Besides one's own children, there are children we can meet along the way to heaven who are spiritual orphans in need of a benefactor!



Endangered Species of Spiritual Mothers

The spiritual mother is committed to teaching those younger than she is so that they too may put their hope in the LORD. Where are all the spiritual mothers today? Why are there so few older women available to mentor a new generation of young women? Are they are working in the marketplace, earning money for more trinkets, rather than sacrificing time and money to pour into the next generation? Or are women simply not taught that they should be committing Titus Time to younger women? With the lack of such committed mentors, however, someone or something fills the void. We saw Oprah Winfrey mothering the world for decades through her TV show and online interactive classes. As angry as some Christians were about the “new religion” of Oprah Winfrey (like the class on A New Earth by Eckhart Tolle), we need to understand that she only appealed to many because there are millions of “motherless” souls out there. Women and girls need spiritual mothering by mature Christian women, not the latest favorite book promoted and affirmed by a popular talk show host. And once Oprah exited the stage, hungry souls turned to an even more problematic voice of spiritual influence: social media.



The Lord has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to SUSTAIN with a WORD him who is weary ~ Isaiah 50:4

Go

→ **Make Disciples**

→ **Mentor**

→ **KEEP HOPE ALIVE**

BE LIKE JOCHEBED ...

Courageous

Make choices without guarantees

Do what you can ~ LEAVE THE REST TO GOD

BE LIKE PAUL'S SPIRITUAL MOTHER

Bring HOPE to OTHERS (Romans 16:13)

*A woman or man will never have TRUE JOY
until they are doing the very thing they were
CREATED for ~ Oswald Chambers*

*I pray that God, the source of HOPE, will fill you completely with JOY and
PEACE because you trust in Him. Then you will overflow with CONFIDENT
HOPE through the power of the Holy Spirit. ~ Romans 15:13*

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Who is your Paul? Who is pouring into you?
2. Who is your Timothy? Who are you pouring into?
3. Do these people fill you or drain you?

NOTES

ADDITIONAL NOTES



ADDITIONAL NOTES





@PetalsNPrayer

Appendix: Further Study

Discipline of Bible Study

What prevents effective devotions?

1. Being a Spiritual Voyeur
2. Being a Skimmer
3. Being Scattered and Distracted

Why have daily devotions?

1. Spiritual Nourishment (I Peter 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14)
2. Devotions are a Holy Telescope (II Cor. 3:18; Heb. 4:12)
3. Devotions Produce Addiction to Hope (Ps. 119:92)
4. Anti-doubt Journal
 - a. Source of Faith (Rom. 10:17)
 - b. Pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6)
 - c. Inner Referee (Col. 3:15,16; Heb. 4:12)
 - d. Strength for Life's Trials (Ps. 119:67,71,92,107)
 - e. God's Will Clarified (Ps. 40:8)
 - f. Ultimate Tool of the Sanctifier (John 17:17)

Who is the ultimate tutor during devotions? James 1:5

The Holy Spirit does the following during our Tutorials in the Word

1. Searches (I Cor. 2:9-11)
2. Teaches (John 14:26; 16:13)
3. Compares (I Cor. 2:13)
4. Cleanses (John 16:8-11; Ps. 139:23,24; Ps. 119:9,11)

Who needs a daily quiet time?

1. Powerful People (Deut. 17:18,19) Kings
2. Beautiful People (Amos 8:11,12,13) Celebrities
3. All People desiring to be a true follower of Christ (John 8:31)

Devotions equip us for what kind of service?

1. Noble workman (II Tim. 2:15; 3:16,17)
2. Delicious Caterer (Isa, 50:4)
 - Refreshing Garden Hose (Isa. 58:11)
 - Brave Liberator (John 8:32; Ps. 119:32,45)
 - Tester of God's Promises (Ps. 119:140)
 - Effective Comforter (II Cor. 1:3-8 vs. Job 6:21)

What is available daily in God's Word?

Sampler from Psalm 119

- See wonderful truths (v. 18)
- Receive wise advice (v. 24)
- Encouragement for the discouraged (v. 25)
- Hope for those in grief and despair (v. 28)

5. Discernment between worthy and worthless things (v. 37)
6. Wisdom beyond one's years (vv. 99,100)
7. Insight to spot false belief systems (vv. 104,130)
8. Rest and peace for the weary soul (v. 165)

“A Bible that is falling apart belongs to someone whose life isn’t.”

Spiritual hunger does not develop by not eating! It develops through increased consumption!

“Secret 7 Method”

One Year Bible Study Bible: First year: Read N.T. and Psalms

Second year: Read O.T. and Proverbs

7 minutes per section: 15 minutes total per day

“Trust Buster”—circle the word *trust* throughout the Psalms. “Red Circle of Trust”

“Jesus Calling”—look up verses at bottom of journaling, then write out the verse that most speaks to your heart! Journal, draw a heart, put the scripture verse in the heart and write out verse under the heart

Preparation for your holy intermission

1. Same chair
2. Same Bible
3. Same journal: composition book or Bible margins
4. Notepad
5. Same pen
6. Study helps nearby: ESV Study Bible for the hard questions & Blue Letter Bible app

***What does this passage teach me about**

1. God
2. Jesus Christ
3. Holy Spirit
4. myself
5. sins to confess or avoid
6. commands to obey
7. what Christian love is

*taken from *Keep a Quiet Heart* by Elisabeth Elliot/p.130-hints for a Quiet Time

Definition of Quiet Time: A time you set aside each day to spend with God.

Your time with God might include:

- Reading the Bible
- Reading from a Devotional
- Spending time in Prayer
- Doing Art
- Listening to Worship Music and getting your **PRAISE ON!**
- All of the above! Be creative, change it up, be **YOU!**

When should you have this time?

- Times when you must get away by **YOURSELF**: Matthew 6:5-6
- Times when it is an all-day occasion: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 1 Thess. 5:15-18 (Discuss this with them and give explanation)
- *Each day, fight for your time with God!*

How Do You Read The Bible?

- John 4:23-24, In Spirit and Truth
- S.O.A.P. – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer: A technique that can aid in helping you to not only get in the Word, but slow down with it and really take away lessons and applications from the text.

Don't be afraid to wrestle with the text (not God, but the text). Write about a personal example of what you're wrestling with. Research, find out answers, for goodness sake, wrestle!

Journaling as a Part of Spending Time with God: A journal is a place where you can write out all of your thoughts and prayer, where no one judges you, no one is there criticizing...it's just you, God, and paper and ink.

- Explain your own journey. The blessing will be to have documented evidence of the work of Christ in your life and to trace back the answering of prayers, promises fulfilled, etc...
- Write your prayers, thoughts, poetry, Scriptures...just WRITE!

“God’s Word is shallow enough to not drown the young, but deep enough that the greatest theologian will never touch the bottom.” ~ St. Augustine



Spiritual Discipline of Prayer—Fuel Line for Hope

Prayer Defined

1. The deepest and highest work of the human spirit
“All who have walked with God have viewed prayer as the main business in their lives.”
2. Like communication between two people who love each other
“*Meaningful prayer looks like the ceaseless communion between two people caught up in a love affair*” ~ C.W. Gaddy
3. Internal Jogging (Gen-X definition)
4. Holy Point

Prayer’s Purpose (Isa. 26:3; 50:10; 45:20; I Tim. 2:1-5; Rev. 5:8; 8:3,4; John 10:27-30)

“*Prayer...secret, fervent, believing prayer lays at the root of all personal godliness.*” ~ William Carey

“*In prayer, real prayer, we begin to think God’s thoughts. We will begin to desire the things He desires, love the thing He loves and will the things He wills.*” ~ E.C. Haskell

“*Prayer is designed to adjust my will to God’s will, not to adjust God’s will to mine.*” ~ Henry Blackabey

Prayer’s Privileges (Ps. 94:18,19; Gal. 6:2; Rom. 8:26, 27)

1. God listens (Deut. 4:7; Ps. 4:1; 6:9; 17:1,6; 65:2; 66:20)
2. Never an interruption (I Thess. 5:17; Heb. 4:15,16)
3. Burden bearing honor (Gal. 6:2)
4. Holy Spirit is our editor—built in grammar check (Rom. 8:26,27)

Prayer's Priority (I Sam. 12:23; Rom. 14: 23)

Not Optional (Ps. 32:6; Acts 6:4; Rom. 12:12; 15:30; II Cor. 1:11; Col. 1:9,10; II Thess. 1:11)

As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. I Sam. 12:23

1. Failing to pray is sin against God (Rom. 14:23)
2. Prerequisite to teaching good and right ways (Eph. 4:15)

Prayer's Prerequisite (Jer. 29:11-13; I John 5:14, 15; James 5:16; Matt. 26:39)

1. According to His Will—perfect example (Matt. 26:39)
2. Prayers that delight God (Prov. 15:8, 29; James 5:16; Ps. 37:4)

Beware! Audacious Prayer Request:

- a. Who not to pray for (Jer. 14:10-12; Prov. 28:9)
- b. What not to pray for (James 4:1-3; Ps. 106:15)

And He gave them their request and sent leanness to their soul.

Psalm 106:15

Prayer's Pursuit

Fruitfulness (John 15:7,8,16,17; II Cor. 5:18,19; Acts 20:24) Eyes open to hope (Eph. 1:18; Lam. 3:21-23)

Open doors (Col. 4:3; I Cor. 16:9)

Direction where to go (Jer. 42:3; Isa. 30:21)

Protection from falling (Lk. 22:40; I Cor. 10:12,13) Maturity and depth spiritually (II Cor. 13:9; Phil. 1:9)

Prayer's Partnership (Matt. 18:19,20) This is the most heavenly of duets.

Prayer's Posture (Dan.10:9,10; Mk. 11:25; John11: 41; Matt.26:39; II Sam. 7:18)

“The meaning of prayer is not determined by proper mechanics, but by personal authenticity.” ~ C. W. Gaddy

Where can you pray? *Anywhere!*

Prayer's Problems (Matt. 6:5-7; James 4:3; Isa. 1:15; Mk. 12:40)

1. Hindrances: Vain repetition (Matt. 6: 5-7)
2. Too much rambling; words not supported by the heart
3. Wrong motives (idolatrous lust; James 4:3; Rev. 4:11)
4. How can I use God? vs. How can God use me?
5. Men hinder their prayers (I Pet. 3:9)

Prayer's Participation (I Thess.5: 17,18; Phil 4:6,7; Zeph. 3:17; Isa. 42:9; Ps. 25:14)

A 24/7 adventure with Jesus

Prayers Privacy/Solitude (Matt. 6:5,9; 14:23; 26:36)

Prayer's Deuteronomy: Review

P = pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17) requires:

Persistence: “unabashed audacity; shameless boldness” (Lk.11: 5- 8; I Kings 8:56)

Confidence: “freedom in speaking all that one thinks” (Heb. 4:15,16)

R = rarely easy, always work, sometimes agony (Col. 4:12,13) Angels visit agonizing intercessors

Prayer Gladiator

A = always better as a duet (Matt. 18:19,20)

“Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God’s infinite grace and power. All that God is, and has, is at the disposal of prayer. Prayer can do anything that God can do.” ~ R.A. Torrey

Learn to harmonize with one, two or a huge group!

Y = yield to Spirit's Leadership (His teleprompter, Rom. 8:26)

“Wanting the things He wants, feeling the things He feels, thinking the things He thinks!” ~ Roy Lessin

Will it bring glory to Jesus?

Will it advance His kingdom?

Will it help others draw closer to Jesus?

Will it help me to grow spiritually?

E = e-mail prayers, journal prayers, record (Ps. 78:6,7)

R = Rolodex list of names (I Tim. 2:1-3)

Flash Prayers: pray for the one brought to mind

Swishing Prayers: pray for someone who crosses your path

S = Simple format: ACTS (Phil. 4:6): Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplications

Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a prayer partner?
2. Are most of your prayers about personal happiness or holiness?

Jump-start for Adoration/Thanksgiving in Prayer: “Lord, you are...”

Almighty, Ancient of Days
Blessed, Beautiful, Blameless Omnipotent
Compassionate, Counselor
Prince of Peace
Deliverer
Eternal, Everlasting, El Shaddai
Righteous
Father, First, Faithful
Sure
Glorious, Giver of Life
Tender
Holy, Healer, Hiding Place
Unchanging
Immortal, Invisible, Immutable
Just, Jealous
Worthy
King of Kings, Kind
Lord of Lords, Light of the World
Majestic, Mighty, Merciful
Hope
Never Ending Omnipotent,
Pure, Powerful,
Quickener Rest, Refuge,
Strength, Salvation,
Trustworthy,
Unfailing Love,
Victorious Wonderful, Wise,
Xalted (exalted)
Yahweh
Zion’s King, Zion’s

Spiritual Discipline of Fasting in the 21st Century

The best meal you will ever miss. Why people don't fast.

1. Gorging on worldly pleasures (Lk.8:14; Mk.4:19)

2. Nibbling at the Lord's table (Jer. 15:16; Job 23:12)

“The weakness of our hunger for God is not because He is unsavory, but because we keep ourselves stuffed with ‘other things.’” ~ John Piper

Why Fast?

Bridegroom's instruction (Matt. 9:14,15)

“More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us.” ~ Robert Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

Occasions to Fast

1. Hero Fallen (II Sam. 1:12)

2. Personal Affliction (II Sam. 12:15,16)

3. Family Needs (Ezra 8:21-23)

4. Bereavement (I Sam. 31:13)

5. Preceding Confrontation (Ezra 10:6; Jer. 36:9)

6. Intercessor (Dan. 6:18, 10:3)

7. National Crisis (II Chron. 20:3,4; Esther 4:15,16; Jonah 3-5)

8. Ministry Decisions (Acts 13:2,3)

9. Gain Understanding (Dan. 10:12)

10. Finding God's Will (Prov. 11:14; 15:22;24:6)

Who Fasts?

1. Disciples (Matt. 9:14)

2. Religious (Mk. 2:18; Matt. 23:5)

3. Widows (Lk. 2:36-38)

4. Seekers (Acts 10:30, 31)

5. Servants (II Cor. 6:5; 11:27)

6. Kings, Queens, Warriors, Prophets, Ambassadors, even children
(II Chron. 20:13, 18)
7. Jesus (Matt. 4:1,2; Luke 4:1,2)

What to do While Fasting?

1. Extended prayer time (Dan. 9:3,4; Joel 1:13,14; 2:12,13)
2. Extended Bible reading (Jer. 36:6) Fasting/Prayer Journal
3. Confession of sin (I Sam. 7:6; Ps. 139:23,24)
4. Mourn/grieve for others (Neh. 9:1-3; Ps. 19:9,10; Deut. 9:18; Dan. 9)
5. Feast of Truth and Peace (Zech. 8:19)

Conditions of Fasting

1. Time (II Chron. 20:13-15)
2. Deprivation (Dan. 10:3; Esther 4:16)
Fast From: food, sleep, entertainment (Dan. 6:18), retail-therapy, exercise, & criticism
“Abstinence from anything that is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of a special spiritual purpose.” ~ M. Lloyd-Jones
3. Private Affair (Matt. 6:16-18) Look good – no sackcloth outwardly, only inward sack cloth
4. Monitor (Ps. 69:10; I Cor. 6:12) De-sensualizing my heart

God’s Fast vs. Generic Fasting

1. God’s fast is described in Isaiah 58 (Jer. 14:12, Zech. 7:5, II Chron. 7:14)
“It is possible to do extraordinary fasting and yet not humble ourselves, pray, seek God, and turn from our sin.” ~ John Piper
2. Generic Fasting: Fasting in vain (Jer. 14:12; Zech. 7:5)
 - a. Religious practice devoid of internal devotional (Isa. 58:5; Joel 2:13)
 - b. Fasting with sinful motives (I Kings 21:9-13; Isa. 58:3,4)

- c. Fasting for material goals rather than ministry (Isa.58:7)
- d. Fasting to be seen as spiritual (Matt. 6:16)

Benefits of Fasting

1. Effectiveness in prayer
2. Increased concentration
3. Guidance
4. Deliverance from strongholds
5. Revelation
6. De-sensualizing of my heart
7. Prep for spiritual battles (Eph. 6:12-18; Matt. 17:21; Matt. 9:29)
8. Physical well-being

“Most of us run the risk of being overly ‘sensualized’ simply by having every craving satisfied and rarely pausing in a moment of self-denial to discover if there are alive within us spiritual appetites that could satisfy us at a much deeper level than food...” ~ John Piper, *A Hunger for God*

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever fasted? What was the occasion?
2. What keeps you from fasting?
3. Do you think you need to fast more regularly?



Joy as a Spiritual Discipline The Inextricable Link between Joy and Hope

SERIOUSNESS OF JOY

Deut. 28:47,48

“Many a Christian has a thousand reasons for joy which she knows nothing of.” ~ Charles Spurgeon

II Cor. 6:3-10

“At every moment of our life we have an opportunity to choose joy. It is in the choice that our true freedom lies, and that freedom is, in the final analysis, the freedom to love.” ~ Henri Nouwen

BLESSING OF JOY AND SORROW

Luke 1:48; Rom. 5:2-5; James 1:2-4

JOY IS A COMMAND Phil. 4:4

SEVERAL JOY ROBBERS

1. Anxiety and Fear (Prov. 12:25; Matt. 6:34; Phil. 4:6,7)
2. Comparing/Coveting (I Cor. 4:7; Phil. 4:11,12; Heb. 13:5; I Tim. 6:6)
3. Sin (Ps. 32:4; 51:7-12; Lam. 5:15,16)
4. Busyness (Ecc. 8:16,17; Mark 1:35-39; I Cor. 3:12-15)

“Do not add to the cross in your life by becoming so busy that you have not time to sit quietly before God.” Fenelon

5. Controllers (Isaiah 5:18,19; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18)
6. Joyless People (I Chron. 15:29; Amos 3:3; Prov. 13:20)

7. Unbelief (Matt. 13:20,21;II Cor. 7:4; Rom. 15:13;Heb. 3:12,13)
“*The opposite of joy is not sorrow—it is unbelief.*”

G.I.G.A.T.T. God is Good all the Time

“*God created us in joy and created us for joy, and in the long run not all the darkness there is in the world and in ourselves can separate us finally from that joy, because whatever else it means to say that God created us in His image, I think it means that even when we cannot believe in Him, even when we feel most spiritually bankrupt and deserted by Him, His mark is deep within us. We have God’s joy in our blood.*” ~ Frederick Buechner

REASONS FOR JOY

1. The Joy of Being Loved (Jer. 31:3;Rom. 5:5,8; 8:38,39; John 17:26; I John 3:1)

Henry VII burned Thomas Bilney at the stake because he would not renounce his joy of living in God’s free forgiveness.

2. The Joy of Loving God (Jer. 33:3; I John 4:19; John 15:10,11)
“*There is no joy equal to this joy in God.*” ~ Charles Spurgeon
3. The Joy of God’s Activity (Ps. 92:4,5; Isa. 64:4; III John v.4; I Thess. 3:8,9)
4. The Growth of Joy (I Pet. 1:6-8; Rom. 5:2-5; James 1:2-4)
5. The Joy of Fulfilling One’s Purpose (John 17:4; Acts 20:24)

“*Joy comes from seeing the complete fulfillment of the specific purpose for which I was created and born again, not from successfully doing something of my own choosing.*” ~ Oswald Chambers

JOY IS A SOUL CATCHER

Rom. 14:17; John 17:3,4

“There is a joy which is not given to the ungodly, but to those who love You for Your own sake, whose joy is You Yourself. And this is the happy life: to rejoice in You, of You, for You. This is true joy, and there is no other.” ~ St. Augustine

“Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls...” ~ Mother Teresa

JOY IS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH IN TOUGH TIMES

Neh. 8:10; Ps. 81:1

JOY IS A GIFT FROM GOD TO US

Gal. 5:22; Isa.35:10

Gladness and joy overtake the redeemed—a holy ambush!

“Joy is the great note all through the Bible. We have the notion of joy that arises from good spirits or good health, but the miracle of the joy of God has nothing to do with a man’s life or his circumstances or the condition he is in. Jesus Christ does not come to a man and say ‘Cheer up.’ He plants within a man the miracle of the joy of God’s own nature.” ~ Oswald Chambers

JOY MAINTENANCE

1. Dwelling in the Truth (John 15:4,5; Jer. 15:16)

Word***Faith***Obedience***Exuberant Gladness Warden,
Security Guard over Word (John 15:9-11)

2. Addicted to Hope (Prov. 23:17,18; Lam. 3:15-25)

To lose hope is for the soul to stop breathing. Dare to hope!

3. Joy’s ultimate expression (II Sam. 6:16-23; John 4:23,24; I Thess. 5:18)

Discussion Questions

1. Did you ever consider the seriousness of joy in the life of a Christian?

“Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you...”
(Deut. 28:47,48)

2. Share a recent experience of joy in the Lord.
3. What is a common joy robber in your life?

Spiritual Disciplines on Display in the Dailies of Life: Practical Guidelines for Keeping Hope Alive

Yada Yada Sisterhood Defined

Yad: extend your hand to help

Yadah: raise your hands to worship

Yada: intimate knowing...heart to heart...Psalm 133:1-3

Divine Secrets of Yada Yada Insight and Understanding:

1. Largeness of Heart (I Kings 4:29)
2. Ministry of Encouragement (Gal.6:2)
3. Understands Life's Greatest Mystery: Suffering (Heb. 5:8)

Divine Yada Yada Insight:

1. Suffering knocks things out of proper focus
(Ps. 55:1-6; Ps. 69:1-3; Matt. 11:1-11; Ex .6:9)
2. Suffering blurs our view of god temporarily (Ps. 10:1; 13:1;109:1,2)
3. Suffering either refines or ruptures one's faith (Job 6:14; II Cor. 7:6,13;Ps. 119:67,71)

Yada Yada Sisters Do Not Slam the Door on the Wounded

1. She validates feelings

(Prov. 18:13; Gal. 6:2; Prov. 11:17; 17:17)

2. She doesn't reprimand someone's struggle

(Job 6:8,9; 36:15,16;42:7; Prov 18:14)

She is a compassionate listener

She thinks before she speaks (Prov. 14:15;11:12)

She knows when to be silent (Prov. 17:27,28; 10:19)

She knows when to speak (Prov. 15:23; 20:5; 18:13; 25:11)

The Yada Yada Sister Resists Being a “Pair of Cleats”

_____ transforms a woman from a Paraclete, into a pair of cleats

Yada Yada Sisters Are Wounded Healers

II Cor. 1:3-7 Tutored by the God of all comfort

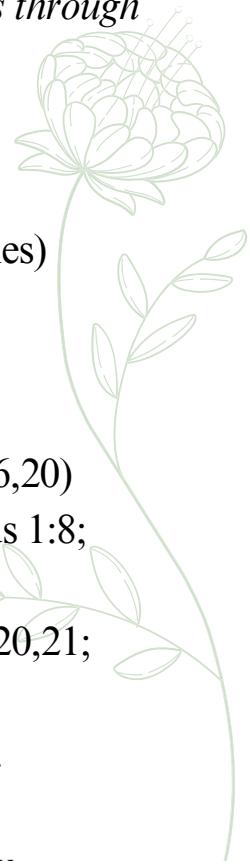
“The most effective path in understanding the pain of another is through facing and embracing my own pain.”

The Secret Activities of the Yada Yada Sisterhood

(The Proverbs 31 Woman Demonstrated Yada Yada Activities)

Yada Yada Sisters Shoot Out Their Hands To Give:

1. Holy Hugs (Deut. 33:12)
2. Helping hands (Prov. 31:13,17; Ecc. 4:9)
3. Hand someone financial assistance (Phil. 4:18;Prov. 31:16,20)
4. Open the door of one’s home: hospitality (I Tim. 3:2;Titus 1:8; Heb. 13:2; Prov. 31:14)
5. Carry people’s burden’s to God through prayer (Job 16:20,21; I Sam. 12:23)
6. Places her hand on her ear to listen more carefully (Prov. 20:5;18:13)
7. Holds open the Bible and directs attention to Hope (Prov. 12:25; Ps. 119:92,107,165: Prov. 31:26)
8. Hand writes notes of encouragement (Isa. 50:4;Ps. 34:18)
9. Uses her hands to carry meals to those suffering (Isa. 58:7; Matt. 25:42-45)
10. Hands of applause—fanning the flame for Jesus (Heb. 10:24; Isa. 62:1)



Book Reference: *The Dangerous Duty of Delight* by John Piper

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