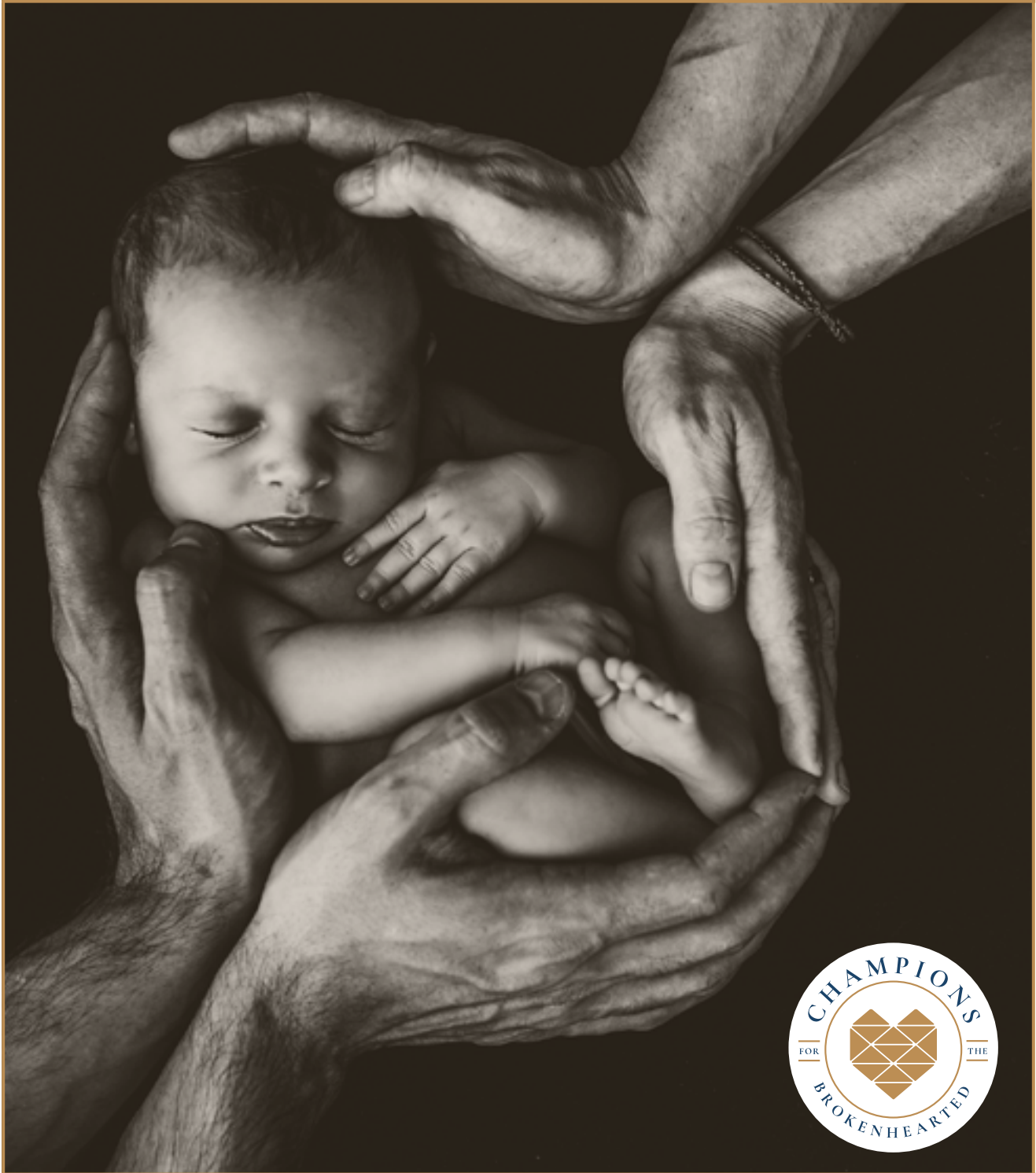




HOPE FOR THE UNBORN



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INTRODUCTION

Dear Friend,

I was born in Melbourne, Australia without arms and legs even though three sonograms had never revealed any complications. Growing up, it wasn't easy. Throughout my childhood, I struggled with depression and loneliness. I even questioned the purpose of my life and tried to take my own life when I was ten years old.

But Jesus met me in my pain and I decided to give my life to him. Since then, I've travelled to 74 countries to share my story with millions of people just like yourself, from students and young people to business professionals and even world leaders. I want to share a special message with the world based on my own story and encounter with Jesus: there is hope.

I may not know what you're struggling with today. But like I've seen in my own life, the Bible teaches us that Jesus is not only present in our pain, but that He is the answer to our heaviest struggles. Jesus says, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have **peace**. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

I'm here to tell you today that you are special, you are loved, and that God does have an amazing plan for your life. He will never leave or forsake you. And if God can use me, a man without arms and legs, to be His hands and feet, then He will certainly use any willing heart. Throughout my life I've always held onto a special verse that says: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you **hope** and a **future**"* (Jeremiah 29:11). If we give our lives to him, he promises to give us hope and a future. Now that is amazing!

Here at NickV Ministries, we love you and we're praying for you. We're here to be your Champions and to point you back to the true Champion: Jesus. We pray that these resources will help you through whatever challenges you may be facing and bring hope for the way forward.

Thank you and God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "NickV". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nick Vujicic and the NickV Ministries Team

WORRY

The Joy Stealer

What Is God's Heart on Worry?

When we worry, our minds get an unnecessary workout. We run through all the possible outcomes to our situation. We jump to conclusions before getting all the facts. We weigh ourselves down with all the “what-ifs.”

Truly, worrying is an exercise in futility. Worry leads to fear and stress instead of faith and rest.

Realize, when Jesus talked about worry, He redirected our focus onto God. He wants us to understand that our worries don't change the character of God. Ultimately, grasping God's character changes how we handle our worries. Perhaps the most poignant phrase Jesus said to worriers is: “. . . *your heavenly Father knows . . .*” (Matthew 6:32).

God knows what's going on in your life. He cares about what's happening. He loves you. While worry will steal your joy, the Lord gives it. He wants every worried heart to look to Him for help and find joy.

*“I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me.
He freed me from all my fears.
Those who look to him for help
will be radiant with joy.”
(PSALM 34:4–5 NLT)*

God wants you to remember that He is good and gracious and cares about you with compassion.

“The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made” (PSALM 145:8–9).

God wants you to remember He promises to meet your needs.

“The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame” (ISAIAH 58:11).

God wants you not to live in a state of worry.

“Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (MATTHEW 6:34).

God wants you to trust Him when you're worried—to have faith and not fear.

“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you” (PSALM 56:3).

God wants to be close to you when worries break your heart.

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed” (PSALM 34:18 NLT).

*“While worry will
steal your joy,
the Lord gives it.”*

God wants you to look to Him when you're filled with worry.

"When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy" (PSALM 94:19).

God wants you to look to His Word when you're tempted to worry.

"As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands" (PSALM 119:143 NLT).

God wants you to give Him all your worries because He cares for you.

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you" (1 PETER 5:7 NLT).

God wants you to encourage others when they are worried.

"Encourage one another and build each other up" (1 THESSALONIANS 5:11).

God wants you to talk with Him about everything that's worrying you, and thank Him for how He will use your trials in your life.

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus" (PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 NLT).

Key Verses to Memorize

*"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray.
Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers,
letting God know your concerns.
Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness,
everything coming together for good,
will come and settle you down.
It's wonderful what happens when
Christ displaces worry at the center of your life."
(PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 MSG)*

Key Passage to Read

Luke 12:22-34

My Personalized Plan to Find Peace

Worries become well-rehearsed words swirling around in my mind. I know I shouldn't worry, but I can't seem to stop the worrisome words . . . then I worry about worrying! Fortunately, God doesn't simply say, "Stop worrying," without telling me *how* to stop worrying. If I want my worries to vanish, then I must learn new ways of thinking and develop methods for changing my former thinking patterns. Although my thoughts and memories may not be erased, the rehearsed words can be replaced as I focus on the wisdom of Philippians 4:6–9 . . .

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.
⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
⁸Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true,
whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable
—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—
think about such things.
⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me,
or seen in me—put it into practice.
And the God of peace will be with you."
(PHILIPPIANS 4:6–9)*

Applying God's Word to My Worry

As I seek to overcome worry in my life on a daily basis, I will personally apply the truths of God's Word found in the preceding passage . . .

I will choose not to worry or be anxious about anything. (v. 6)

I will bring every situation that concerns me to God rather than worrying about it. (v. 6)

I will tell God what I need, and thank Him for all He's done for me. (v. 6)

I will focus on having a heart of praise and thankfulness. (v. 6)

I will let His peace guard all of my thoughts and feelings—my entire mind and heart. (v. 7)

I will direct my thoughts, intentionally fixing them on what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. (v. 8)

I will act in a way that reflects God's life—His words, His teachings, His actions, His character, His example in thought, word, and deed. (v. 9)

I will continually remember that the God of peace will be with me . . . *always*. (v. 9)

Applying God's Way to My Worry

As I seek to overcome worry by applying God's Word to my life, I will also commit to applying it God's way and in His strength.

Therefore, I will . . .

Acknowledge what I worry about.

- Honestly evaluate the people or situations that burden me.
- Make a "Worry List" of my concerns, detailing each one and the outcome I hope to ultimately see.

"Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll" (JOB 19:23).

Read Philippians 4:8 carefully, one point at a time.

- Evaluate my fretful thoughts against each point in Philippians 4:8.
- Ask myself, "Are my thoughts true . . . noble . . . right . . . pure . . . lovely . . . admirable . . . excellent . . . praiseworthy?"

"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (PHILIPPIANS 4:8).

Present each worry on my list to God, along with the details, moving all of them from my "Worry List" to my "Prayer List."

- Set aside a sufficient amount of time to present my requests to God.
- Pray, "Lord, I know you are fully aware of my situation regarding (the problem). I am feeling (describe my emotions). I want your will to be done in my life and in the lives of everyone involved. I relinquish control of this situation and thank you that you already have a resolution in mind. I am trusting you to reveal your will for me in your time and in your way. And I am relying on you to direct my course of action and guard my heart and mind. I will not worry about this anymore, but will continue to leave it in your hands. Thank you, Lord."

"I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer" (PSALM 17:6).

Slow down my thinking.

- Become more aware of the thoughts rushing through my mind as they occur.
- Recognize my troubling thoughts, submit them to the scrutiny of God's Word, and write down their corrections. To change a thought, I must first capture it.

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 CORINTHIANS 10:5).

Challenge my mistaken or false beliefs. (Mistaken beliefs are at the core of worry.)

- Carry a notebook with me to capture and record thoughts that imply some belief that may be false.
- Write down why I know what I believe is mistaken or not true. Example: "I am a victim of the way others have treated me." "Not true. I can take control of my life now and change the outcome."

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (ROMANS 12:12).

Change my focus from *worrying* to *resting* in God's sovereignty.

- I will recite scriptures that remind me of God's sovereign rule over my life.
- And, I will sing and listen to songs that focus on the faithfulness of God and His character, and practice resting in Him by remembering and focusing on His goodness and faithfulness.

"Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you" (PSALM 116:7).

STRESS

How to Cope at the End of Your Rope

What Is God's Heart on Stress?

Stress can take us down one of two paths. For many, stress leads to *unrest*. Frustrations at work, responsibilities at home, deadlines at school, unfinished to-do lists, heartbreaking headlines, and troubled relationships all pile up to an overwhelming sense of weariness, exhaustion, pressure, and unrest. And the enemy wants to use the *unrest* to *arrest* you—to hold you captive to the pressures and stresses of life.

But God's plan—His path for stress—leads not to painful unrest but rather peaceful *rest*. The enemy wants to overwhelm you with unrest, but the Lord wants you to overcome with His rest. Stress is inevitable, but hope is available. If you want to find peace in times of stress, come to the Lord and find the rest you're looking for in Him.

*"Let me teach you, because
I am humble and gentle at heart,
and you will find rest for your souls."
(Matthew 11:29 nlt)*

God is with you in times of stress.

"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

God sees and knows your stress.

"But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand" (Psalm 10:14).

God wants to give you peace when your heart is troubled, stressed, and afraid.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

God wants to carry your burden and give you rest.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

God wants to guide you when you're too stressed to make decisions.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you" (Psalm 32:8).

God wants to strengthen you when you're weak and weary.

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak" (Isaiah 40:29).

*"God's plan for
stress leads not
to painful unrest
but rather
peaceful rest."*

God wants to deliver you from your stress.

“They cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress” (Psalm 107:6).

God wants to comfort you in times of stress.

“I, yes I, am the one who comforts you” (Isaiah 51:12).

God wants to use your stress to increase your dependence on Him.

“We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself . . . But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:8–9).

God wants you to talk to Him about your stress and set you free.

“In my distress I prayed to the LORD, and the LORD answered me and set me free” (Psalm 118:5 nlt).

God wants you to trust Him and be a refuge for you in times of stress.

“Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge” (Psalm 62:8).

God wants you to worship Him and acknowledge His constant presence even in times of stress.

“I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone” (Genesis 35:3).

Key Verses to Memorize

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and
burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
(Matthew 11:28–30)*

Key Passage to Read

1 Kings 19:1–18

My Personalized Plan to Manage Stress

As I seek to manage the stress in my life, **I will . . .**

Seek to Be Healthy

- I will eat healthy, get adequate sleep each night, avoid harmful substances, and exercise regularly (as I am able).
- I will get regular medical checkups and talk with my doctor about my stress if needed.

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Learn Relaxation Techniques

- I will learn breathing techniques and other exercises to calm myself down when I am stressed.
- I will take a time-out as needed to give myself a few minutes to calm down in stressful situations.

“I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content” (Psalm 131:2).

Express My Emotions

- I will talk with a trusted friend or family member, wise counselor, and especially with God about my stress and emotions.
- I will journal my thoughts and feelings regularly, especially when I am stressed.

“In my distress I prayed to the LORD, and the LORD answered me and set me free” (Psalm 118:5 nlt).

Draw Near to God

- I will pray and read God’s Word daily, meditating on His truths and talking with Him honestly.
- I will attend church regularly to worship, receive encouragement from God’s Word, and be with other believers.

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer” (Acts 2:42 nlt).

Keep Things in Perspective

- I will keep an eternal perspective and remember that my stress is temporary.
- I will remember God has promised me a future full of hope.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

Replace Negative Thoughts

- I will identify negative thought patterns that lead me to feel more stress.
- I will replace negative thoughts with the truth of God’s Word.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

Identify Triggers

- I will identify which situations, feelings, people, environments, and circumstances typically lead me to feel stressed.
- I will find healthy ways to prepare for and cope with those situations.

“Give careful thought to your ways” (Haggai 1:5).

Build Boundaries

- I will identify where I can create boundaries in my life to limit stressful interactions and prevent overextending myself.
- I will communicate my need for boundaries, time, and space as needed with the people in my life.

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23).

Take Time for Myself

- I will do at least one thing each day that brings me joy and gives me peace.
- I will take time to rest daily, weekly (Sabbath), and yearly (taking vacation time)—and not feel guilty about it.

“Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him” (Psalm 62:5).

Be in Community

- I will make time to be with friends and family to talk, share a meal together, or go out together.
- I will look into joining a local church, Bible study, book club, gym, exercise class, or other community group.

“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help” (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 nlt).

Be Thankful

- I will write down a few things I am thankful for each day.
- I will give thanks to God for His many blessings and gracious gifts in my life.

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Rest in My Identity in Christ

- I will remember my identity is not in my job, performance, work, ministry, or accomplishments.
- I will rest in God’s grace and find my identity in Christ as a beloved child of God.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1).

Truth to Meditate on When You're Stressed

God's Word can be a great source of comfort when we are feeling stressed. By meditating on His truth, we can gain perspective and find peace. The Lord promises ...

*"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you,
all whose thoughts are fixed on you!"
(Isaiah 26:3 nlt)*

"The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (Deuteronomy 31:8).

"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24–26).

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness" (Jeremiah 31:3).

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:1–3).

"The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

"The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made" (Psalm 145:8–9).

"The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing" (Zephaniah 3:17 esv).

"I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38–39 nlt).

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say" (2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 nlt).

GUILT & SHAME

Breaking Free from Guilt and Shame

What Is God's Heart on Guilt?

God's grace is greater than our guilt. It's one of the most central and remarkable truths of the Bible. For *every* sin and for *all* our sin—God has grace for us. The Bible says, “*he gives us more grace*” (James 4:6).

We all experience guilt. We've all said or done things we shouldn't have, and we've all failed to do things we know we should have done.

Guilt can lead to two very different responses. On one hand, guilt can drive us *away* from God. This often leads us to cover up our sin and guilt, try to ignore it, or we attempt to “earn” God's approval through our “good works” or trying harder or beating ourselves up. This usually leads to feeling more guilt, shame, and frustration.

On the other hand, guilt can drive us *to* God. Guilt can serve as a signal that we've done something wrong and we need to come back to God to receive His grace and forgiveness.

Realize, no matter what you've said or done, no matter how many times you've failed, no matter how great your sin—you're never outside the reach of God's love and mercy. The Lord extends forgiveness to you and calls you to walk in the freedom of His grace.

*“Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace
to help us in our time of need.”*

(HEBREWS 4:16)

God is gracious and forgiving, yet He does not overlook or excuse the guilty.

“The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty” (EXODUS 34:6–7 NLT).

God declares that all people are guilty of sin.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (ROMANS 3:23).

God placed our sin and guilt on Christ so we could be forgiven.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (ISAIAH 53:5–6).

“For every sin and
for all our sin—
God has grace
for us.”

God does not condemn those who are in Christ—who have received Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (ROMANS 8:1).

God will judge those who reject Christ and His free gift of salvation.

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them” (JOHN 3:36).

God doesn’t want you to hide your sin and guilt but to confess it and receive His grace.

“People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy” (PROVERBS 28:13 NLT).

God wants you to repent with godly sorrow, not worldly sorrow.

“For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death” (2 CORINTHIANS 7:10 NLT).

God completely forgives and cleanses you of all sin.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 JOHN 1:9).

God calls you by His grace to live holy and leave sin behind you.

“Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin” (JOHN 8:11).

God wants you to regularly remind yourself that He is gracious and compassionate.

“The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made” (PSALM 145:8–9).

God wants you to forgive others who are guilty of wronging you.

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (COLOSSIANS 3:13).

God wants you to tell others about His forgiveness.

“My friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you” (ACTS 13:38).

Key Verse to Memorize

*“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
(ROMANS 8:1)*

Key Passage to Read

“Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!

*²Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!*

³When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long.

*⁴Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me.
My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.*

⁵Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt.

I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.”

And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.”

(PSALM 32:1–5 NLT)

How to Break Free from Guilt and Shame

“I’ll never tell anyone.”

“No one will love me if they find out.”

“I feel dirty. Damaged.”

“God will never forgive me.”

Statements like these reveal the lasting sense of guilt and shame. If these emotions go unaddressed, they can impact how you view yourself, how you interact in your relationships, and how you relate to God. In order to break free from these strongholds, the feelings of guilt and shame need to be correctly defined and dealt with God’s way. With God’s help, you can start walking in the freedom of His grace.

*“In my distress I prayed to the LORD,
and the LORD answered me and set me free.”*

(PSALM 118:5 NLT)

The Difference Between Guilt and Shame

Guilt and shame are not the same. **Guilt** focuses on your behavior; **shame** focuses on you.

Shame can be a response to what was done to you, but **guilt** is a response to something you have done.

Shame is a painful emotion of disgrace caused by a strong sense of real or imagined **guilt**.

Shame focuses on who you are, but **guilt** focuses on what you've done.

Shame is experienced when your **guilt** moves from knowing you have done something bad to feeling that you are bad.

Shame creates an inner desire to maintain rigid control over emotions and behavior; **guilt** can motivate a desire to change—or justify emotions and behavior.

Shame produces feelings of loneliness that foster unhealthy dependencies, but **guilt** produces inner longings that foster healthy repentance in relationships.

Shame steals the joy of your salvation; **guilt** confessed restores joy in salvation.

*“Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”*
(PSALM 51:12)

The Difference Between True Guilt and False Guilt

False guilt can blind and deceive people from seeing the truth about themselves, their situation, and God. False guilt adds another unhealthy dynamic to already difficult emotions. Realize, there's a vast difference between true guilt and false guilt. ...

True guilt is an emotional response as a result of any wrong attitude or action contrary to the will of God—and refers to the fact of being at fault.

- **False guilt** is an emotional response of (1) self-blame even though no wrong has been committed, or (2) self-blame that continues even after confessing and repenting of a sin that is no longer a part of a person's life.
- **False guilt** is based on self-condemning feelings that you have not lived up to your own expectations or to the expectations of someone else.

True guilt leads to freedom, as it leads you to repent of sin and wrongdoing, turn to God, and receive His grace and forgiveness.

- **False guilt** keeps you in bondage to three weapons of destruction: shame, fear, and anger.
- **False guilt** is not resolved by confession because there is nothing to confess.
- **False guilt** is resolved by rejecting the lies of the enemy and believing the truth of God's Word. Revelation 12:10 says that Satan is the “*accuser of our brothers and sisters.*” He loves to burden believers with false guilt and condemnation. Some of his favorite strategies are: bringing up the past, reminding you of your failures, and making you feel unforgiven and unaccepted by God.

The next time your mind begins to replay sins which you have confessed and repented of, realize this taunting comes from Satan, the accuser, to discourage you. Ask yourself:

- “What am I hearing?” (Accusation.)
- “What am I feeling?” (False Guilt.)
- “What are the facts?” (I am not guilty. I am fully forgiven.)

Use Scripture as your standard to determine true and false guilt. Memorize Romans 8:1 and turn it into a prayer: “Thank you, Father, that you don’t condemn me and don’t want me to condemn myself. These feelings of false guilt are not valid because I am accepted in Christ.”

“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

(ROMANS 8:1)

How to Break Free from Guilt and Shame

If you are experiencing true guilt (feeling bad about what you’ve done), confess your sins to God and receive His forgiveness.

“I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, ‘I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.’ And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone” (PSALM 32:5 NLT).

If you are experiencing false guilt (feeling bad although you’ve done no wrong), reject the false guilt and replace the lies you’ve been led to believe with the truth of God’s Word.

“Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you” (PSALM 25:5 NLT).

If you are experiencing shame (feeling bad about who you are), embrace God’s love for you and meditate regularly on your identity in Christ as a chosen, beloved child of God.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 JOHN 3:1).

The powerful emotions of guilt and shame can take time to untangle and overcome. In addition to believing the truth of God’s Word, talk with a wise friend, counselor, or pastor to help you gain victory over these feelings.

“In abundance of counselors there is victory.”

(PROVERBS 11:14 NASB)

How to See Yourself through God’s Eyes

We naturally see ourselves and the world around us through eyes that are colored by our own thoughts and beliefs. We see ourselves as we think (assume) we really are. If you *think* you are a wretched person, whenever you look in a mirror, you will see a wretched person, and you will think and act and feel like the wretched person you believe yourself to be.

Realize, there’s a vast difference between *our perceptions* and *God’s perspective*. Our perceptions are often wrong. They can be unreliable and untrustworthy. But God’s perspective is never wrong. He sees everything completely and accurately. That’s why it’s important to see ourselves as God sees us.

That's why we need to willfully choose to yield ourselves to the Lord and to work with Him to transform us. We do this by allowing His truth to replace our faulty thoughts (often based on our feelings). Since all of God's thoughts are true, we need to saturate our minds with His words of truth—allowing those words to cause us to think as He thinks and see as He sees. Thus, He changes our minds . . . about Him, about us, and about others.

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—
his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*
(ROMANS 12:2)

Seeing Yourself through God's Eyes

This process of change involves: (1) identifying the image you presently have of yourself, (2) identifying the contrasting image God has of you, and then (3) choosing to believe from His perspective rather than your own perception. It is that simple . . . and yet that profound.

Do you think . . . you are unacceptable?

God says . . . you are accepted by Him.

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (ROMANS 15:7).

Do you think . . . you are alone?

God says . . . He will never leave you nor forsake you.

“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (DEUTERONOMY 31:8).

Do you think . . . you are incompetent, a failure?

God says . . . He has made you competent.

“Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God” (2 CORINTHIANS 3:5).

Do you think . . . you are bad, not good enough?

God says . . . He sees you through the lens of His mercy.

“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (TITUS 3:5).

Do you think . . . you are a mistake?

God says . . . you are wonderfully made.

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (PSALM 139:14).

Do you think . . . you are defeated?

God says . . . you are more than a conqueror.

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (ROMANS 8:37).

Do you think . . . you are unloved?

God says . . . He has great love for you.

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (EPHESIANS 2:4-5).

Do you think . . . you can’t be forgiven?

God says . . . your sins are forgiven.

“He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins” (EPHESIANS 1:7 NLT).

Do you think . . . you don’t have enough strength?

God says . . . He will strengthen you Himself.

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (ISAIAH 41:10).

Do you think . . . you can’t have victory over a sinful habit?

God says . . . You have victory through Jesus.

“Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 CORINTHIANS 15:57).

God’s thoughts are revealed to us through His Word, which is powerful and able to transform us to be like Him in thought, in word, and in deed. . . .

*“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return to it without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower
and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

(ISAIAH 55:10–11)

DECISION MAKING

Discerning the Will of God

What Is God's Heart on Decision Making?

We make decisions every day. Many are of little significance, but some will change our lives forever. Do you make decisions by “doing what comes naturally,” or do you struggle with delay because of a paralysis of analysis? We too often make bad or unhealthy choices because we do not take the time to discover God's perfect will for our lives.

Be assured, God doesn't play “hide and seek” as you try to discover His will. He reveals His will in His Word. The more intimately you draw close to the heart of God and His Word, the more clearly you will know the will of God.

Consider what an indescribably awesome privilege it is that the God of the universe cares about the decisions concerning your life—your health, your job, your marriage, your children—all of it. None of us knows what the future holds, and at times we truly don't know which way to turn. But when we seek the Lord, He never fails to direct us—for our good and for His glory.

God wants to help us with our decisions. We can come to Him at any time to ask for guidance, and He will graciously help us in our time of need.

*“Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace
to help us in our time of need.”*

(HEBREWS 4:16)

God is the ultimate source for true wisdom and guidance.

“For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (PROVERBS 2:6).

God is faithful to lovingly guide you.

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you” (PSALM 32:8).

God wants you to seek His will.

“I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart” (PSALM 40:8).

God wants you to look to His Word for guidance.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (PSALM 119:105 ESV).

God can use wise counselors to help you make decisions.

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (PROVERBS 15:22).

God wants to
help us with our
decisions.

God wants you to desire His will above your own.

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (LUKE 22:42).

God wants your decisions to please Him above pleasing people.

“We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts” (1 THESSALONIANS 2:4).

God wants you to wait patiently for Him.

“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope” (PSALM 130:5).

7 Don'ts of Decision Making

“Doing what comes naturally” or “what feels right” is not a good barometer for determining God’s will for your life. What comes naturally to us can be our sinful nature or the “flesh,” which operates apart from the Spirit of God. The following “7 Don'ts of Decision Making” can help you determine whether your decision reflects God’s will or your own natural desires.

*“For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit,
and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.
They are in conflict with each other,
so that you are not to do whatever you want.”*
(GALATIANS 5:17)

1. Don't wait until all else fails before seeking God’s will.

“First seek the counsel of the LORD” (1 KINGS 22:5).

2. Don't just seek the plan but rather seek the Lord who reveals the plan.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (PROVERBS 3:5–6).

3. Don't ask for permission regarding something God has forbidden.

“I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws” (PSALM 119:106).

4. Don't make decisions based on feelings.

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (PROVERBS 4:23).

5. Don't assume that God’s will is too difficult for you to do.

“This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome” (1 JOHN 5:3).

6. Don't test God by seeking visible signs.

“Jesus answered ... ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (MATTHEW 4:7).

7. Don't think trials and adversity indicate you are out of God’s will.

“Those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good” (1 PETER 4:19).

8 Tests of Decision Making

From God's perspective, decisions are not to be determined by random selection, supernatural events, people's opinions, delay tactics, or our feelings. God wants you to measure your decisions by His Word. Rather than testing God, test your decisions against the following eight Scriptures. This will help you to make choices that are pleasing to the Lord.

"We make it our goal to please him"
(2 CORINTHIANS 5:9)

1. Scriptural Test: "Has God already spoken about it in His Word?"

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness"
(2 TIMOTHY 3:16).

2. Secrecy Test: "Would it bother me if everyone knew this was my choice?"

"The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity" (PROVERBS 11:3).

3. Survey Test: "What if everyone followed my example?"

"Set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 TIMOTHY 4:12).

4. Spirit Test: "Am I being people-pressured or Spirit-led?"

"Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ" (GALATIANS 1:10).

5. Stumbling Test: "Could this cause another person to stumble?"

"It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall"
(ROMANS 14:21).

6. Serenity Test: "Have I prayed and received peace about this decision?"

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7).

7. Sanctification Test: "Will this keep me from growing in the character of Christ?"

"We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 CORINTHIANS 3:18).

8. Supreme Test: "Does this glorify God?"

"Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 CORINTHIANS 10:31).

THE ABORTION DILEMMA

Tackling the Tough Questions

What Does the Bible Say about Abortion and the Sanctity of Life?

As the Creator of all life, God is not silent on the issue of abortion. If you are seeking to gain God's perspective on abortion, the most beneficial thing you can do is read the Bible. When we read His Word, we see the heart of the Giver of life and what He thinks of those He created.

*"Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long."
(PSALM 25:5)*

God created humankind in His image. God, in His infinite sovereignty, uniquely formed human beings to be His image-bearers and gave them a special dignity, personal freedom, and individual accountability above all the works of creation.

*"God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'"
(GENESIS 1:26).*

Human life begins at conception and human beings have been made to be in relationship with God, who created each person's inmost being, knit together in their mother's womb.

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ... Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (PSALM 139:13–14, 16).

From conception until natural death, every human life is sacred because every human life has been created by God.

"This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself" (ISAIAH 44:24).

Human life, even before conception, is designed by God for a specific purpose. Every human life must be recognized, respected, and protected as having the rights of a person and the irrevocable right to life.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (JEREMIAH 1:5).

Human life is created in the image of God. The right to life of every unborn human being is inherent by virtue of being created in the image of God.

*"God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them"
(GENESIS 1:27).*

Human life is precious and deserves to be saved. All life is precious. Therefore, deliberately terminating human life after conception is a sin against God for which individuals are held accountable. Extremely rare situations exist where saving the life of the mother can result in losing the life of the baby. However, this is a matter of trying to save one life or two lives, as opposed to causing the death of one or both.

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives” (PROVERBS 11:30).

Human life must be protected and defended from conception to natural death. We are ethically bound to defend all human life from destruction, whether by surgical abortion or use of drugs, devices, or procedures with the intent of terminating human life.

“Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?” (PROVERBS 24:11–12).

Human life must be publicly and peacefully proclaimed as sacred. Those who make up the Christian church, including and led by Christian ministers and ministries, should be public witnesses regarding the intrinsic and irrevocable dignity of all human life, from conception to natural death.

“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” (DEUTERONOMY 30:19).

Human life at conception defies that a fetus is just a “mass of tissue.” According to the Bible, a fetus is not merely a mass of tissue. God’s Word does not distinguish between a “potential baby” and a “newborn baby.” In the Bible, the same Greek word *brephos*, which means “babe,” is used to describe both a fetus and a newborn baby.

Fetus: *“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb” (LUKE 1:41).*

Babies: *“People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them” (LUKE 18:15).*

Human life at conception negates that females have the right to choose abortion by asserting, “It’s her body!” A woman should have rights over her own body, but in pregnancy there are at least two different bodies, two different heartbeats, two different brain wave patterns, two different genetic codes (DNA), and often two different genders and blood types. Every woman has choices within her own life, but not the freedom to destroy the life of a developing human being within her.

“I have cared for you since you were born. Yes, I carried you before you were born” (ISAIAH 46:3 NLT).

Human life is unique from all other forms of life. A human being is defined as a member of the species *Homo sapiens*. All human beings have their own genetic codes (DNA), singularly unique and established at conception. The DNA of a human fetus is distinct not only from animals, fowls, and fish, but also from the mother’s DNA.

“Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another” (1 CORINTHIANS 15:39).

A Personalized Plan for Those Contemplating Abortion

If you or your partner is pregnant and unsure of what to do, take a deep breath and do not rush to make a permanent decision. This is likely the most important decision you will ever make. Whether to carry the child to term or to terminate the pregnancy is literally a choice between life and death. The pregnancy may be unexpected and unplanned and may even feel unbearable, but it is not a surprise to God. He has a plan for your life and the life of your child.

You're not alone. There are many people, agencies, and support groups who can help you. Above all, remember that God is with you every step of the way.

*“For I am the LORD your God
who takes hold of your right hand
and says to you,
Do not fear; I will help you.”
(ISAIAH 41:13)*

The following are a few initial steps and considerations that you (and/or your partner) can take when contemplating what to do with your unborn child. Personalize these steps to your unique situation and pray for God's guidance and grace as you seek Him.

With God's help, I will ...

Seek wise counsel.

- I will pray and look to God's Word for direction.
- I will seek godly, wise counsel about what to do.

*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you”
(PSALM 32:8).*

Look for support.

- I will remember I'm not alone, and there are people willing to help me.
- I will look into local churches, pregnancy centers, community support groups, and online services and hotlines for help with my pregnancy, parenting, and needed resources.

“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help” (ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10 NLT).

Take care of myself (and/or partner) physically.

- I will seek a healthy lifestyle while I am pregnant for the sake of the baby and myself.
- I will go to the doctor for regular prenatal check-ups and guidance.

*“I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well”
(3 JOHN 1:2).*

Do what is best for my unborn child.

- I will think about my child’s future and what God desires for them.
- I will consider options of parenting and adoption and what each option means for me and the child.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (PHILIPPIANS 2:3–4).

HOPE

The Anchor for Your Soul

What Is God's Heart on Hope?

The world cries out for hope. From individuals and families to cities and nations, the cries for justice, for peace, for *hope* ring out around the world. We cry out for answers, for guidance, for comfort . . . to make it through one more season, to overcome one more tragedy, to persevere one more day.

But there is only one hope that will satisfy our longings and our cries, one hope that will anchor us during the storms of life—the hope of Jesus Christ.

From His first cry as a baby to His last cry on the cross, Jesus Christ came to give us hope. The Bible says of Jesus:

“In his name the nations will put their hope.”

(MATTHEW 12:21)

God is the God of 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 NLT).

God is the only lasting hope for everyone.

“You are the hope of everyone on earth, even those who sail on distant seas” (PSALM 65:5 NLT).

God wants your hope to be in Him.

“O Lord, you alone are my hope” (PSALM 71:5 NLT).

God wants His Word and His promises to be your source of hope.

“You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my source of hope” (PSALM 119:114 NLT).

God does not want you to put your hope in people or leaders.

“It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes” (PSALM 118:8–9).

God does not want your hope to be in money or wealth.

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 TIMOTHY 6:17).

“There is only one hope that will anchor us during the storms of life—the hope of Jesus Christ.”

God has a plan for your life that is filled with hope.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (JEREMIAH 29:11).

God wants you to have hope all day—every day.

“Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long” (PSALM 25:5).

God gives you hope during times of trouble and suffering.

“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (PSALM 42:5).

God strengthens you with His hope.

“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (ISAIAH 40:31).

God keeps you anchored with His hope.

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (HEBREWS 6:19).

God wants you to know that no matter what happens—there is always hope.

“There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off” (PROVERBS 23:18).

Key Verse to Memorize

*“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,
‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.’”*

(JEREMIAH 29:11)

My Personalized Plan to Stay Anchored in Hope

True hope comes from knowing Jesus Christ, resting in Him and His plan for both my todays and my tomorrows. Therefore, when unexpected sorrows and hardships come, I will remember God’s promises to me found in the Bible.

*“I am counting on the LORD; yes, I am counting on him.
I have put my hope in his word.”*

(PSALM 130:5 NLT)

As I focus on renewing my mind with God's Word and deepening my hope in Christ, **I will . . .**

Remember that true hope is anchored in God.

- I will remember that true hope is found in God, who doesn't change—not in people, who do change.
- I will remember that true hope is found in God's unchanging Word, not in shifting circumstances or cultural opinions.
- I will remember that true hope is found in God's Son, who loves me and secured my eternity through His death and resurrection.

"And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you" (PSALM 39:7 NLT).

Recognize that when I feel hopeless, God calls me to trust Him.

- I will accept that in this broken world, I will inevitably face painful circumstances.
- I will accept that even believers can experience sorrow, loneliness, depression, and periods of desperation.
- I will accept that in dark times, God is with me and He desires to give me His love and hope.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (ROMANS 15:13).

Realize that there is always hope and God will help me overcome the obstacles in my life.

- I will trust that God is always with me, guarding and guiding me, fulfilling His purposes for me.
- I will trust that God is in control of the circumstances of my life, and I can learn and grow during both good and bad circumstances.
- I will trust that God can use me to be an encouragement to others who are facing their own obstacles.

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; . . . The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever" (PSALM 138:7–8 ESV).

Rely on the Lord and others for support and help when I feel hopeless.

- I will remember that I don't have to suffer alone or in silence, and I will acknowledge my need for help.
- I will seek the support of a counselor, friend, or pastor when I feel unable to handle my situation or emotions.
- I will seek God in prayer, trusting Him to give me victory and use my trials for my good and His glory.

"Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory" (PROVERBS 11:14 NASB).

Recount my blessings, thanking God for them.

- I will thank God for all the good things in my life—for family and friends, work and play, clothes and food, rest and inspiration.
- I will do at least one thing a day that brings me joy and focuses my attention on Jesus.
- I will remember all the things God has brought me through in the past and trust Him for my future.

"Put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption" (PSALM 130:7).

Reach out to others and share the hope of Christ.

- I will pray for those in my life who do not know the Lord—that God will save them.
- I will look for opportunities to share the hope of Christ with the lost.
- I will encourage others who are suffering or facing a trial with God's truth.

"Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 THESSALONIANS 5:11).

4 POINTS OF GOD'S PLAN

Whether you're trying to make sense of your past, trying to overcome something in the present, or trying to make changes for a better future, the Lord cares about you. He loves you. No matter what challenges you or your loved ones are facing, no matter the pain or difficult feelings you may be experiencing, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, *there is hope*. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for your life, and it begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. The most important decision you can ever make is whether you will accept His invitation. If you have never made that decision, these four simple truths can help you start your journey together with Him.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD,
‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.’”*
(JEREMIAH 29:11)

God's Purpose for You: *Salvation*

What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him”* (John 3:16–17).

What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* (John 10:10).

The Problem: *Sin*

What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God's standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway”* (Romans 7:18–19 NLT).

What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *“Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God”* (Isaiah 59:2). Scripture also says, *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

God's Provision for You: *The Savior*

Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). The Bible says, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .”* (Acts 16:31).

Your Part: *Surrender*

Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”* (Matthew 16:24–26).

Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your “good works” as a means of earning God’s approval. The Bible says, *“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you’ve humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

*“God, I want a real relationship with you.
I admit that many times I’ve chosen to go my own way instead of your way.
Please forgive me for my sins.
Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins.
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.
Change me from the inside out and make me
the person you created me to be.
In your holy name I pray. Amen.”*

What Can You Now Expect?

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . .”* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

*“Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me
has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”*

(JOHN 5:24)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

God gives us His Word not just for information but for transformation. The Lord wants you to “*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Romans 12:2). This isn’t something you do alone, but something God does in you by His Spirit.

The following questions are designed to help you reflect on the biblical truths in this resource. Take a moment to pray and ask God to settle your mind and quiet your spirit as you reflect on His truth.

“Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.”
(2 TIMOTHY 2:7)

What are two key truths, Bible verses, or “takeaways” from this resource that you found helpful—or that you simply needed to be reminded of?

In relation to these topics, what behavior(s) do you need to *begin, change, or stop* in order to help you grow into the person God created you to be?

In relation to these topics, what is the biggest obstacle you need to overcome in order to move forward?

What might your life look like a few years from now if you do *not* make changes regarding these issues? How might your life be different if you *do* make changes?

Is there anyone in your life who needs help with these topics/issues? How can you pray for them, and what is one thing you can do to encourage them?

What can you give thanks to God for today?

*“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself
and God our Father, who loved us
and by his grace gave us eternal comfort
and a wonderful hope,
comfort you and strengthen you
in every good thing you do and say.”
(2 THESSALONIANS 2:16–17 NLT)*

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