



# HOPE FOR DISABILITIES



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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

# CHRONIC ILLNESS & DISABILITIES

## *God's Peace in the Midst of Pain*

### What Is God's Heart on Chronic Illness & Disabilities?

Why me, Lord? Why her? Why him? Why does anyone have to suffer day after day with a chronic illness and ongoing affliction? Where are you, Lord, in our suffering? How can we find peace in the midst of pain?

These are all difficult questions ... ones that many people have asked. Be assured: God cares about our pain. We might not believe it at times. We might not always sense His presence. But He is with us in our pain ... every day, every moment ... holding our hand with His helping hand.

*"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)*

**God understands** your pain.

*"He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain" (ISAIAH 53:3).*

**God speaks to you** in your suffering.

*"But those who suffer he delivers in their suffering; he speaks to them in their affliction" (JOB 36:15).*

**God draws near** to you when you are hurting.

*"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (PSALM 34:18).*

**God wants to give** you rest when you are weary and burdened.

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

**God wants to give** you peace in your suffering.

*"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 you to know** you always have hope.

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

**God will relieve your pain** and restore your body in heaven.

*"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" (REVELATION 21:4-5).*

**God wants you to be compassionate** to others who suffer.

*"Be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble" (1 PETER 3:8).*

## How Does God Use Suffering in Our Lives?

The trials and suffering we experience are not meaningless. There is purpose in the pain. God's Word reveals what the Lord can do in and through our pain. As you make sense of your own suffering, remember that the Lord Himself is not immune to pain—He knows it intimately. Jesus is the “*man of sorrows*” (Isaiah 53:3 ESV). He carries our burdens and sorrows each day in His arms.

*“Praise the LORD; praise God our savior!  
For each day he carries us in his arms.”  
(Psalm 68:19 nlt)*

### **God uses suffering to ...**

**Show** the sufficiency of His grace.

*“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 CORINTHIANS 12:9).*

**Shift** your focus on eternal things.

*“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).*

**Give** you a desire for eternal glory.

*“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (ROMANS 8:18).*

**Open** your heart to make you more teachable.

*“It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees” (PSALM 119:71).*

**Soften** your heart to obey His Word.

*“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word” (PSALM 119:67).*

**Mellow** your heart to make you more compassionate.

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4).*

**Strengthen** your heart to make you more mature.

*“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (JAMES 1:2–4).*

**Grow** your character and show His love.

*“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (ROMANS 5:3–5 ESV).*

**Bring** Him glory.

*“So the sisters sent word to Jesus, ‘Lord, the one you love is sick.’ When he heard this, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it’” (JOHN 11:3–4).*

## What Feelings Are Associated with Chronic Illness and Impairment?

For those suffering with chronic pain, illness, or a disability ... it’s not just a purely physical issue. There are often many difficult emotions that accompany the constant challenges of living with pain and limitations. These emotions can make people feel worse about their situation, and the feelings are difficult to manage. They need to be processed, so it’s important to talk with others and with the Lord about what you’re feeling and experiencing.

*“Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress;  
my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.  
My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning;  
my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.”  
(PSALM 31:9–10)*

**Strange:** “Something happened to me and I’m not the person I used to be. I’ve changed, and nothing will ever be the same again.”

- Weird and wrong
- Different and peculiar
- Unfamiliar and unnatural
- Disoriented and confused

**Afraid:** “I no longer have any control over my life, my relationships, my body, or my future. I am helpless, powerless, and at the mercy of my illness.”

- Of getting worse or dying
- Of losing even more control
- Of losing meaningful relationships
- Of what the future holds

**Angry:** “Life is totally unfair. I did nothing to deserve this. It’s not right that I have to suffer when other people are strong and healthy and going on with their lives while I am withering away.”

- At God
- At my affliction
- At those who take care of me
- At myself, my body, my pain, my limitations

**Lonely/Isolated:** “I am all alone now and will be for the rest of my life. I no longer fit in anywhere or with anyone. No one wants to be around someone with my limitations. I’m just a drag.”

- Because no one completely understands me or my situation
- Because no one can truly share my thoughts or feelings
- Because people are uneasy around me and either avoid me or won’t touch me
- Because my condition stresses people out, wears them out, and pushes them away

**Powerless:** “I’ve become like a helpless infant, unable to do much of anything for myself. And everyone treats me like I can’t think for myself either, like I have lost the capacity to reason and problem solve. I no longer have power over any area of my life.”

- Due to others making decisions about my treatment without consulting me
- Due to being excluded from family decisions and events
- Due to having so many things done for me that I once did for myself
- Due to being unable to be as self-sufficient and independent as I once was

**Self-Focused:** “I just want to regain some control over my life and to start doing things for myself again. I need to focus all my mental, emotional, and physical energy on being strong and using my situation to my advantage.”

- Fixated on my pain and limitations to the point of ignoring others
- Fixated on my need to be as self-sufficient and independent as possible ... to the point of refusing the help I really need
- Fixated on my need to be strong to the point of viewing closeness and emotional vulnerability as a sign of weakness
- Fixated on my right to be taken care of by others to the point of ignoring responsibility for myself

**Humiliated:** “I have lost all my rights to privacy, and I am not always treated with respect and dignity. My body is no longer my own, and I have little say over what is done to it.”

- By being physically exposed, handled, and prodded
- By being routinely tested, pushed around, and experimented on
- By being subjected to superior attitudes and looked down on with pity or disdain
- By being robbed of personal and financial privacy

**Hopeless:** “I am tired of dealing with my illness. I see no hope of ever getting better, no end to my pain, and no good purpose for it. I might as well crawl into a hole and give up on life.”

- As a result of being mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausted from trying to cope with the challenges of my illness

- As a result of focusing too much on what I can't do rather than on what I can do
- As a result of seeing no end to my suffering and no purpose for it
- As a result of losing perspective, being isolated, and feeling sorry for myself rather than reaching out to others for prayer and support

*"Jesus ... gives us hope."*

(1 TIMOTHY 1:1 NLT)

## Wrong Belief vs. Right Belief

**Wrong Belief:** "Because of my condition, my life no longer has significance, meaning, or purpose. I no longer have anything to offer. I'm just a burden to others."

**Right Belief:** "I refuse to be bitter because I know God is with me, He loves me, and He still has a purpose for my life. I will seek Him and His plan for my life. I will pray that my life will be honoring to Him and be a blessing to others."

*"I cry out to God Most High,  
to God who will fulfill his purpose for me"*

(PSALM 57:2 NLT).

## Key Verse

*"But he [Jesus] said to me,  
'My grace is sufficient for you,  
for my power is made perfect in weakness.'  
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly  
about my weaknesses,  
so that Christ's power may rest on me."*

(2 CORINTHIANS 12:9)



## My Personalized Plan: Lessons to Learn

Jesus was often referred to as *Teacher*. Indeed, He is the greatest of all teachers. But of all the lessons Jesus taught, do you know the one thing His disciples specifically asked Him to teach them about?

It was prayer.

*“Lord, teach us to pray”* (Luke 11:1). Maybe they recognized something special about the way Jesus prayed. Or maybe they recognized their own inadequacy or shortcomings in prayer. Whatever it was, their simple, humble request led Jesus to teach them the Lord’s Prayer, perhaps the most famous prayer in the world.

With a chronic illness or disability, there are many new things to learn ... or unlearn. It can be a difficult process of change as we recognize our dependence and our needs. But Jesus, the Master Teacher, is with you each day and each step of the way. He understands our pain and weakness, and yet He is gracious and strong enough to help us for our every need.

*“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses ...  
So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God.  
There we will receive his mercy,  
and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.”*  
(HEBREWS 4:15–16 NLT)

Use the following steps and personalize them to your unique situation. Ask yourself: What do I need to learn during this season of life? What is the Lord teaching me?

### Learn to cry.

- Crying is not a sign of weakness, but a much-needed, emotional cleansing outlet.
- Tears can help process emotions, and they are noticed by God.

*“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book”* (PSALM 56:8 NLT).

### Learn to let go.

- Manage your expectations.
- Trust God with your future.

*“But I am trusting you, O LORD, saying, ‘You are my God!’ My future is in your hands”* (PSALM 31:14–15 NLT).

### Learn to rest.

- Get physical rest whenever possible.
- Rest in the promises of God’s Word.

*“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest”* (MATTHEW 11:28 NLT).

**Learn to adjust.**

- Modify your activities and schedule to fit your needs.
- Look to God for strength when you feel weak.

*“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” (ISAIAH 40:29).*

**Learn to laugh.**

- Don’t lose your sense of humor.
- Enjoy the funny moments in life—and look for them.

*“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” (PROVERBS 17:22).*

**Learn to be thankful.**

- Show gratitude to family and friends who help and support you.
- Praise God daily for who He is and for His love for you.

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

# FEAR

## *No Longer Afraid*

### What Is God's Heart on Fear?

Fear often stops us from doing something important, saying something that needs to be said, or even doing something God has called us to do. In our moments of fear, God calls us to trust Him, *"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you"* (Psalm 56:3).

Realize, you don't face your fears alone. The Lord promises to be with you. As you reflect on His presence and His promises, the Lord helps you move from fear to faith.

*"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)*

#### **He is with you and will never leave 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).

#### **He is your light, salvation, and stronghold.**

*"The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?"* (Psalm 27:1).

#### **He keeps you safe as you trust in Him.**

*"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe"* (Proverbs 29:25).

#### **He has His hand on you.**

*"You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me"* (Psalm 139:5).

#### **He guides and holds you.**

*"Even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast"* (Psalm 139:10).

#### **He delivers you.**

*"I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears"* (Psalm 34:4).

#### **He cares for you.**

*"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you"* (1 Peter 5:7).

#### **He strengthens, helps, and upholds you.**

*"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).

*"Realize, you don't  
face your fears  
alone. The Lord  
promises to  
be with you."*

### **He works in all things for your good.**

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).*

### **He says nothing can separate you from His love.**

*“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39).*

### **He has plans to give you hope and a future.**

*“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).*

### **He has made you more than a conqueror.**

*“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).*

## **Key Verse to Memorize**

*“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)*

## **Key Passage to Read**

When you are stricken with fear, read Psalm 23. This psalm is one of the most beloved passages in all the Bible, and for good reason. It is full of truth we need to focus on to experience comfort, restoration, and peace rather than fear. Every verse in the psalm reminds us of truth that can calm our hearts.

### **The Psalm 23 Strategy**

*“The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
<sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
<sup>3</sup>he refreshes my soul. He guides me along  
the right paths for his name’s sake.  
<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.  
<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.  
<sup>6</sup>You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”*

Certain situations are more fearful than others. Sometimes it is enough to read Psalm 23 once to settle your fears. At other times, you may need to move to a quiet place without distractions so you can focus on each verse of the psalm and its promises.

**Verse 1:** *“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.”*

Imagine a grassy, pastoral scene and the Lord there with you. Slowly say, “The Lord is my Shepherd” five times, each time emphasizing a different word:

**THE** Lord is my Shepherd.  
The **LORD** is my Shepherd.  
The Lord **IS** my Shepherd.  
The Lord is **MY** Shepherd.  
The Lord is my **SHEPHERD**.

**Verse 2:** *“He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters.”*

Imagine yourself lying down beside a soothing, calm pool of water.

**Verse 3:** *“He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.”*

Take several slow deep breaths and say, “My Shepherd refreshes my soul” five times. Say it slowly, each time emphasizing a different word:

**MY** Shepherd refreshes my soul.  
My **SHEPHERD** refreshes my soul.  
My Shepherd **REFRESHES** my soul.  
My Shepherd refreshes **MY** soul.  
My Shepherd refreshes my **SOUL**.

**Verse 4:** *“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”*

Realize that you are not trapped. Say, “I will fear no evil, the Lord is with me” five times, repeating it slowly.

**Verse 5:** *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”*

Repeat the following statement five times, each time emphasizing a different word:

**THE** Lord is my Protector.  
The **LORD** is my Protector.  
The Lord **IS** my Protector.  
The Lord is **MY** Protector.  
The Lord is my **PROTECTOR**.

**Verse 6:** *“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

Thank the Lord for the way He will use each fearful situation for good in your life.

*“Dear God, I thank you that you are my Shepherd.  
You guide me, you protect me, and you give me your peace.  
You are the one who restores my soul.  
You know my weaknesses and the times I’ve caved in to fear.  
Now, in my weakness, I will choose to rely on your strength. You are my Shepherd.  
I am choosing to rely on your power to move me from fear to faith.  
As I turn my fear over to you, use it for good in my life  
to remind me of my continual need for you.  
In your holy name I pray. Amen”*

Focus on your fear, and your panic will increase.  
Focus on your Shepherd, and your heart will be at peace.

## How to Move from Fear to Faith

**Begin with a healthy fear (awe) of God.** Believe that God . . .

- Created you because He loves you.
- Has a purpose and a plan for your life.
- Has the right to have authority over you.
- Wants you to entrust your life to Him.
- Has the power to change you.
- Will keep you safe as you trust in Him.

*“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7)*

**Be determined to eradicate your fear-based mind-set.** Fear-based thinking . . .

- Means you are not fully trusting God, who alone is always and forever trustworthy.
- Prevents you from appropriating the grace of God.
- Keeps you in bondage to fear and robs you of peace.
- Damages you physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
- Distorts the power, sufficiency, and faithfulness of God.
- Turns your focus from God to people or other circumstances.

*“I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?” (Psalm 56:4 nlt)*

**Be assertive in analyzing your fear and discovering its source.** Are you fearful of . . .

- Rejection: Do you need to be loved?
- Failure: Do you need to feel significant?
- Financial loss: Do you need to feel secure?
- Broken relationships: Do you need to feel loved?
- Being alone: Do you need to feel significant?
- Job loss: Do you need to feel secure?

*“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.” (Proverbs 29:25)*

**Be persuaded of the extent of God's love for you.** God's love provides you with . . .

- Complete acceptance.
- A realization of your true value.
- Confidence in His ability to accomplish His plans for you.
- The assurance that you will be loved for all eternity.
- Power to overcome fear.
- True security.

*"I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:38–39)

**Be dedicated to developing your faith in the Lord.** Ask God to help you be . . .

- Actively involved in a Bible study (2 Timothy 2:15).
- In daily prayer—truly talking with God (Philippians 4:6).
- Consistently active in a local church that teaches the Word of God (Hebrews 10:25).
- Committed to memorizing and meditating on God's Word (Philippians 4:8).
- Obedient to God's promptings in your spirit (Philippians 4:5).
- Pure in your thoughts with your spiritual eyes fixed on Christ (1 Timothy 1:5).

*"Blessed is the one . . . whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night."* (Psalm 1:1–2)

**Be engaged with other believers.** As you cultivate fellowship, be . . .

- Active in spending time with fellow Christians (Hebrews 10:25).
- Prepared to help those who are isolated or in distress (James 1:27).
- Willing to testify to God's faithfulness in your life (Lamentations 3:22–23).
- Focused on serving others (Philippians 4:10).
- Responsible to assist others in need (1 John 3:17–18).
- Accountable to a small, intimate group of growing Christians.

*"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."* (Proverbs 27:17)

**Be tenacious in using God's Word to rein in your fears.** Meditate on these truths:

- Psalm 27:1—*"The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?"*
- Isaiah 41:13—*"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."*
- Psalm 46:1–2—*"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear . . ."*
- Psalm 56:3—*"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you."*
- Psalm 112:6–7—*"Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever. They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord."*
- Psalm 118:6—*"The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"*

**Be focused on facing your fear through the power of Christ.** Ask God for the grace to . . .

- Know that Christ is always ready to respond to your needs.
- Acknowledge Christ’s presence in your life and call for His help.
- Trust in the faithfulness of God to meet all your needs through Christ.
- Remember that Christ has gone before you and prepared the way for you to go.
- Release your fear to Him and receive His powerful love.
- Act in love toward others by focusing on their needs and relying on Christ.

*“The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24)*

**Be set free from fear and be strong in faith.** As you do, you will also become more . . .

- Trusting (taking God at His Word and believing His promises).
- Peaceful (memorizing and repeatedly reciting Psalm 23).
- Thankful (making a list every day of God’s blessings).
- Prayerful (setting aside time every day to pray for others).
- Faithful (diligently reading God’s Word, witnessing, attending church, and giving).
- Christlike (studying the character of Christ and spending more time with Him).

*“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” (Colossians 2:6–7)*



# DEPRESSION

*Walking from Darkness into the Dawn*

## What Is God's Heart on Depression?

The pressures and stresses of life often weigh us down. When our hearts are heavy and our heads are low, the clouds of depression seem to block out any ray of hope. But even in our depression, God walks with us, carries our burdens, and shines the light of His Word on our despair.

*"The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us."*

(PSALM 118:27)

**God is with us** in our depression.

*"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** our pain and suffering.

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

**God hears** our cries and listens to us in our pain.

*"... the LORD has heard my weeping" (PSALM 6:8).*

**God wants** to give us light in our darkness.

*"It is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness" (PSALM 18:28 ESV).*

**God wants** to lift us up when we're feeling down.

*"The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down" (PSALM 145:14).*

**God wants** us to talk to Him when we're depressed.

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

**God wants** to comfort us.

*"I, yes I, am the one who comforts you" (ISAIAH 51:12).*

**God wants** to give us peace.

*"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 give us 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** us to trust Him.

*“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me” (PSALM 28:7).*

**God wants** us to comfort others who are depressed.

*“The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort . . . comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4).*

**God will** one day wipe away all our tears—and there will be no more sorrow or suffering.

*“He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever” (REVELATION 21:4 NLT).*

## Symptoms of Depression

The American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (DSM-5) lists nine key symptoms of depression. It says that a person must have at least five of the following symptoms, lasting two weeks or longer, to be considered a major depressive episode. At least one of the five symptoms must be either persistent sadness or loss of interest.

- Persistent feelings of sadness, anxiousness, or “emptiness” most or all of the time
- Complete or near complete loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyable
- Significant change in appetite or weight
- Difficulty sleeping most nights or sleeping too much
- Agitated thoughts and movements (i.e., fidgeting, pacing, tapping fingers or feet) or slowed responses (i.e., pausing more when talking; speaking slower, more quietly, or infrequently; moving slowly)
- Chronically fatigued, easily decreased energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or disappointment in oneself
- Lack of concentration, focus, memory retention, or inability to make decisions
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts

Instead of diagnosing yourself with depression, first consult a mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed professional counselor) who can give you an educated assessment after conducting a detailed analysis of your situation and symptoms. There is no shame in reaching out for help.

The psalmist, by his own admission, reminds us just how necessary it is to admit our need for help—first to God . . . then also to others.

*“Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;  
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.  
My soul also is greatly troubled.  
But you, O LORD—how long?  
Turn, O LORD, deliver my life;  
save me for the sake of your steadfast love.”  
(PSALM 6:2–4 ESV)*

## Key Verse to Memorize

*“Why am I so depressed? Why this turmoil within me?  
Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him,  
my Savior and my God.”*  
(PSALM 42:5 HCSB)

## My Personalized Plan to Manage Depression and Live with Hope

Depression can hide the light of day from my view and leave me in the darkness of despair. A sense of hopelessness lingers. But amidst the heaviness and dark clouds of depression, God wants to lift my heavy heart and show me there is hope.

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

Because depression can impact every area of my life, I must address it from multiple angles. As I walk through the darkness of depression into the light of dawn, **I will . . .**

**Recognize** that my depression is real.

- I will acknowledge my feelings of sadness, anger, hopelessness, and other overwhelming emotions.
- I will not live in denial about my depression but will educate myself about depression and seek help to move forward.

*“I am suffering and in pain. Rescue me, O God, by your saving power”* (PSALM 69:29 NLT).

**Remember** that my pain is temporary.

- I will put my pain in perspective and acknowledge that God can help me.
- I will remember that God will one day put an end to all pain and suffering.

*“He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever”* (REVELATION 21:4 NLT).

**Reaffirm** the importance of caring for my physical needs.

- I will talk with my doctor about my depression and get regular medical check-ups.
- I will eat nutritious meals, get adequate sleep each night, and exercise regularly.

*“Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come”* (1 TIMOTHY 4:8).

**Restrict** the amount of stress in my life.

- I will identify the environmental or situational factors related to my depression, such as difficult life events, losses I've experienced, and the various sources of stress in my life.
- I will seek to adjust to stressful life events and deal with my losses in a healthy, productive manner.

*"Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer" (PSALM 4:1).*

**Reveal** my emotional needs.

- I will talk with a trusted friend or family member, counselor, and especially with God about my emotions.
- I will honestly confront my feelings and process them with God's help.

*"I call to you, LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you" (PSALM 88:9).*

**Restrain** negative thought patterns.

- I will acknowledge negative self-talk and lies I believe about myself or my situation.
- I will replace negative thoughts with God's truth by meditating on His 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).*

**Renew** my commitment to get my spiritual needs met.

- I will cultivate my relationship with God through reflective prayer and Bible reading.
- I will attend church regularly to receive encouragement from God's Word and to 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).*

## How to Help a Depressed Loved One

When you have depressed loved ones in your life, you want to do something that will make a difference, but the question is *what?*

First and foremost, *do not avoid them*. Because of the tendency to withdraw and isolate, help them get involved in activities whenever they are open to doing so. Encourage them to find a new hobby. Realize, you may be their only lifeline of hope, and they need to stay connected. Do what you wish someone would do for you if you were struggling with depression.

*"Do to others as you would have them do to you."*

(LUKE 6:31)

## 12 Things You Can Do to Help

### Learn all you can about depression.

Read books, watch videos, attend conferences, visit websites such as the National Institute of Mental Health ([www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)).

*“Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge” (PROVERBS 23:12).*

### Be an accountability partner.

Communicate both with words and actions, “I’m with you in this, and I won’t abandon you.”

*“I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare” (PHILIPPIANS 2:20 NLT).*

### Initiate regular dialogue.

Send frequent text messages and phone calls. Make intentional contact and encourage them sincerely and often.

*“Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them” (EPHESIANS 4:29 NLT).*

### Listen to their pain.

Take time to hear their story and let them share their feelings without fear of judgment. Listening affirms their value and helps them process their emotions and circumstances.

*“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (JAMES 1:19).*

### Talk about depression

Talking about depression helps remove the stigma of it.

*“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver” (PROVERBS 25:11 ESV).*

### Help them find a support group.

There is strength in numbers. Inquire at a nearby hospital, local church, or search the web for listings of support groups in the community dealing with depression or mental illness.

*“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).*

### Realize the power of touch.

As appropriate, a hand on the shoulder or a hug can be a great comfort.

*“Greet one another with a kiss of love” (1 PETER 5:14).*

### Play inspirational music when you’re with them.

Music is therapeutic and can lift their spirit.

*“. . . speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit” (EPHESIANS 5:19).*

### Bring laughter into their lives.

Share funny cards, pictures, stories, videos, or movies.

*“A cheerful heart is good medicine” (PROVERBS 17:22).*

### **Work with them to set small, daily goals.**

Encourage them to set and achieve small goals that require minimal effort. Check on their progress regularly.

*“The desires of the diligent are fully satisfied”* (PROVERBS 13:4).

### **Enlist help from other family and friends.**

Be specific about your concerns and engage others in caring for the one depressed.

*“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ”* (GALATIANS 6:2).

### **Take all threats of suicide seriously.**

If suicide is a concern, ask, “Are you thinking about hurting yourself or taking your life?” While asking this may create some discomfort, awkwardness, or make them initially upset—it is worth the risk. Don’t shy away from the hard questions, but always ask them in a kind and gentle way.

*“A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions”* (PROVERBS 27:12 NLT).

## **How to Respond to Suicidal Thoughts or Threats**

If you, or a depressed loved one, are having suicidal thoughts or planning to harm yourself, it is important to talk with someone immediately. You will find information for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line below. These free and confidential services are available 24/7 to provide emotional support and helpful resources for those facing distress and having suicidal thoughts. When you contact them, you will be connected with a real person who is trained to provide guidance and support. You are *not* alone.

*“Be strong and courageous.  
Do not be afraid or terrified . . .  
for the LORD your God goes with you;  
he will never leave you nor forsake you.”*  
(DEUTERONOMY 31:6)

**NOTE:** If you are ever in imminent danger, call 911 immediately.

#### **Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**

- 988
- 1-800-799-4889 (For Deaf + Hard of Hearing)
- Ayuda disponible en Español
- 988lifeline.org (Live chat available)

#### **Crisis Text Line**

- Text HOME to 741741 (United States)
- Text HOME to 686868 (Canada)
- Text HOME to 85258 (United Kingdom)
- [www.CrisisTextLine.org](http://www.CrisisTextLine.org)

Don’t hesitate to call or text these hotlines if you’re thinking of harming yourself. Remember, no matter what you’re feeling or how bad things seem . . .

*“There is surely a future hope for you.”*  
(PROVERBS 23:18)

# ANGER

## *Facing the Fire Within*

### What Is God's Heart on Anger?

Forest rangers who care for and protect national parks occasionally say they have to “start a fire to stop a fire.” These backfires help deprive the main fire of fuel and better enable forest rangers and firefighters to contain the blaze. God can work for our good in much the same way.

Anger, like fire, can be dangerous. If not kept in check, it can get out of control, damaging and destroying our lives and relationships. But just like fire, anger can be used for good purposes.

The Bible reveals the wisdom of God's counsel on anger.

*“To God belong wisdom and power;  
counsel and understanding are his.”  
(Job 12:13)*

**Anger** is a God-given emotion. God Himself experiences anger.

*“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (Exodus 34:6–7).*

**Anger** itself is not a sin but what you do with it can lead to sin.

*“In your anger do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26).*

**Anger** can propel you to action—to correct an injustice.

*“He [Jesus] looked around at them angrily and was deeply saddened by their hard hearts. Then he said to the man, ‘Hold out your hand.’ So the man held out his hand, and it was restored!” (Mark 3:5 nlt).*

**Anger** can be learned behavior, so be careful whom you befriend.

*“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared” (Proverbs 22:24–25).*

**Anger** can lead to abusive language.

*“You must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips” (Colossians 3:8).*

**Anger** can lead to fighting.

*“An angry person starts fights; a hot-tempered person commits all kinds of sin” (Proverbs 29:22 nlt).*

*“Anger, like fire, can be dangerous. But just like fire, anger can be used for good purposes.”*

**God wants** you to be slow to anger.

*“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” (James 1:19–20).*

**God wants** you to refrain from anger.

*“Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil” (Psalm 37:8).*

**God wants** you to deal with your anger quickly.

*“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Ephesians 4:26).*

**God wants** you to free yourself from anger.

*“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (Ephesians 4:31).*

**God wants** you to talk to Him about your anger.

*“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 be saved through faith in Christ so you do not experience His anger.

*“God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9).*

## Key Verses to Memorize

*“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak  
and slow to become angry, because human anger  
does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”*

(James 1:19–20)

## Key Passage to Read

### Ephesians 4:26–27, 29–32

*“In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,*

*<sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. . . .*

*<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths,  
but only what is helpful for building others up  
according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

*<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,  
with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

*<sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger,  
brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*

*<sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,  
just as in Christ God forgave you.”*



## What Are the Four Sources of Anger?

A roaring fire can be started and fueled by a number of sources: lightning strikes, volcanoes, unattended campfires, or even something as small as a cigarette that isn't put out. In a similar way, anger is typically started and fueled by at least one of four sources: hurt, injustice, fear, or frustration. Anger is a secondary response to one or more of these four roots.

Probing into buried feelings from your past can be painful. Therefore, it might seem easier to stay angry rather than uncover the cause of your anger, let go of your "right" to be angry, and grow in maturity. When you are seeking to uproot problematic anger, you must persevere.

*"Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."  
(James 1:4)*

### 1. Hurt: Your heart is wounded.

Everyone has a God-given inner need for *unconditional love*. When you experience rejection or emotional pain of any kind, anger can become a protective wall keeping people, pain, and *hurt* away.

**Biblical Example:** The Sons of Jacob

Joseph was the undisputed favorite among Jacob's sons. Feeling hurt and rejected by their father, the 10 older sons became angry and vindictive toward their younger brother.

*"Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him" (Genesis 37:3–4).*

### 2. Injustice: Your right is violated.

Everyone has a sense of right and wrong, fair and unfair, just and *unjust*. When you perceive that an *injustice* has occurred against you or others (especially those you love), you may feel angry. If you hold on to the offense, the unresolved anger can begin to take root in your heart.

**Biblical Example:** King Saul

King Saul's *unjust* treatment of David evoked Jonathan's anger. Jonathan, son of Saul, heard his own father pronounce a death sentence on his dear friend, David.

*"'Why should he be put to death? What has he done?' Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him [Jonathan]. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger" (1 Samuel 20:32–34).*

### 3. Fear: Your future is threatened.

Everyone is created with a God-given inner need for *security*. When you begin to worry, feel threatened, or get angry because of a change in circumstances, you may be responding to *fear*. A fearful heart reveals a lack of trust in God's perfect plan for your life.

**Biblical Example:** King Saul

Saul became angry because of David's many successes on the battlefield. (Read 1 Samuel 18:5–15, 28–29.) He felt threatened by David's popularity and *feared* losing the kingdom.

*"Saul was very angry . . . 'They have credited David with tens of thousands,' he thought, 'but me with only thousands.' . . . Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul" (1 Samuel 18:8, 12).*

#### 4. Frustration: Your performance is not accepted.

Everyone has an inner need for *significance*. When your efforts are thwarted or do not meet your own personal expectations, your sense of significance can be threatened. *Frustration* over unmet expectations of yourself or of others is a major source of anger.

##### **Biblical Example:** Cain

Both Cain and Abel brought offerings to God, but Cain's offering was clearly unacceptable. Cain had chosen to offer what he himself wanted to give rather than what God said was right and acceptable. When Cain's self-effort was rejected, his *frustration* led to anger, and his anger led to the murder of his own brother.

*"In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. . . . Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him"* (Genesis 4:3–5, 8).

## What Is the Root Cause of Anger?

### **Wrong Belief:**

"Based on what I believe is fair, I have the right to be angry about the disappointments in my life. I have the right to express my anger in whatever way I choose and to stay angry as long I want."

### **Right Belief:**

"Since I have trusted Christ with my life and have yielded my rights to Him, I choose not to be controlled by anger. My human disappointments are now God's appointments to increase my faith and develop His character in me." The Bible says . . .

*"Now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."*  
(1 Peter 1:6–7)

## My Personalized Plan

As I seek to control my anger, I will:

**Believe** that God can help me

- I will trust God, knowing that He is in control of my life.
- I will read God's Word to find guidance on anger.

*"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).

**Respond** to upsetting situations appropriately

- I will ask God for peace and wisdom to respond to difficult or unexpected situations.
- I will take time to collect my thoughts before I respond.

*“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19).*

**Watch** my words carefully

- I will remember that God wants my words to be uplifting and encouraging.
- I will guard my mouth when tempted to lash out in anger.

*“Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3).*

**Be accountable** to God and others

- I will write out my thoughts when I’m angry, telling God what I’m feeling about the situation.
- I will seek the support of others and talk to friends or a counselor to help me deal with my anger.

*“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed” (Ecclesiastes 4:9 nlt).*

**Give thanks** in every situation

- I will remember God’s blessings in my life.
- I will write out a list of things I’m grateful for when I’m upset and thank God for them.

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

**Forgive** and seek forgiveness

- I will ask those hurt by my anger for forgiveness.
- I will forgive those who have angered me, remembering that God has forgiven me of all my sins and does not treat me with anger.

*“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).*

## The Quick Answer to Anger

The effort to resolve anger can be reduced to two basic steps. These two steps involve one question and one action response.

**Step 1. Ask:** Can I change this situation?

**Step 2. Action:** If you can, change it. If you can’t, release it.

Let’s go back to the first step: Think of a situation that angers you. Can you change it? Answer *Yes* or *No*—that’s it.

Now consider the second step: If you answered *Yes*, you are angry about something you can change—so change it.

If the door squeaks, oil it.

If the faucet leaks, fix it.

If you answered *No*, you are angry about something you cannot change—so release it. How do you release your anger? First, list what angers you—every person, every situation. Then, humbly go to God, reject any thought of revenge, and surrender the situation and yourself to the Lord. Although you may feel powerless, in reality you have the power to release your pain and anger to Him.

### **Prayer to Release Your Anger**

*“Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me.  
Thank you for caring about me.  
Since you know everything,  
you know the strong sense of  
( hurt, injustice, fear, and/or frustration )  
I have felt about ( name or situation ).  
Thank you for understanding my anger.  
Right now, I release all of my anger to you.  
I trust you with my future.  
In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.”*

*“Cast all your anxiety on him  
because he cares for you.”  
(1 Peter 5:7)*

# CAREGIVING

*A Blessing, Not a Burden*

## What Is God's Heart on Caregiving?

Caregiving begins with God and reflects His heart toward us. Out of His infinite love, He cares for us. And He calls us to reveal that love by caring for others. In all the many ways we provide care—when we care for someone, we reflect the heart of God who “cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

However, caregiving is hard work and can feel like a burden at times. But done in the right spirit, it blesses both the giver and the recipient. The work of giving care can offer its own rewards, and no act of care and kindness goes unnoticed by God.

*“For God is not unjust. He will not forget  
how hard you have worked for him  
and how you have shown your love to him  
by caring for other believers, as you still do.”  
(HEBREWS 6:10 NLT)*

**God cares for you** every day—throughout your lifetime.

*“I have cared for you since you were born. Yes, I carried you before you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you” (ISAIAH 46:3–4 NLT).*

**God wants you to care** for others.

*“Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone” (1 THESSALONIANS 5:14 NLT).*

**God will strengthen and sustain you** as you care for others.

*“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).*

**God wants you to care** for others with the strength He provides.

*“Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ” (1 PETER 4:11 NLT).*

**God wants you to care for and serve others** as if you were serving Christ.

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (COLOSSIANS 3:23–24).*

**God wants you to recognize your limits** and set boundaries.

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

**God wants you not to grow weary** in your caregiving.

*“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”* (GALATIANS 6:9).

**God wants you not to neglect** your own needs but to care for them as much as you address the needs of others.

*“No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church”* (EPHESIANS 5:29 NLT).

Caregiving is hard work  
and can feel like a  
burden at times.  
But done in the right spirit,  
it blesses both the giver  
and the recipient.

**God wants to bear your burdens** and take care of you when you feel overwhelmed.

*“Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall”* (PSALM 55:22 NLT).

**God notices even the smallest acts of care**—and He will reward them.

*“If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded”* (MATTHEW 10:42 NLT).

## What Are Examples of Caregiving in the Bible?

Moses once praised the Lord in song for His care of His people, *“In a desert land he [God] found him [Israel], in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye”* (Deuteronomy 32:10). Looking back to the exodus, the Lord says of Israel, *“I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of burning heat”* (Hosea 13:5). In what may be the most poignant picture of caregiving in Scripture, the psalmist encourages us to praise God for His care of us.

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;  
for he is our God and we are the people  
of his pasture, the flock under his care.”*  
(PSALM 95:6–7)

### Old Testament Examples of God’s Care for You

Realize, when we care for and help someone, we reflect the heart of God who is called *“my helper”* (Psalm 54:4 NLT). Consider how the many different ways in which we provide care reflects the heart of God, who cares for us. Remember . . .

*“He will take care of you.”*  
(PSALM 55:22 NLT)

**When we help someone find rest**, we reflect the heart of God who “gives rest to his loved ones” (Psalm 127:2 NLT).

**When we give someone food** and help them eat, we reflect the heart of God who “gives food to every creature” (Psalm 136:25).

**When we help someone get dressed**, we reflect the heart of God who “has dressed me with the clothing of salvation” (Isaiah 61:10 NLT).

**When we provide medical care for someone**, we reflect the heart of God who “heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3).

**When we help someone who has fallen**, we reflect the heart of God who “upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down” (Psalm 145:14).

**When we offer a gentle touch** or supportive hand, we reflect the heart of God who “takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you” (Isaiah 41:13).

**When we help someone find a place to live** and feel safe, we reflect the heart of God who is “a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble” (Psalm 9:9 NLT).

**When we help someone bathe** or help clean their home, we reflect the heart of God who promises, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean” (Ezekiel 36:25).

**When we take time to listen to someone** tell their story or share a memory, we reflect the heart of God who “bends down to listen” (Psalm 116:2 NLT).

**When we simply sit with someone** and keep them company, we reflect the heart of God who says, “I am with you” (Isaiah 41:10).

## **New Testament Examples of Caring for Others**

Like Moses, Paul also praised God for His care and comfort, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). Because God compassionately cares for and comforts us, we can do the same for others.

The New Testament abounds with examples of giving care to others. Whether you are a nurse, a parent, a teacher, an employee—whatever your role—caregiving is a calling and comes from the heart—a heart of sacrifice, the heart of the Shepherd, the heart of a servant.

*“Anyone who wants to be first must be  
the very last, and the servant of all.”*  
(MARK 9:35)

### **A Caring Sacrificial Heart**

- Providing for physical needs

*“He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him” (LUKE 10:34).*

### **A Caring Shepherd’s Heart**

- Providing for protective needs

*“Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep’” (JOHN 21:16).*

## A Caring Servant's Heart

- Providing for practical needs

*“Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs”*  
(MATTHEW 27:55).

## What Is Caregiver Burnout?

After caring for a loved one for an extended period of time—with no rest, no respite, no restoration—a caregiver can burn out. The caregiver finally reaches a point of physical and emotional exhaustion.

Every airline safety announcement reminds adults to first put on their own oxygen mask in case of an emergency before placing one on a child or someone in their care. Likewise, caregivers must take care of themselves before they can take care of someone else.

Failing to do so can result in physical weariness, compassion fatigue, depression, self-neglect, illness, injury, and a compelling desire to quit caregiving altogether!

Jesus urges those who are weary and burdened to . . .

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and  
burdened, and I will give you rest.”*  
(MATTHEW 11:28)

**Signs and symptoms** of caregiver burnout:

### Emotional symptoms

- Anger
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Depression

### Physical symptoms

- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Stress
- Susceptibility to illness

### Social signs

- Withdrawal from the patient
- Diminished attention span
- Less interaction with family
- Increased isolation from friends

Remember, you do not have to do this all on your own. Call for help when you experience these symptoms. The psalmist reminds us what to do when we are hard-pressed in what feels like a tight place.

*“When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD;  
he brought me into a spacious place.”*  
(PSALM 118:5)



## Key Verse to Memorize

*“Let us not become weary in doing good,  
for at the proper time we will reap a harvest  
if we do not give up.”  
(GALATIANS 6:9)*

## Dos and Don'ts of Caregiving

**Don't** do everything for the person you are taking care of because it could enable them to the point of becoming more dependent on you prematurely.

- **Do** encourage personal accountability by asking the care receiver what they want to do or think they can do on their own.
- **Do** find or create useful tasks your care receiver can perform successfully.
- **Do** share responsibility whenever possible with other family members and friends.

*“For each one should carry their own load” (GALATIANS 6:5).*

**Don't** think you have to have all the answers.

- **Do** listen carefully for hurts and feelings that are being expressed.
- **Do** ask questions in order to clarify thoughts and desires.
- **Do** learn to reflect their hurts and feelings so they know you really “hear” and understand what they are expressing.

*“To answer before listening—that is folly and shame” (PROVERBS 18:13).*

**Don't** think you must control people and circumstances.

- **Do** recognize that God has His purposes to accomplish.
- **Do** maintain a constant awareness of the presence of God everywhere, every moment.
- **Do** submit to the leading and control of the Holy Spirit.

*“Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives” (GALATIANS 5:25 NLT).*

**Don't** take things too seriously.

- **Do** focus on the positives of the situation.
- **Do** share humorous stories or sayings with the care receiver.
- **Do** learn to laugh at little things and at yourself.

*“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” (PROVERBS 17:22).*

**Don't** think your identity is found in meeting another's needs—to do so can quickly develop into codependency.

- **Do** know that you can trust God to meet the needs of others, apart from you.
- **Do** realize that your identity is in Christ.
- **Do** know that God will meet your needs for meaning and purpose in your life.

*“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (GALATIANS 2:20 NLT).*

**Don't** repress your feelings of hurt and frustration.

- **Do** share your pain with a trusted friend.
- **Do** pour out your heart to the Lord.
- **Do** recognize when it may be time to seek counseling for yourself.

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

**Don't** let yourself become physically exhausted. Lack of rest is a setup for emotional vulnerability.

- **Do** set aside time to be alone—to exercise, pray, and do whatever revives and restores your spirit.
- **Do** set your own personal boundaries.
- **Do** join a caregivers' support group to receive encouragement and fellowship with others in your situation.

*“Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place” (MARK 6:31–32).*

**Don't** become isolated from family and friends for long periods of time.

- **Do** keep contact with others to help you maintain a positive perspective.
- **Do** maintain a regular schedule of getting away and doing things just for you.
- **Do** bring other trusted people into the care environment who can bring joy, laughter, encouragement, and hope.

*“The pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice” (PROVERBS 27:9).*

**Don't** become spiritually depleted.

- **Do** thank God regularly for His blessings. Call on Him for strength when you feel weak.
- **Do** increase the amount of time you spend in God's Word to gain hope and encouragement for the long haul.
- **Do** ask others to pray that God will strengthen you as you give care.

*“My [Jesus'] grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I [Paul] will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 CORINTHIANS 12:9–10).*

**Don't** try to do it all alone.

- **Do** learn to delegate to others.
- **Do** ask for help from family and friends or engage an outside support person.
- **Do** start each morning with a devotion and prayer with the care receiver.

*"The LORD said to Moses: 'Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone'"* (NUMBERS 11:16–17).

**Don't** expect to please everyone.

- **Do** accept the fact that others will misunderstand and even be angry with you at times.
- **Do** recognize that you are not responsible for the responses or reactions of others.
- **Do** be led by God's Spirit and seek to do that which pleases the Lord.

*"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).

**Don't** assume a load of false guilt if you have to choose another source of care.

- **Do** evaluate whether you are carrying guilt and, if so, is it true guilt or false guilt?
- **Do** seek what is best for the person in need.
- **Do** be content that God knows the intent of your heart.

*"The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"* (1 SAMUEL 16:7).

# 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?**

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**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?**

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

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**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?**

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**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?**

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**What can you give thanks to God for today?**

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*“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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