



HOPE FOR THE POOR



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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).

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

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).

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).

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.
²He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
³he refreshes my soul. He guides me along
the right paths for his name’s sake.
⁴Even 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.
⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
⁶You 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)

SELF-WORTH

Discover Your God-Given Value

What Is God's Heart on Self-Worth?

The religious leaders of Jesus' day try to trap Him. They want to get Jesus to say something so they have grounds for arresting Him. After some flattery and compliments, they try to bait Him. *"Teacher,' they said, 'we know how honest you are. You are impartial and don't play favorites. You teach the way of God truthfully. Now tell us—is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay them, or shouldn't we?"* (Mark 12:14–15 NLT).

Their question is designed to place Jesus in a political and religious dilemma where, depending on His answer, He would upset the Jews or the Romans. Jesus, however, knows their malicious intent . . . *"Jesus saw through their hypocrisy and said, 'Why are you trying to trap me? Show me a Roman coin, and I'll tell you'"* (Mark 12:15 NLT).

After receiving a coin, Jesus asks, *"Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"*

"Caesar's,' they replied." (Mark 12:16).

Jesus concludes, *"Well, then . . . give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God"* (Mark 12:16 NLT).

The Bible says, *"His reply completely amazed them"* (Mark 12:17 NLT). His answer ought to amaze us, too—not because He wisely evades a trap, but because of what Jesus alludes to about our worth. By asking the religious leaders about the coin, "Whose image is this?" . . . He indirectly poses a question: Caesar's image may be on the coin, but whose image is on *you*?

You are made in *God's* image. Because of that, you have infinite worth—more than any coin or currency this world can afford. You belong to God. The Creator and King of the universe not only created you in His image, but He cares for you. He crowns you with glory and honor, showing your infinite, inherent, unchangeable worth.

*"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?
You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor."*

(PSALM 8:3–5)

God wants you to see yourself through His eyes—as His image-bearer with infinite worth.

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (GENESIS 1:26-27, 31).

God wants you to see yourself through His eyes—as precious and honored in His sight.

"You are precious and honored in my sight, and . . . I love you" (ISAIAH 43:4).

God wants you to see yourself through His eyes—as His beloved child.

“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).

God wants you to know that you are fully accepted in Christ—not due to your performance but due to His grace.

“He made us accepted in the Beloved” (EPHESIANS 1:6 NKJV).

God will not reject His people, His beloved possession.

“The LORD will not reject his people; he will not abandon his special possession” (PSALM 94:14 NLT).

God understands the pain of being devalued and held in low esteem.

“He [Jesus] was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem” (ISAIAH 53:3).

God offers healing from past pain, guilt, and shame.

“Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me” (PSALM 30:2).

God wants you to forgive those who hurt you and led you to feel worthless.

“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 show respect to everyone because we all bear His image.

“Show proper respect to everyone” (1 PETER 2:17).

God wants you to encourage others who have low self-worth.

“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).

God wants you to look to Him and His Word to find your true worth.

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

“You are made in
God’s image.
Because of that,
you have
infinite worth.”

How to Get Rid of Guilt and Shame

Feelings of guilt and shame need to be correctly defined and dealt with God’s way, so that healing can happen and you can begin to walk in the freedom of God’s grace.

*“God has taken away my shame.”
(GENESIS 30:23 HCSB)*

Understand the Difference Between Guilt and Shame

Guilt and shame are not the same. Guilt focuses on your behavior, whereas shame focuses on you.

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

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

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 while guilt creates a desire to change or justify emotions and behavior.

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

Shame steals the joy of your salvation, yet 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)

Understand the Difference Between True Guilt and False Guilt

False guilt can blind and deceive people from seeing the truth about the hurtful experiences they suffered. False guilt adds another unhealthy dynamic to already wounded emotions. Realize, there's a big 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 perfect 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 after having committed a sin even though the sin is confessed, repented of, and no longer a part of a person's life.
- **False guilt** is based on self-condemning feelings of not having 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 lies and believing truth. 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 committed against you for which you feel responsible (or the sins for which you have repented), realize that 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?” (Not guilty; 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)

Overcoming 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 reflect on your 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).

Guilt and shame are powerful emotions that 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.

*“Where there is no counsel, the people fall;
But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”*
(PROVERBS 11:14 NKJV)

ENVY & JEALOUSY

Taming the Terrible Twins

What Is Envy?

Envy is feeling resentful about the advantages, possessions, or successes of another person, with an intense desire to possess what they have.

Envy is a feeling of animosity over another's possessions, position, popularity, or power. Envy says: "I want to be who you are. . . . I want to do what you do. . . . I want to have what you have." Left unchecked, envy can escalate in intensity to the point of imagining or even inflicting harm against whoever possesses the object of envy.

Envy in the New Testament is one of several Greek words including *phthonos*, which means "the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others."

Envy is *coveting* what belongs to another. To covet in Hebrew is *charmā*, meaning "to long for, to lust after."

When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, His heart was to teach all people everywhere how to live a life pleasing to God, reflecting His character—a life free from the consequences of *coveting*. The last of the Ten Commandments says that we are not to covet anything that belongs to someone else.

*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife,
or his male or female servant,
his ox or donkey, or anything
that belongs to your neighbor."
(Exodus 20:17)*

Envy—Always Wrong?

Question: "Is envy ever right?"

Answer: No. Envy is an expression of self-centered pride, and, as such, is always wrong. To envy is to covet—which is expressly prohibited by God in His Ten Commandments. Envy is often accompanied by entitlement: "I'm entitled to have what you have." The Bible never speaks of envy in a positive light. God's Word says that love does not envy. Since the greatest commands are to love God and love our neighbors—and love does not envy—it can never be loving or right to be envious.

One example of the evil of envy in action occurred when the Jewish leaders wrongly accused Jesus. They envied His astonishing power and popularity with the people. The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, realized this and offered to release Jesus and crucify the notorious prisoner Barabbas, for Pilate *“knew that they had handed Him over because of envy”* (Matthew 27:18 nkjv). However, the Bible says:

“Love does not envy.”
(1 Corinthians 13:4 esv)

What Is Jealousy?

Jealousy is feeling fiercely protective over one’s own rights or possessions with a passion to vigilantly guard them.

Jealousy can be resentment and suspicion when someone you love is attracted to someone else.

Jealousy in the New Testament is the Greek word *zelos*, which means “zeal” or “to burn with jealousy.”

Jealousy can be either:

- Selfish possessiveness based on a feeling of ownership (destructive)
- Loyal protectiveness based on a covenant relationship with that person (constructive)

The Bible describes destructive jealousy as *“worldly.”*

“You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?”
(1 Corinthians 3:3)

Jealousy—Always Wrong?

Question: “Isn’t jealousy always wrong?”

Answer: No, sometimes jealousy is wrong and sometimes right.

Ungodly jealousy arises from selfishness and insecurity or the belief that one person owns another person. This worldly jealousy is not based on love, but on self-centered desires.

Godly jealousy surfaces when a covenant relationship is threatened (such as in a marriage or in our relationship with God). Out of His great love for us, God jealously guards His special relationship with us. God, in giving the Ten Commandments, describes Himself as a “jealous God”: *“I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God”* (Exodus 20:5).

In the Old Testament, God's righteous jealousy is described in numerous passages.

– The name *Jealous* is used in reference to God when His people were warned to remain faithful.

“Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exodus 34:14).

In the New Testament, the idea of is expressed when . . .

– The apostle Paul speaks of his deep concern for the Corinthians.

“I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2–3).

Conclusion: The appropriate feeling of jealousy is natural for God when a covenant relationship with Him is threatened. Likewise, because we are called to be “godly,” jealousy will be a natural response when we have a covenant relationship in jeopardy.

What Is the Difference between Envy and Jealousy?

How do *envy* and *jealousy*, words so often used interchangeably, actually differ from one another? The differences are subtle, but distinct.

Envy is empty hands desperately *yearning to be filled*

Jealousy is full hands *fearing to be emptied*

Envy is a burning desire to *get*

Jealousy is a burning desire to *keep*

Envy is craving what *another has*

Jealousy is clinging to what *one has*

Envy is focused on *gaining*

Jealousy is focused on *losing*

Envy is fueled by a sense of *entitlement*

Jealousy is fueled by a sense of *retaining control*

Envy is rooted in ambitious *pride*

Jealousy is rooted in anxious *fear*

Envy usually involves *two* people (e.g., you envy someone who has something you want exclusively for yourself)

Jealousy usually involves *three or more* people (e.g., you feel jealous over an outside rival to your mate's affection)

What is the ultimate solution to struggling with these painful emotions? The answer is learning to be content with what we have in our lives. Contentment is a wonderful state of satisfaction and serenity, comfort and fulfillment, pleasure and a heart at peace. This comes much more easily for those who yield their lives to the Lord.

*“If they obey and serve him,
they will spend the rest
of their days in prosperity
and their years in contentment.”*
(Job 36:11)

Gaining an Attitude of Gratitude

God, who knows all things, understands envy and jealousy are rooted in selfishness and pride and in the idea that He is unfair, unjust, and unsympathetic in His actions toward us. Some believe that He is *partial* to certain people and *impartial* to others or that He *should* distribute material wealth, physical and emotional health, professional and relational success, talents, and abilities equally to all of His people.

Yet who are we to judge the rightness of God’s plans? He is not creating inequality by varying the gifts He gives. Rather, He is building a body made up of many parts, each having different abilities and assignments, but all possessing equal value. God tells us to look at the bigger picture and embrace it, for therein lies contentment and the motivation to relish the role He’s called us to live out.

*“Just as a body, though one, has many parts . . .
so it is with Christ.
But in fact God has placed the parts in the body . . .
just as he wanted them to be
. . . so that there should be no division in the body,
but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.”*
(1 Corinthians 12:12, 18, 25)

Look at what God has placed in your own hands rather than what is in the hands of others.

- Begin and end each day expressing thanks to God for at least one thing.
- Maintain an attitude of gratitude to God throughout the day.

“They were also to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD. They were to do the same in the evening”
(1 Chronicles 23:30).

Look at what God has done in the past *for you* rather than what He has done for others.

- Create a timeline of your life in ten-year increments.
- As you think back over the events in your past, note on your timeline the occasions you know you were blessed by God and thank Him for each one.

“I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done”
(Psalm 143:5).

Look at what God is doing *in you* rather than only what He is doing in others.

- Prayerfully ask God to show you ways He is working in your life to mold and shape your character to reflect the character of Christ.
- Thank Him for preparing you for greater service. Ask Him to make you a godly example to those whose lives you touch.

“It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13).

Look at what God is doing *through you* rather than only what He is doing through others.

- Enlist the help of someone who knows you well enough to help evaluate your gifts, talents, and abilities.
- Examine how you are expressing the love of God to loved ones, strangers, and those in the body of Christ, His church.

“We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere”
(1 Thessalonians 1:2–3, 7–8).

Look at what God has promised *regarding you* rather than focusing on what He has promised regarding others.

- Become familiar with the promises of God to those who place their faith in Jesus Christ.
- Write out the promises that touch your heart and personalize each one.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires”
(2 Peter 1:3–4).

The Bible says that God *“gives everyone life and breath and everything else”* (Acts 17:25). Every possession you have, every meal you’ve eaten, every relationship you’ve enjoyed, every sunny day and moment of laughter you’ve had are gifts from the hand of God. When you consider these gifts, as well as God’s greatest gift to you—the gift of His Son—your heart ought to swell with gratitude for all of the Lord’s blessings in your life. Because He has been so gracious to us, He calls us to live with thankful hearts.

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

TRIALS

God's Refining Fire

What Is God's Heart on Trials?

Purification is a painstaking process.

The choicest silver or gold—*like the choicest character*—undergoes the Refiner's fire numerous times to attain the highest degree of purity possible. When silversmiths or goldsmiths finally see a perfectly clear image of themselves in the crucible, they know purification has been achieved.

Facing the agony of the cross, Jesus was in great physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual distress, to the point of asking the Father three times whether there might be another way to redeem us—but there was none. He faced the last and most painful trip to the crucible of God's refining fire, not out of weakness and defeat but out of strength and faith in His Father who loved Him. Jesus was able to trust the Father's trial because He trusted the Father's heart of love and compassion, wisdom and understanding. And you can face the trials He has designed for you because He has the same love for you that He has for Jesus.

*"I have given them the glory that you gave me,
that they may be one as we are one
—I in them and you in me—so that they
may be brought to complete unity.
Then the world will know that you sent me
and have loved them even as you have loved me."*
(JOHN 17:22–23)

God's Heart on Trials

God uses trials to show you the sufficiency of His power and grace.

"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness" (2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 NLT).

God uses trials to increase your trust in Him.

"Let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good"
(1 PETER 4:19 ESV).

God uses trials to break your pride and produce in you a heart of humility.

"So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh" (2 CORINTHIANS 12:7 NLT).

God uses trials to reveal your sinfulness so that He might break the power of sin in your life.

"Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back" (ISAIAH 38:17).

God uses trials to lead you to a point of personal examination so that He might set you on a correction course.

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (PSALM 139:23–24).

God uses trials to drive you to pour out your heart to Him.

“I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. I pour out before him my complaint; before him I tell my trouble. When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who watch over my way” (PSALM 142:1–3).

God uses trials to show you that He hears you and encourages you.

“You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry” (PSALM 10:17).

God uses trials to help you learn His ways.

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

“Purification is a painstaking process.”

God uses trials to keep you from going astray and to teach you obedience.

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

God uses trials to produce maturity in you.

“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 1:2–3).

God uses trials to develop compassion in you.

“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 uses trials to bring glory to Himself.

“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 Is the Refining Process?

In the Bible, many references present the refining of gold and silver as a parallel of God’s refining us through our own painful trials. This unforgettable allegory is meant to help us understand the purpose behind our pain—specifically, to conform us to the character of Christ. Clearly, we don’t develop Christlike character all at once. Character is forged over time, especially through fiery trials. Indeed, God is our Refiner.

“For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver.”

(PSALM 66:10)

Because the Bible is filled with images of God working as the Refiner in our lives, we can gain much insight by understanding the refining process.

The Six Stages of Refinement

STAGE 1: The Breaking—The refiner breaks up the natural ore.

- In biblical times, a refiner began by breaking up rough ore—hardened rock encased with common minerals (such as tin, copper, and zinc), but which also might possibly contain rare metals—the precious metals of gold and silver.
- Breaking the rock is necessary to begin the refining process of exposing highly valuable metals to heat.
- The Lord states, *“My people [are] the ore”* (Jeremiah 6:27). We are rough rock in need of hammering, breaking, and refining. *“Is not my word like fire,’ declares the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?’”* (Jeremiah 23:29).

STAGE 2: The Crucible—The refiner places unrefined silver or gold into a crucible.

- The refiner puts broken, crushed ore into a crucible—a fireproof melting pot able to withstand intense heat.
- Then the refiner places the crucible into the furnace at the precise temperature necessary for separating out inferior metals that would otherwise mar the quality of the gold or silver.
- Just as the furnace is used to purify silver in the crucible, our Refiner uses the heat of a severe test or a life-impacting trial to purify our hearts and cleanse our character. Proverbs 17:3 says, *“The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.”*

STAGE 3: The Dross—The refiner places the crucible in the heated furnace to remove dross.

- As the ore melts in the crucible under the watchful eye of the refiner, a layer of impurities called dross eventually appears. (Dross refers to the scum that forms on the surface of the liquefied molten metal.)
- The Bible says, *“Remove the dross from the silver, and a silversmith can produce a vessel”* (Proverbs 25:4).
- For us individually, dross represents anything impure or worthless—any wrong motive, wrong attitude, wrong action—any sin that keeps us from being all God created us to be. Yet, the Word of God states the problem succinctly: *“Your silver has become dross”* (Isaiah 1:22).

STAGE 4: The Heat—The refiner raises the temperature to higher degrees.

- The heat extracts the dross—the impurities emitted during the refining process. After the refiner painstakingly skims off these impurities, he then increases the heat and places the crucible back into the blistering furnace.
- Again and again (up to seven times, we are told in historical literature) impurities rise to the surface. Again and again, the crucible is returned to the furnace.
- Our Refiner knows the exact temperature needed to extract the dross, and He knows that only certain impurities are released at certain temperatures. How interesting that Psalm 12:6 says, *“And the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver purified in a crucible, like gold refined seven times.”*

STAGE 5: The Purification—The refiner continues to remove the impurities.

- Each time, with utmost skill and patience, the refiner removes layer after layer of dross and increasingly, the silver and gold become more pure and precious than before.
- To gauge his progress, the refiner looks for his own reflection on the surface of the crucible’s contents. The more dross removed, the less distorted his reflection.
- Notice, the refiner never leaves the crucible—he sits by it. The Bible says our Refiner sits over the refining process to purify us. *“He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify . . . and refine them like gold and silver”* (Malachi 3:3).

STAGE 6: The Reflection—The refiner sees a clear image of himself.

- Initially, the refiner looks into the pot and sees a dim reflection of himself.
- Only after repeatedly skimming off the top layer of dross floating on the surface, and only when the refiner looks into the metal-filled crucible and sees a clear reflection of himself is the process complete. Finally, the metal attains its highest degree of purity!
- And that describes our Refiner’s loving intentions for allowing us to be in the “*furnace of affliction.*” As we trust Him to use our trials to cleanse our character and purify our hearts, we will begin to see the “silver lining.” Isaiah 48:10 says, “*See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.*”

What Are Truths about Trials?

When it comes to trials, without a doubt, some are “hotter” than others.

The Master Refiner can use the loss of a job or the loss of a loved one to surface dross in our character, or He can fulfill His divine purposes through the pain of a rocky relationship or a sobering medical diagnosis. Certain impurities will rise to the top—*only with utmost heat.*

And like refiners of silver, who slough off that slimy layer of waste in the crucible, God sloughs off the impurities in our lives. What follows next is a fascinating step. Silversmiths peer into their crucibles, eyes squinting to scrutinize the surface of the molten metals, searching for an image—*their very own image.* If what stares back at them is cloudy and dull, the crucible is placed back into the sweltering inferno for further purification.

Likewise, our Master Refiner is committed to completion.

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

(PHILIPPIANS 1:6)

Truths about Trials

Trials are experienced by everyone.

“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 TIMOTHY 3:12).

Trials have a divine purpose.

“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame” (ROMANS 5:3–5).

Trials last only for a while.

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 CORINTHIANS 4:17).

Trials are controlled by God.

“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear” (1 CORINTHIANS 10:13).

Trials come with God’s grace for endurance.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 CORINTHIANS 12:9).

Trials strengthen you in your weaknesses.

“I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 CORINTHIANS 12:10).

Key Verse to Memorize

*“When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.”*

(ISAIAH 43:2)

Key Passage to Read

James 1:2–18

Building Faith in the Furnace

Face your trial positively (v. 2).

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds” (JAMES 1:2).

Acknowledge the purpose of your trial regularly (v. 3).

“Because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance” (JAMES 1:3).

Endure your trial to maturity (v. 4).

“Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (JAMES 1:4).

Pray for wisdom consistently (v. 5).

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (JAMES 1:5).

Believe in God’s answer confidently (vv. 6–8).

“But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do” (JAMES 1:6–8).

Live in light of eternity (vv. 9–11).

“Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business” (JAMES 1:9–11).

Persevere in your trial unwaveringly (v. 12).

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him” (JAMES 1:12).

Fight temptation faithfully (vv. 13–15).

“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (JAMES 1:13–15).

Receive God’s grace humbly (vv. 16–17).

“Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (JAMES 1:16–17).

Remember your God-given identity (v. 18).

“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created” (JAMES 1:18).

My Personalized Plan to Overcome Trials

Through every trial, I will seek to be transformed by following these guidelines of God’s truth:

Thankfulness—I will thank God for all that He is doing in my life.

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

Joy—I will rejoice in the Lord, knowing that the outcome of every trial is in His hands.

“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance” (ROMANS 5:3 ESV).

Confession— I will ask God to search my heart, and I will confess any hidden sin.

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (PROVERBS 28:13).

Humility—I will remember that God gives grace to the humble.

“He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble’” (JAMES 4:6).

Obedience—I will listen to and obey God’s Word.

“This is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love” (2 JOHN 6).

Wisdom—I will saturate my mind with Scripture.

“I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word”
(PSALM 119:15–16).

Prayer—I will not worry, but pray about everything.

“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).

Trust—I will entrust myself to God, who judges justly.

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly” (1 PETER 2:23).

Dependence—I will act in the power of Christ.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV).

Endurance—I will look to the Lord for deliverance.

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 CORINTHIANS 10:13).

Praise—I will focus on God’s greatness, not on my circumstances.

“I will praise you every day; yes, I will praise you forever. Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! No one can measure his greatness” (PSALM 145:203 NLT).

Ministry—I will look for ways to reach out and help others.

“Don’t be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you” (2 TIMOTHY 4:5 NLT).

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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