



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 Life Without Limbs, 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 "Nick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nick Vujicic and the Life Without Limbs Team

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).

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

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).

How to Know Your Real Worth

We receive explicit and implicit messages every day from numerous sources—our parents, friends, school, work, culture, and media—about our identity and our worth. Many times, the messages are negative, hurtful, or discouraging. Even worse, the enemy of God, Satan, attacks our identity and worth.

In order to overcome the lies of the enemy and negative messages from the world about your worth, you need to stay grounded in God’s Word. Embrace the truth about what *God* says about you.

*“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)

Psalm 139

Realize that God knows all about you. (vv. 1–6)

“You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.”

Remember that God is always with you. (vv. 7–12)

“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”

Rejoice in the fact that God created you. (vv. 13–14)

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

Recognize that God uniquely designed you. (vv. 15–16)

“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

Receive God’s loving thoughts toward you. (vv. 17–18)

“How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.”

Renounce God's enemies as enemies to you. (vv. 19–22)

"If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, LORD, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies."

Respond to God as He changes you. (vv. 23–24)

"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."

PURPOSE IN LIFE

Pinpointing Your Priorities

What's Is God's Heart on Your Purpose in Life?

Why am I here? What's the point? Do I matter? Can I actually make a difference?

These are important questions. They all revolve around our purpose in life. The good news is that God has answers for you. His Word reveals that you do have purpose, you do matter, and you can make a difference. Even more, you are not alone. The Lord is faithful to help you discover your purpose and to fulfill His purposes in you, through you, for you, and with you.

*“He who began a good work in you
will carry it on to completion
until the day of Christ Jesus.”
(PHILIPPIANS 1:6)*

12 Truths on Your Purpose in Life

God has plans and purposes for you.

“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 had a purpose for you even before you were born.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart” (JEREMIAH 1:5).

God has good works that He prepared specifically for you.

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (EPHESIANS 2:10)

God is committed to fulfilling His purpose for you.

“The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever” (PSALM 138:8 ESV).

God’s purposes for you do not change based on shifting circumstances, cultural trends, or feelings.

“The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations” (PSALM 33:11).

God wants you to look to His Word to discover His purposes and the path He has for you.

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

God can use wise, insightful people to help you understand your purpose.

“The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out” (PROVERBS 20:5).

God gives you a specific spiritual gift to help fulfill your purpose and to serve others.

“God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another” (1 PETER 4:10 NLT).

God’s purpose in every circumstance and season of life is to make you more like Jesus.

“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. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (ROMANS 8:28–29).

God has purposes for your suffering—to reveal His compassion to you and use you to comfort others.

“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’s highest purpose and priority for you is to love the Lord and love others.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these” (MARK 12:30–31).

God’s purpose for you is to know Him and make Him known to others.

“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 CORINTHIANS 5:20).

Prayer of Purpose

*“Dear Lord,
Thank you for having a unique plan and purpose for me.
Thank you for caring about every detail of my life.
It gives me hope to know that my life has meaning
and that you will accomplish your purposes in my life
through the good times and even through the difficult times.
I ask that you reveal your purposes for my life as I study your Word,
talk to others, and pray for your leading.
Help me discover your specific goals and plans for my life.
Thank you, Father, for the gifts you have given me,
and that you will accomplish your purposes in and through me.
In Jesus’ name. Amen.”*

20 Questions to Help Discover Your Purpose in Life

Use the following questions to help discover and pinpoint your God-given purpose. It can be helpful to talk through them with someone, especially someone who knows you well. As you think through these questions, ask the Lord to guide you in the path He has for you.

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

1. What activities have been the most fulfilling to you—ones that brought you great joy and satisfaction?
2. When do you feel like you’re “in the zone” or “at your best?”
3. What has God clearly revealed to you in His Word about His purpose for you?
4. What would you like to spend more time doing?
5. What do you know should be a priority to you?
6. What is your greatest passion? (i.e. What do you love doing the most?)
7. What activities come naturally to you?
8. What activities/work have you been successful at?
9. What have others noticed you’re good at?
10. What dreams, desires, or goals do you often think about?
11. What are your most important roles and responsibilities?
12. What are your God-given gifts and talents?
13. What current opportunities do you have?
14. What resources do you have at your disposal?
15. What do you really want out of life?
16. What problem in the world do you think needs to be solved?
17. What people do you have a heart for helping / praying for? (i.e. Who needs help?)
18. When have you felt like you’ve made a difference?
19. What would you like to be remembered for?
20. What do you want to accomplish before you die?

“I cry out to God Most High, to God who will fulfill his purpose for me.”
(PSALM 57:2 NLT)

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).

WORRY

The Joy Stealer

What Is God's Heart on Worry?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

God wants you to encourage others when they are worried.

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

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

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

Key Verses to Memorize

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

Key Passage to Read

Luke 12:22-34

My Personalized Plan to Find Peace

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

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

Applying God's Word to My Worry

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Applying God's Way to My Worry

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

Therefore, I will . . .

Acknowledge what I worry about.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Slow down my thinking.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

“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).

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)*

Key Passage to Read

Lamentations 3:19–25

“I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.

²⁰ I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.

²¹ Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:

*²² Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.*

²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

²⁴ I say to myself, ‘The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.’

²⁵ The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;”

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)

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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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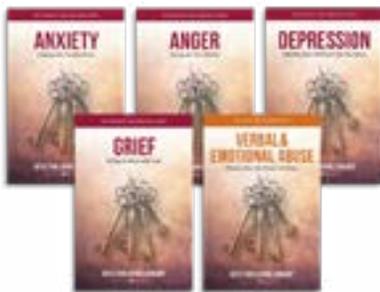
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