



HOPE FOR THE WIDOW



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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

WIDOWHOOD

Wisdom in a Wilderness

What Is God's Heart on Widowhood?

"A champion of widows" (Psalm 68:5 HCSB). That's how God's Word describes the Lord.

Over and over, the Bible shows how God cares for the widow. It says, "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow" (Deuteronomy 10:18). The Lord commands His people, "Do not oppress the widow" (Zechariah 7:10). God gives sobering warnings and judgments to those who mistreat widows, yet He also expresses His compassionate, protective care for widows.

The reality of widowhood is difficult, as it often creates a number of unique challenges. Emotionally, the widow is grieving and sorrowful. Financially, the death of a spouse can create difficulties with money, insurance, and work. Socially, widows can become isolated as relationships change over time. Spiritually, the widow might feel distant from God, angry with Him, or simply lost and confused as to why this is happening.

Yet for all those who have experienced the pain of widowhood, the Lord knows. He sees. He cares. His promise to widows and to all those grieving is that He will walk with you each day.

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

God is a protector and defender of widows.

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling" (PSALM 68:5).

God sustains and cares for widows.

"He cares for the orphans and widows, but he frustrates the plans of the wicked" (PSALM 146:9 NLT).

God does not want widows to be taken advantage of, exploited, or mistreated.

"You must not exploit a widow or an orphan. If you exploit them in any way and they cry out to me, then I will certainly hear their cry" (EXODUS 22:22–23).

God calls His people to look after and care for widows.

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (JAMES 1:27).

"For all those who have experienced the pain of widowhood, the Lord knows. He sees. He cares."

God wants the children and grandchildren of widows to care for them.

“Take care of any widow who has no one else to care for her. But if she has children or grandchildren, their first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them. This is something that pleases God” (1 TIMOTHY 5:3–4 NLT).

God sees your pain and grief.

“I will be glad and rejoice in your unending love, for you have seen my troubles, and you care about the anguish of my soul” (PSALM 31:7 NLT).

God will meet your needs.

“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (PHILIPPIANS 4:19).

God wants your hope to be in Him.

“Now a true widow, a woman who is truly alone in this world, has placed her hope in God. She prays night and day, asking God for his help” (1 TIMOTHY 5:5 NLT).

God promises to wipe away all your tears.

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

God comforts you and can you use 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).

Uplifting the Widow: Two Stories & Key Lessons

God’s care and compassion for widows is reflected in many stories and passages in the Bible. It is also expressed in how the Lord Jesus brought attention to widows in His teaching ministry. Using widows as examples, Jesus told two stories which taught important spiritual lessons to the disciples and for us today. The Parable of the Persistent Widow shows what it looks to pray without ceasing. In the story of the widow’s offering, Jesus revealed what it meant to give sacrificially.

While the Lord calls us to care for widows, these stories are a reminder that widows can also teach us something about what it means to love God and rely on Him for all things.

*“Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.”
(PSALM 105:4)*

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

The Widow’s Offering

Mark 12:41-44

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

GRIEF

Living at Peace with Loss

What Is God's Heart on Grief?

Grief is common in our broken world. When we face a significant loss in our lives, it is natural to feel heartache and to mourn. But in our grief, God is near. He sees our pain, understands it, and walks with us every day. God's Word shows that we don't grieve without purpose or without His presence.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

(PSALM 46:1)

God empathizes with your grief because He has experienced grief Himself.

"He [Jesus] was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief" (ISAIAH 53:3 NLT).

God is with you in your grief.

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

God sees your grief and suffering.

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

God hears your cries and listens to you in your pain.

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

God wants you to process your grief with Him.

"Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken" (PSALM 55:22).

God wants you to have hope even in your grief.

"Dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope" (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13 NLT).

God wants to give you joy even in your grief.

"You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy" (PSALM 30:11 NLT).

God wants to comfort you with His presence.

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

"In our grief, God is near. He sees our pain, understands it, and walks with us every day."

God wants to comfort you through others.

“God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus” (2 CORINTHIANS 7:6).

God wants to comfort you with His Word.

“I have suffered much; preserve my life, LORD, according to your word” (PSALM 119:107).

God wants to use your grief to comfort others.

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

God will one day wipe away your tears—and there will be no more death or mourning or grief.

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

What Complicates the Grieving Process?

What makes grieving difficult is not just the loss of a loved one but all the changes that accompany the loss. Depending on the type of loss, there are numerous and often significant changes that can occur. These changes can extend or intensify your grief.

When you experience loss and all the changes that come about as a result of it, remember that God is your *constant* companion.

“The LORD your God will personally go ahead of you.

He will neither fail you nor abandon you.”

(DEUTERONOMY 31:6 NLT)

The following issues can affect the grieving process:

Logistics—dealing with immediate concerns surrounding a loss (phone calls; funeral plans; writing an obituary; notifying insurance; processing a will/probate; coordinating meetings, work schedule, childcare, meal planning)

Housing/property/finances—dividing assets; cleaning out a home; having to relocate; dealing with insurance payments or status, hospital bills, funeral expenses, taxes, debts, adjustments to change in income

Busyness—being consumed by daily life and responsibilities to the extent that you do not have adequate time to process your thoughts and emotions

Support system/remaining family—not having people who can comfort you and be there for you; adjusting to new family dynamics; handling conflicts

Circumstances surrounding the loss or death—not recognizing how the unique circumstances of the loss or cause of death will impact survivors (for example: grieving over a miscarriage, suicide, drug overdose, terminal illness, violent death, sudden or accidental death, losing multiple people at once)

Length/type of relationship—not understanding how the duration or type of relationship can intensify the grief (parent/child, spouse, grandparent, friend, church member, coworker/boss, pet, student/teacher)

Memories—being confronted with memories of your loved one (often in unexpected ways or at unexpected times) through various people, places, songs, meals, smells, etc.

Emotional complexity/inexperience with grief—not knowing what to do with the depth and range of emotions or what to expect or how to cope

Spiritual needs—not having a spiritual foundation or community to understand and process grief

Physical needs—neglecting physical needs (sleeping, eating, exercising, etc.)

Regret/guilt—wishing you had said or done something differently before the loss; feeling responsible for wrongdoing toward the person you've lost

Denial/refusal—living as if the loss has not occurred; choosing to ignore the loss

*“The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.”
(PSALM 18:2)*

Key Verses to Memorize

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

Key Passage to Read

Lamentations 3:19–26

*“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;*

²⁶ *it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.”*

My Personalized Plan to Process My Grief

As the Lord uses this period of grief to produce the character of Christ in me, **I will . . .**

Recognize my grief

- Know the stages of grief
- Share my pain with another
- Openly express my emotions

“I am exhausted and completely crushed. My groans come from an anguished heart. You know what I long for, LORD; you hear my every sigh” (PSALM 38:8–9 NLT).

Realize my insufficiency

- Acknowledge my grief and pain to God
- Admit I am powerless to carry the grief alone
- Ask God to help me experience His strength in my weakness

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

Relinquish control

- Recognize God’s rightful, sovereign control over my life
- Give my dreams and desires to God
- Trust God’s plans for me

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

Respond to God’s grace

- Spend time in God’s Word
- Allow the Lord to meet my emotional needs
- Recognize that God loves me and has not deserted me

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze” (ISAIAH 43:2).

Rebuild my life

- Acknowledge the “new normal” in my life
- Stay active in church and be involved in the lives of others
- Recognize that God wants to use me in new ways

“The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 PETER 5:10).

Dos and Don’ts of Healthy Grieving

Throughout the psalms, David shows us what to do with our grief and other difficult feelings. He brings his raw, honest feelings to God. He cries out to God. He questions God. He tells God how his grief and suffering affects him physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. As David processes his grief before God, he often recalls God’s faithfulness to him. He remembers God’s promises. By the end of many psalms, David expresses a renewed trust in God.

David shows us that instead of running away from God in our grief, we can run to God. That’s a mark of healthy grieving. There are other steps to take—and things to avoid—that will help you in the grieving process.

*“Commit everything you do to the LORD.
Trust him, and he will help you.”
(PSALM 37:5 NLT)*

Don’t let self-pity dominate your thoughts.

Do seek peace through contentment.

“I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (PHILIPPIANS 4:11).

Don't become consumed with regret.

Do learn from and accept the past.

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance" (PROVERBS 1:5).

Don't ignore memories and feelings—both positive and negative.

Do allow yourself to feel your emotions and to reflect on your memories.

"I thank my God every time I remember you" (PHILIPPIANS 1:3).

Don't isolate yourself.

Do seek the support of others and look to the Lord to meet your needs.

"Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you" (ISAIAH 46:4).

Don't compare your circumstances to the circumstances of others.

Do focus on what God wants you to do in *your* situation.

"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground" (PSALM 143:10).

Don't busy yourself with distractions in an effort to avoid your grief.

Do set aside time to process your grief through prayer, journaling, conversations, etc.

"The Lord said to her, 'My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her'" (LUKE 10:41–42 NLT).

Don't make major decisions while grieving.

Do establish priorities and seek wise counsel.

"The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways" (PROVERBS 14:8).

Don't define yourself by your grief.

Do find your identity in Christ.

"Listen to the LORD who created you. . . . The one who formed you says, 'Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine'" (ISAIAH 43:1 NLT).

How to Help the Grieving

Your words can build up and comfort the grieving, and your actions can show your love and care. When someone is grieving, they may be too overwhelmed to deal with everyday responsibilities in addition to the emotional impact of the loss. Acknowledge their loss immediately and let them know as soon as possible that you are available for them. Because they often won't ask for help, find helpful things to do without being asked. They will usually appreciate small acts of kindness and support.

*“Let’s not merely say that we love each other;
let us show the truth by our actions.”*

(1 JOHN 3:18 NLT)

Consider these practical suggestions for reaching out to others with the compassion of Christ:

Pray. Remind yourself to pray regularly *for* the grieving and, as appropriate, pray *with* them.

Be there. Don't feel the need to fill the silence. Sometimes the most meaningful way to show compassion is simply to be present. Offer a hug when appropriate.

Listen. Give the one grieving opportunities to talk about the loss. Expect tears and emotional extremes. Accept emotional or verbal responses without judgment.

Offer to help with phone calls. Depending on the loss, there may be a lot of phone calls to make. Offer to help answer phone calls and relay information, if needed.

Bring a meal. Cook a warm meal and deliver it to the one grieving. Use disposable containers if possible. Be aware of any dietary needs/restrictions or allergies.

Run an errand. Offer to go to the grocery store, post office, dry cleaners, etc.

Send gift cards. Buy them a gift card for a restaurant, grocery store, movie theater, online store, etc.

Send a card or flowers. Immediately following the loss, send a card or flowers to let them know you're thinking of them. Stay in touch by writing a letter or sharing a story or memory.

Encourage a change of scenery. Take them out to lunch, dinner, shopping, or just for a walk.

Travel with them. Offer to drive them somewhere or join them in running errands so they are not alone.

Help around the house. Offer to clean, mow the lawn, do laundry, etc.

Offer to house-sit, babysit, take care of pets. This can help the grieving person get some rest or attend to errands or personal responsibilities.

Gather information and identify help network. Depending on the loss, you can help find available jobs, houses, or services. Reach out to others who may be able to help the grieving individual or family as well.

Show hospitality. Depending on the loss and your availability, open up your home as a place for people to meet, have a meal, or spend a night.

“When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them.

Always be eager to practice hospitality.”

(ROMANS 12:13 NLT)

LONELINESS

From Longing to Belonging

What Is God's Heart on Loneliness?

When God created the world, He said it was “*very good*” (Genesis 1:31). Even though Adam enjoyed perfect fellowship with God, the Lord still declared that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). We are made for relationship with God *and* for relationship with one another.

But in our broken world, at various times in our lives, we will all experience the pain of loneliness. It might be due to a break-up, a divorce, an illness, job loss, strained relationship, death of a loved one, or seemingly for no reason at all. There are times when even though we are around people every day . . . we just feel alone, unconnected from everyone. There are times when we will feel like the psalmist, “*I am lonely and afflicted*” (Psalm 25:16).

The Lord understands the pain of loneliness and isolation. In His final moments on the cross, the Bible records, “*Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’*” (Mark 15:34). Jesus experienced loneliness and isolation on the cross so we could be in a restored relationship with God and never be truly alone.

When we feel lonely, God meets with us. One of the Lord's most comforting and frequent reminders to us is simply this . . .

“I am with you.”
(ISAIAH 41:10)

God is always with you.

“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (MATTHEW 28:20).

God 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).

God says it is not good to be alone.

“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (GENESIS 2:18).

God wants you to turn to Him when you're lonely to find grace.

“Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish” (PSALM 25:16–17).

God calls you into relationship with Him and His Son, Jesus Christ.

“God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 CORINTHIANS 1:9).

*“When we
feel lonely,
God meets
with us.”*

God gives you His Spirit to be with you and live in you.

“The Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you” (JOHN 14:17).

God wants you to be involved in a local church for fellowship and spiritual growth.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (ACTS 2:42).

God reveals the value of relationships.

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

God gives us family and friendships to protect against loneliness.

“God sets the lonely in families” (PSALM 68:6).

God wants you to pursue meaningful friendships.

“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend” (PROVERBS 27:17 NLT).

God wants you to reach out to others who feel burdened and alone.

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

God promises to be with His people forever in heaven.

“I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, ‘Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever’” (REVELATION 21:3–4 NLT).

Examples of Loneliness in the Bible

God’s people are not exempt from the pain of loneliness. But God meets us in our pain, addresses our needs, and guides us back into relationship with Himself and others. Observe how He did this in the lives of these seven people in the Bible:

Joshua felt lonely and discouraged because the Hebrew people God called him to lead often rebelled against his leadership, especially after the death of his friend and mentor, Moses.

But God Himself encouraged Joshua with these words: *“No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you” (Joshua 1:5 NLT).*

Hannah felt “less than” and very much alone as she struggled for years with infertility. The societal disgrace of not being able to have children wore heavy on her heart. That is until *that* day—the day Hannah poured out her heart to God in prayer believing wholeheartedly that He had heard and would answer her prayer in the way she humbly hoped.

But the Lord remembered Hannah’s anguished plea: *“So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I asked the LORD for him’”* (1 Samuel 1:20).

Elijah was lonely and tired of having no one to help him. Even after defying King Ahab, calling down fire from heaven, and killing hundreds of prophets of Baal, God’s mission for Elijah was not yet finished. With wicked queen Jezebel following in hot pursuit and swearing to take the prophet’s life, Elijah continued on. Completely exhausted and overcome with despair, Elijah cried out to God: *“‘I have had enough, LORD,’ he said. ‘Take my life’”* (1 Kings 19:4).

But the Lord sent an angel to care for Elijah’s needs in a simple and practical way: *“He [Elijah] lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat.’⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.⁷ The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.’⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night”* (1 Kings 19:5–9).

Naomi was desperately lonely after her husband and two sons died. Anticipating the total isolation she would experience returning to her homeland of Judah, Naomi felt bitter and so very much alone. Though willing to go with her, Naomi urged her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to return to their own people in Moab.

But God moved in the heart of her daughter-in-law Ruth and provided the relationship Naomi so desperately needed: *“Ruth replied, ‘Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me’”* (Ruth 1:16–17).

David was on the run from Saul and in his desperate loneliness cried out to God: *“No one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life”* (Psalm 142:4). At that moment in time, David was feeling unheard, unknown, and uncared for.

But God brought to David’s remembrance His past acts of mercy: *“The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me”* (Psalm 142:7 ESV).

Paul, the apostle, fought loneliness when he was persecuted for spreading the gospel and deserted by his friends in his time of need: *“. . . no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me”* (2 Timothy 4:16).

But God did not abandon Paul in his time of need, rather: *“The Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death”* (2 Timothy 4:17 NLT).

Jesus experienced loneliness in its most painful forms. He knew the pain of desertion and rejection from those closest to Him, and He experienced true loneliness when God the Father left Him alone as He was dying on the cross: *“About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ (which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’)”* (Matthew 27:46).

But God the Father knew Jesus’ cry of despair and loneliness on the cross was not the end of the story: *“Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the LORD. They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!”* (Psalm 22:30–31).

Scriptures on loneliness are numerous, covering a wide range of experiences. And what we see throughout them all is that God cares deeply when we feel rejected, abandoned, discouraged, or lonely. Just as He was with Joshua, Hannah, Elijah, Naomi, David, Paul, and Jesus, so He is with you and me.

*“The LORD who created you, . . . says: ‘Don’t be afraid, . . .
I have called you by name; you are mine.*

²When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you.

When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown!

*When you walk through the fire of oppression,
you will not be burned up—the flames will not consume you.*

³For I am the Lord your God, your Savior, the Holy One of Israel.

⁴. . . you are precious to me and honored, and I love you.”

(ISAIAH 43:1-4 TLB)

Key Verse to Memorize

*“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)

A Prayer for Comfort

An Acrostic for the Word COMFORT

Thank you, God, that you . . .

C—Care for me with compassion

“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail” (LAMENTATIONS 3:22).

O—Offer strength when I am weak

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (PHILIPPIANS 4:13).

M—Meet all of my needs in the way that is best for me

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (PHILIPPIANS 4:19).

F—Forgive and forget my sins

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (HEBREWS 8:12).

O—Offer hope for the future

“‘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).

R—Reassure me of your love

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness” (JEREMIAH 31:3).

T—Turn my pain into joy

“Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning” (PSALM 30:5).

God has not created you and set you adrift in a sea of loneliness. He not only knows the intimate details of your life, He has your best interests foremost in His mind.

*“What a wonderful God we have—
he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the source of every mercy,
and the one who so wonderfully
comforts and strengthens us
in our hardships and trials.”
(2 CORINTHIANS 1:3 TLB)*

DEATH & HEAVEN

The Doorway to Your Destiny

What Is God's Heart on Death and Heaven?

Before Jesus walked out of His tomb, He stood at the tomb of a friend. Lazarus had been dead for four days and was already buried. When the Lord arrived at the tomb, He asked that the stone be rolled away. Then, after praying, “Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’” (John 11:43).

And he did.

Death does not have the final word over our lives—Jesus does. He holds power over death, and He conquered death by His resurrection. Through Christ, God has removed every obstacle for people to avoid His judgment, escape hell, and experience the everlasting joy of being with the Lord in heaven. Our part is to believe and entrust our lives to Jesus, who said . . .

*“I am the resurrection and the life.
The one who believes in me will live,
even though they die;
and whoever lives by believing
in me will never die.
Do you believe this?”
(JOHN 11:25–26)*

God lives in heaven, ruling all things from His heavenly throne.

“The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all” (PSALM 103:19).

God destroyed death through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“It has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 TIMOTHY 1:10).

God offers eternal life to everyone through faith in Jesus Christ.

“For 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” (JOHN 3:16).

God will judge each person after they die.

“Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (HEBREWS 9:27).

God promises believers they will be with the Lord when they die.

“As long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord . . . we are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 CORINTHIANS 5:6, 8).

God will resurrect everyone on the last day—believers to eternal life in heaven and unbelievers to eternal punishment in hell.

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (DANIEL 12:2).

God does not delight in the death of the unbelieving.

“Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign Lord. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live” (EZEKIEL 18:23 NLT).

God will make a new heaven and new earth at the end of time.

“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind” (ISAIAH 65:17).

God promises that heaven will be free of suffering and death.

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

God wants you to focus on the realities of heaven.

“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth” (COLOSSIANS 3:1–2 NLT).

“Death does not
have the final word
over our lives—
Jesus does.”

God wants you to encourage others with the hope of eternal life with God.

“We want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died . . . Then we will be with the Lord forever. So encourage each other with these words” (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13–14, 17–18 NLT).

God wants you to share the gospel and lead people to their eternal home in heaven.

“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).

Key Verse to Memorize

The Author of Life stood before His beloved friend, Martha, and being moved with compassion at seeing her grief and anguish, He felt her pain and wept with her. But that is not all He did. He gave her truth that changed her perspective on death and He invaded her sorrow with hope.

*“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life.
The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.’”*
(JOHN 11:25)

Key Passage to Read

Among the most quoted and memorable passages of Scripture is Psalm 23. For thousands of years, this psalm has comforted millions as they face discouragement, despair, and death. Commonly read in hospital rooms and at funerals, Psalm 23 has encouraged people in their final days and brought solace to those left behind. And for good reason. Like the shepherd in the psalm, this passage provides everything needed to bring peace and comfort in the face of death.

Psalm 23 (ESV)

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name’s sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the valley

of the shadow of death,

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;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall

follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

| | |
|---|------|
| The Lord provides what I need. | v. 1 |
| The Lord gives me peace. | v. 2 |
| The Lord restores me to Himself. | v. 3 |
| The Lord leads me along the right path. | v. 3 |
| The Lord is with me as I face death, so I need not fear..... | v. 4 |
| The Lord comforts me with His protection and guidance..... | v. 4 |
| The Lord’s grace and generosity toward me are abundant. | v. 5 |
| The Lord’s goodness and mercy are always with me. | v. 6 |
| The Lord’s house is where I will live forever. | v. 6 |

My Personalized Plan to Honor the Lord in My Life and in My Death

The hope of heaven makes all the difference in the world. It is a hope stronger than death, more sure than the grave. It provides comfort when I suffer, clarity when I'm lost, and courage when I'm afraid. I can live gratefully and fearlessly for the Lord because He has given me this secure hope in Christ.

"You will be secure, because there is hope."

(JOB 11:18)

As I seek to honor the Lord in my life and in my death . . .

I will consider my own death and take seriously my own mortality.

"Show me, LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is" (PSALM 39:4).

I will address and take care of end-of-life matters.

"This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die" (2 KINGS 20:1).

I will honestly evaluate my life and legacy.

"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD" (LAMENTATIONS 3:40).

I will accept the sovereignty of God over my life and death.

"You ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that'" (JAMES 4:15 ESV).

I will live with the hope of heaven—even when I'm suffering.

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

I will tell others about Christ and how they can have eternal life.

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

I will seek to honor God in my life and in my death.

"So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it" (2 CORINTHIANS 5:9).

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)*

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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