



## **ANSWERS FOR THE HOPELESS**

**Hopelessness - How to Hold On When You Feel Like Giving Up**

**Intro: How do we keep holding on when we feel like giving up?**

**How do we find the strength to persevere, to go on?**

**Ever feel like giving up? Ever feel like quitting? Ever feel like your situation is so hopeless that the only thing you can possibly do is leave? Just walk away, head out the door and never come back?**

**In extreme circumstances, people can feel so much emotional pain that they take their own lives.**

**Perhaps you've even considered that yourself. But the real reason people commit suicide isn't the pain. It's the loss of hope. It's the sense that there's no escape, no way to resolve their problems. It's the conviction that things are never going to get better. They look and look for a ray of hope and only see darkness. That's how Job felt.**

**"Oh, that I might have my request that God would grant what I hope for, that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut me off! . . . .  
"What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects, that I should be patient? Do I have the strength of stone? Is my flesh bronze? Do I have any power to help myself, now that success has been driven from me?" "My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again." Job 6:8-12; 7:5-7 (NIV)**

**Job knew what it was to feel despair; to lose hope; to look into the future and see only darkness. He felt as though even death would be preferable to what he was experiencing.**

### **What relevance does Job's struggle have to us?**

**Why should we care how he felt when God took away everything he cared about - his family, his wealth, his reputation, his health? Because the temptation to give up, to lose hope, to despair, is universal.**

- It's the wife who is ready to give up on her husband and her marriage; rather than stay and keep trying to make it better.**
- It's the parents who are ready to give up trying to guide their rebellious teenage son.**
- It's the grown daughter who has tried over and over again to please her parents, without success, and is about ready to completely write off the relationship.**
- It's the pregnant teenager who can't see any way out but to have an abortion.**

- It's the fed-up employee who wants to honor God with his work but is about [this] far from telling off the boss and walking out the door.
- It's the victim of cancer who's tired of fighting the illness and thinking of taking her own life.

**The common denominator is a feeling that the situation is hopeless, that things aren't going to get better.**

**When that happens, there is the temptation to give up.**

- Sometimes giving up takes the dramatic form of a suicide,
- A divorce.
- A worker who takes a gun to work with deadly results.
- But more often it takes the form of what Thoreau called, "quiet desperation."

**People going through the motions of a marriage or job; people maintaining the pretense of a relationship with their children or their parents, but who have in reality given up.**

**Detached emotionally. Stopped working; stopped fighting; stopped caring.**

**All of us have faced this temptation, when it seems pointless to keep trying.**

**Some of you are probably facing it now. You may be hiding it well; so that the rest of us would never suspect the struggle that's taking place in your heart. But there's an area of your life where you're considering just giving up and walking away, regardless of what God says or the Bible says.**

**The question for us as Christians is, how do we keep holding on when we feel like giving up?**

- How do we find the strength to persevere, to go on?
- Where does the power come from to keep on keeping on?

*This afternoon I'm going to give you three key principles to store in your heart for that day when you're tempted just to throw in the towel and give up.*

## **1- Trust in God's Sovereignty**

**First, God is sovereign.**

**He is in control. No matter how hopeless, painful, unpleasant, or discouraging your circumstances are, He has a purpose for them. He has a purpose for you in the midst of them.**

- **And that purpose does not involve giving up.**
- **It does not involve despair.**
- **It does not involve abandoning your faith.**
- **It does not involve panicking.**

**The struggle you are going through has meaning and purpose, because God is sovereign and He does everything for a reason.**

**He doesn't make mistakes. He isn't surprised by what has happened to you.**

**Let me put this another way.**

- **You are where you are right now because that's where God wants you right now.**
- **Your circumstances are part of His plan for your life.**
- **This is not an accident. It's not an unhappy coincidence.**
- **It's not bad luck. It's not bad karma.**
- **It's not just the result of your decisions or your husband's decisions or your parents' decisions or your bosses' decisions or any other human being's decisions.**

*It's the result of a loving and wise God working in your life to accomplish His good purposes, even when those purposes don't seem loving or good to us.*

**"Then Job replied to the LORD:**

**"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted . . . . Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." - Job 42:1-3 (NIV)**

**What does that mean? It means that for the Christian, despair is not an option. Despair is for people who live in a random, capricious universe where bad things just happen for no reason.**

- **Despair is for people who live at the mercy of cosmic forces that are at best indifferent to them and at worst malevolent.**
- **Despair is for people who live in a universe in which there is no God, or in which God is only a spectator.**
- **Despair is for people who live in a world that doesn't make sense, where no one and nothing is in control.**
- **Despair is not for Christians, who live under the constant care of a loving Father.**

**Let's get specific.**

- **Perhaps your husband is a jerk; maybe even a non-Christian jerk. He lets you down.**
- **He doesn't love you the way you long to be loved.**
- **He's selfish.**
- **Insensitive.**
- **Lazy.**
- **A disappointment on many levels.**
- **Will he change?**

**I don't know.**

***But I do know this: whether or not he changes, God has a purpose for you in that marriage. It's a good purpose. It's a wise purpose. It's a purpose that honors God. It's a purpose that can bring you joy if you will trust in God and follow Him, even if your circumstances don't change; even if the husband stays a jerk.***

**"For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like**

**Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear." - 1 Peter 3:5-6 (NIV)**

**Why did they submit to their husbands?**

**Because they trusted in their husbands? No, because they trusted in God.**

**When you are tempted to give up, remember that God is in control, and He is loving and wise and good. He has not abandoned you; He has not stopped caring about you.**

## **2- Trust in God's Power**

**We become hopeless when we cannot escape our situations.**

**We despair when it seems impossible that our circumstances will change for the better, but if God desires to do so, He can make a way. As Job stated, "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted".**

**"Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you." - Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV)**

- \* "Yes, but you don't know my husband. He'll never change." - **NOTHING**
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- \* "Yes, but you don't know my boss." - **NOTHING**
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- \* "Yes, but you don't know my situation" - **NOTHING**

**"God Will Make a Way" (Don Moen), c. 1990 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (ASCAP) (c/o Integrity Music, Inc.)**

*"God will make a way,  
Where there seems to be no way,  
He works in ways we cannot see,  
He will make a way for me;  
He will be my guide,  
Hold me closely to His side,  
With love and strength for each new day,  
He will make a way, He will make a way."*

**God specializes in resurrections.**

**He can bring life to dead relationships.**

**He is the Creator; He can cause loving feelings and attitudes to be created out of nothing.**

**He can transform people and situations in ways that we are unable to foresee.**

**He can do it. If your situation seems hopeless, if it seems that nothing short of a miracle can save you, then you are in luck.**

**God is able to do whatever it takes to fulfill His plan for you.**

### **3- Place Your Hope in Christ**

**But whether or not God chooses to change our circumstances, ultimately our hope is not in what he is going to do for us on this earth, in this life. Our true hope is in Jesus Christ. Our true hope is in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life that come from faith in Christ. [That puts everything into perspective].**

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you. - 1 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)**

**What is the result of placing our trust in God? Hope, joy, and peace.**

**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 (NIV)**