

A misty forest path with sunlight filtering through the trees. The path is covered in fallen leaves and leads into the distance. The trees are tall and thin, with some leaves still on the branches. The overall atmosphere is serene and peaceful.

4 WAYS  
HOPE  
CHANGES  
YOUR  
LIFE  
FOREVER

4-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Karen 'Girl' Friday

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## Introduction

Do life's hurts, heartaches, and injustices leave you feeling overwhelmed and hopeless? Or, perhaps your dreams hunger for fulfillment.

You're nodding. Me too.

There's something I want you to know. You are never far from hope.

Google defines hope, "A feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen." All humans hope.

*I hope to lose weight.*

*My friend carries many hopes in her heart.*

*The pastor said not to give up hope.*

*We hope our brother pulls through this illness.*

Yet, sometimes things happen differently than we wanted.

Hope exists in many forms. But when we cling to false hopes, they soon fizzle and leave us empty-handed. Perhaps you've made the same discovery.

How do we find the real thing?

People often come to me—a pastor’s wife—looking for authentic hope. *Did I pray enough? Where is God?*

People in tough places. Hearts broken by tragedy.  
Languishing dreams with no pillow to lay their heads.

Friend, I want true hope. And I’m betting you do.

This desire stirred my heart to search for the long-lasting kind. A quest more than just, *come out, come out, wherever you are!* And it needed roots in something other than this world. So, I turned to God’s Word.

“For whatever was written in the former days was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4 ESV).

You see, once we tap into the source of real hope, we make another discovery. *Hope is among us.* And it’s ours for the taking.

Let’s look at God’s promises that bring hope near.

Hope was always coming. And God knew.

## **Leaving Life's Drive-Through-Window without Hope**

*And now, Lord, for what do I expectantly wait?*

*My hope [my confident expectation] is in You.*

Psalm 39:7 AMP

The drive-through-window of life remains understocked with real hope.

Less than a mile from my family's neighborhood, the same fast-food restaurant provides drive-through service at two different locations in opposite directions.

At the end of our road, we must make a decision. Do we turn right or left? To the right stands a newer version of the business established in the 1940's.

But the same problem exists with both. My son arrived home to discover an incorrect order. He'd ordered lunch, paid and waited. Yet later found his bag filled with breakfast items. The scent of sausage instead of chicken frustrated him.

Since my husband and I have had similar experiences, I check everything before driving away. Opening each bag, wrapper, or container. It assures I'm leaving with what I expected...what I wanted.

And I never want to wait. I want service and I want it pronto. Impatience tempered with social manners. *Please! I'm in a hurry!*

Life's crossroads force me to park and stay a while. They keep me bewildered about whether to go right or left and wondering if I'll leave the next place with what I expected, all the items I wanted. I grow weary in the waiting.

Here's the problem. Life shifts toward uncertainty and disappoints us. The only choices on the menu offer false promises. High hopes placed in people, programs, possessions, money, goals, careers, or religion. None of these serve us well.

All those items lack assurance. People fail us. Programs unravel. Possessions leave us hollow. Money never satisfies. Unreached goals magnify our weaknesses. Aspiring careers crash. And religion commands our tireless effort.

Even if we examine and double-check each item, we always leave life's drive-through-window without hope.

But where do we turn when the unexpected happens? At the end of our road, which way do we go? What steps do we take if we're simply exhausted from waiting on hope?

God's Word offers a hope established before drive-through windows...before the world even existed.

“But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31 ESV).

The New International Version translates *wait* as hope. “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

Our key verse makes it clear, the only hope worth waiting on rests in the Lord—straight from the ample, fully-stocked windows of heaven. No drive-through service needed.

When we wait on life to start looking up, we wait forever. Instead, look up to the Lord. Our hope lies in Him.

In prayer, lay your expectations and desires in the able hands of the sovereign heavenly Father, not asking for quick service, but trusting Him with the impossible and unexplainable parts of life. He's the certainty of hope in an uncertain world.

*Lord, when life hasn't turned out as I once hoped, make my heart strong and confident as I hope in You. I wait for You, the Hope-Giver.*

## Finding Hope in True Love

*This I call to mind and therefore I have hope:  
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;  
his mercies never come to an end.*

Lamentations 3:21-22 ESV

“He loves me, he loves me not.”

I plucked the white daisy petals, deciding the outcome of my childhood crush. As a young girl, I longed for love.

As I grew older, I craved an endearing devotion—one outshining puppy love. A passion staying through the uphill climbs so the walks down the other side showcase a sweet splendor.

We use the word *love* for everything from possessions and food to our favorite sports teams. We *love* ice-cream, brands, people, books, and our favorite movies.

I use love to describe my affection for cinnamon rolls, pasta, Chai tea lattes, boots, the Hallmark Channel, and sunsets.

Still, we struggle to define love—a feeling, an emotion. In hard moments, we lose the loving feeling. And abandonment

extinguishes the emotion. That happened when, for a few years, my dad vanished from my life.

Culture woos with a hope that fades when hearts break.

For a portion of my life, I wondered, *Am I lovable?* Inside chatter tried to convince me I was not. Internal voices mocked true love. *Only the lovely, the best, the deserving—basically, the cream of the crop—meet the standards.* I assumed love thrived in shiny things and successful people. Love with prerequisites.

Do you need a boo-boo-kissing-tear-wiping-make-it-better kind of love?

There's good news. God news—not frilly but unfailing, undying, and timeless.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, came to earth and died for us on Calvary's cross. Why? Because God loves us. This we know, for the Bible tells us so.

God loved us in the womb. He loves us today and tomorrow and every day into the future. Love in past, present, and future tense.

His is a sure love—never lost, only found. And it gives us hope in a guaranteed pledge of love that’s never eliminated from our lives.

The writer of Lamentations reminds us to hope in God’s steadfast love. It’s loyal, unwavering, unconditional, dependable—and it never ceases...ever.

Hope in the kind of love that goes to the cross. Love in action. Great, deep, wide, and high love. True love = true hope. This word problem in math God already solved for us.

A love not based on the whimsical hope of the last flower petal. We can never say about God, “He loves me not.” It is always, “He loves me. He loves me. God loves me. Jesus loves me.”

Have you found this love? Do you know this hope?

God loves you with a relentless love!

*Heavenly Father, I’m overwhelmed by Your love. I’m grateful You chose me and You love me without conditions. Daily remind my soul how tenderly You wrap the kindness of Your love around my being. Your love never fails me.*

## The Day Hope Showed up and Showed up Big

*Through Christ you have come to trust in God.  
And you have placed your faith and hope in God  
because he raised Christ from the dead  
and gave him great glory.*

1 Peter 1:21 NLT

I peeked through the curtain and scanned the audience.

I'd landed my first high-school role in the Broadway musical, *South Pacific*. Thankfully, my character as the island girl, Liat, called for more speaking parts than singing—not my strong suit.

With sweaty palms and a rush of adrenaline, I checked the seats again. Had my family and friends shown up for the performance? Would I make them proud when I took my final bow?

From side stage during the first scene, my gaze spotted them through the blinding light. All my loved ones occupied the entire third row. *They're here, now break a leg.*

I found my groove and remembered my lines with no blunders. But my glory days as an actress ended soon after.

Over 2000 years ago, God set the stage for a story of hope to unfold.

The birth of the Christ-child took place in a lowly stable where animals occupied the front-row seats.

Jesus grew and carried out the heavenly Father's will. The supernatural happened in His presence. He served the community and reached out to wanderers, outcasts, and the wayward lost without hope. His life, center stage, pointed the glory and applause to God alone.

An enemy, Satan, plotted to destroy God's plans to bring hope to a hopeless people. Still, the Savior died on a cross for the sins of the world...my sins. His blood spilled for me. Then His broken body lay in a borrowed tomb.

The enemy and Jesus' accusers barely had time to celebrate before Christ's followers began rejoicing. *Come and see! He is risen, just as He said!*

Hallelujah! Hopeless never gets the last word. Hope rose from the dead when Jesus Christ conquered the grave.

Jesus fulfilled the expectation of eternity and heaven. Providing a way for us to become children of God and gain eternal life.

The resurrection—the day hope showed up and showed up big. Hope unveiled in amazing grace. The spotlight on God’s mercy freeing us from sin and shame.

When we accept His salvation, it transforms us to overcomers—more than conquerors—and raises us to new life and new hope in the name of Jesus.

The world’s hope lacks fanfare moments of glory—booed off stage with a less than desirable performance. It leaves us in the dark when the last light dims.

Jesus Christ played the leading role in God’s story of hope. He stands solo as the Holy King at hope’s curtain call. His glory deserves the applause of angels and saints.

Allow God to make a grand entrance in your life with show-stopping miracles of hope. Accept His invitation to the curtain call where your ordinary life becomes extraordinary with Jesus taking a bow.

*God, I place my faith and trust in You. Thank You for hope in Your resurrection power and glory. A hope that trumps all other hope. Whatever life throws at me, I remember the tomb is empty.*

## Hope Lives Closer Than You Think

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

Romans 15:13 ESV

“Class, remember, nouns and verbs work together.”

My favorite high school teacher, Mrs. Lewis, taught English, Speech, and French.

For constructing sentences in grammatically correct form, Mrs. Lewis stressed the importance of nouns and verbs working together. She knew powerful verbs made all the difference in describing the action of nouns. They labor hand-in-hand for a successful outcome.

Also, consider how hope is both a noun (expectation) and a verb (expecting).

In our key verse, the Apostle Paul names the Lord as the God of hope, and shows how God’s powerful actions and the work of His hands bring hope. So in a spiritual sense, nouns and verbs work together for hope’s successful outcome.

First, God fills us with His joy and peace, *so that* we abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. Hope's the end result of God's filling us with joy and peace.

With help again from Google, abound means “exist in large numbers or amounts.” Synonyms include, “abundant.”

The verbs *fill* and *abound* illustrate the abundant life Christ promises believers. Leaving the grandeur of heaven, for our sake He became poor so that we—joint-heirs with Him—become rich. We overflow with abundant hope like none other—nothing else compares.

When Jesus lives in us through the Holy Spirit, He brings hope near. It's not just around the corner, off in the distance, on the other side of glory. It's not something we muster up in our own power.

But it's something we possess—a gift from God. Our spiritual clothes contain deep pockets with blessings—never short-changed on peace, joy, love, grace, mercy, comfort, or hope.

We hope in Jesus. And Jesus is our hope. So, He's the verb and noun of authentic hope.

Hope not only identifies God as the main title-bearer but also describes our identity in Christ. Consider the way your driver's license describes you: name, height, eye color, date-of-birth, and address. And your outdated picture's even part of the proof of who you claim to be.

A Christian's ID card contains descriptive terms: beloved, child of God, saint, in Christ, chosen, and free. People should say, *she looks like her Father. Hope lives in her.*

Does Jesus live in you? Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? If you answered yes, then stop looking for hope's address.

Hope lives wherever the presence of Jesus dwells—in you.

Dear brother and sister in God's family, cling to this: Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

Walk forward in the Holy Spirit's power, believing hope abounds in you, because it does.

*God of hope, fill me with Your spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. I claim the abundant life in Christ, believing Your Holy Spirit lives in me, and I abound in hope.*

## **Final Thoughts**

Friend, you are never far from hope. In tragedy, it is there. It soars above despair. During dark moments, it covers with light.

Life brings hurt, heartache, and hard places that threaten to dissolve every ounce of faith.

But in an uncertain world, there's an undeniable hope, an unshakable anchor for your soul.

Hope is a person. His name is Jesus.

And hope changes your life forever.