

HOPE *for the* HEART

CARING FOR YOUR

Mental Health

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT

Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Loneliness,
Suicide Prevention, Grief, and Hope

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HOPE *for the*
HEART

Because hope means everything.

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Dear Friend,

You're not alone.

It's no secret that people everywhere are struggling with mental health challenges, especially since the pandemic. If Covid was the earthquake that shook the world, then the resulting mental health crisis has been the tsunami that followed. Rates of anxiety, depression, suicide, abuse, addictive behaviors, and family stress have all skyrocketed. Many of us feel like we're treading water in a sea of chaos, desperately needing a lifeline ... or like we're lost in the woods, longing for someone to show us a path forward.

The Bible says, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Psalm 119:105). God's Word speaks directly to the mental and emotional struggles of our time—*anxiety, depression, grief, isolation, suicidal thoughts, and more*. His Word shines a light in the darkness, and it gives us a path forward filled with hope.

Just as we care for our physical health, God calls us to nurture our emotional and spiritual well-being. And thankfully, in the midst of our stress, burnout, loneliness, and sorrow ... the Lord is near. He walks with us and says, *"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 cares deeply about what you're going through and wants to help you—and others care and want to help you as well. That's why we created this resource: to provide practical, biblical guidance on how to care for your mental health and navigate the challenges so many are facing today. The material you'll find here is a sample from our *Keys for Living* books, which provide clear answers from God's Word and concise, practical guidance on real-life issues.

Whatever you're facing—and no matter how dark or difficult it may feel right now—there is hope for you. Our prayer is that the Lord will use this resource to encourage you, strengthen you, and give you practical steps to take care of yourself and others, so you can live each day with renewed peace and lasting hope.

Thank you and God bless,



The Hope for the Heart Team

"There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."

PROVERBS 23:18

Note: If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts and intend to harm yourself, call 911 immediately. You can also call the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988. They are available 24/7 for free, confidential services and support.



STRESS

How to Cope at the End of Your Rope

"I will give you rest."

MATTHEW 11:28

*Stress is inevitable,
but hope is available.*

What Is God's Heart on Stress?

Stress can take us down one of two paths. For many, stress leads to unrest. Frustrations at work, responsibilities at home, deadlines at school, unfinished to-do lists, heartbreaking headlines, and troubled relationships all pile up to an overwhelming sense of weariness, exhaustion, pressure, and unrest. And the enemy wants to use the unrest to arrest you—to hold you captive to the pressures and stresses of life.

But God's plan—His path for stress—leads not to painful unrest but rather peaceful rest. The enemy wants to overwhelm you with unrest, but the Lord wants you to overcome with His rest. Stress is inevitable, but hope is available. If you want to find peace in times of stress, come to the Lord and find the rest you're looking for in Him.

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

MATTHEW 11:28-29 NLT

God is with you in times of stress.

"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 and knows your stress.

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

God wants to give you peace when your heart is troubled, stressed, and afraid.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

God wants to carry your burden and give you rest.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

God wants to guide you when you're too stressed to make decisions.

"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).

God wants to strengthen you when you're weak and weary.

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak" (Isaiah 40:29).

God wants to deliver you from your stress.

"They cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress" (Psalm 107:6).

God wants to comfort you in times of stress.

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

God wants to use your stress to increase your dependence on Him.

"We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself . . . But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).

God wants you to talk to Him about your stress and set you free.

"In my distress I prayed to the LORD, and the LORD answered me and set me free" (Psalm 118:5 NLT).

God wants you to trust Him and be a refuge for you in times of stress.

"Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge" (Psalm 62:8).

God wants you to worship Him and acknowledge His constant presence even in times of stress.

"I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone" (Genesis 35:3).

Reflection & Prayer

What truth or Bible verse from this section encourages you the most, and why?

What you are stressed about today? Write it out as a prayer, giving the Lord your burdens.

Prayer: *Father, thank you that even when I'm stressed, I'm never alone. You are always with me. When I'm overwhelmed, help me remember your promises. Right now, I release my burdens to you and ask that you fill my mind with your Word and my heart with your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Key Verses to Memorize

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

MATTHEW 11:28-30

Key Passage to Read

1 KINGS 19:1-18

My Personalized Plan

As I seek to manage the stress in my life, I will . . .

Seek to be healthy

- I will eat healthy, get adequate sleep each night, avoid harmful substances, and exercise regularly (as I am able).
- I will get regular medical checkups and talk with my doctor about my stress if needed.

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Learn relaxation techniques

- I will learn breathing techniques and other exercises to calm myself down when I am stressed.
- I will take a time-out as needed to give myself a few minutes to calm down in stressful situations.

“I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content” (Psalm 131:2).

Express my emotions

- I will talk with a trusted friend or family member, wise counselor, and especially with God about my stress and emotions.
- I will journal my thoughts and feelings regularly, especially when I am stressed.

“In my distress I prayed to the LORD, and the LORD answered me and set me free” (Psalm 118:5 NLT).

Draw near to God

- I will pray and read God’s Word daily, meditating on His truths and talking with Him honestly.
- I will attend church regularly to worship, receive encouragement from God’s Word, and be with other believers.

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer” (Acts 2:42 NLT).

Keep things in perspective

- I will keep an eternal perspective and remember that my stress is temporary.
- I will remember God has promised me a future full of hope.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

Replace negative thoughts

- I will identify negative thought patterns that lead me to feel more stress.
- I will replace negative thoughts with the truth of God’s Word.

“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).

Identify triggers

- I will identify which situations, feelings, people, environments, and circumstances typically lead me to feel stressed.
- I will find healthy ways to prepare for and cope with those situations.

“Give careful thought to your ways” (Haggai 1:5).

Build boundaries

- I will identify where I can create boundaries in my life to limit stressful interactions and prevent overextending myself.
- I will communicate my need for boundaries, time, and space as needed with the people in my life.

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23).

Take time for myself

- I will do at least one thing each day that brings me joy and gives me peace.
- I will take time to rest daily, weekly (Sabbath), and yearly (taking vacation time)—and not feel guilty about it.

“Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him” (Psalm 62:5).

Be in community

- I will make time to be with friends and family to talk, share a meal together, or go out together.
- I will look into joining a local church, Bible study, book club, gym, exercise class, or other community group.

“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” (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 NLT).

Be thankful

- I will write down a few things I am thankful for each day.
- I will give thanks to God for His many blessings and gracious gifts in my life.

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"(1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Rest in my identity in Christ

- I will remember my identity is not in my job, performance, work, ministry, or accomplishments.
- I will rest in God's grace and find my identity in Christ as a beloved child of God.

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"(1 John 3:1).

Application

Which of the steps mentioned above do you need to put into practice to help manage your stress?

What is one step you can take today to help decrease your stress?

What can you give thanks to God for today?



Truth to Meditate on When You're Stressed

God's Word can be a great source of comfort when we are feeling stressed. By meditating on His truth, we can gain perspective and find peace. The Lord promises ...

*"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you,
all whose thoughts are fixed on you!"*

ISAIAH 26:3 NLT

"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).

"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness" (Jeremiah 31:3).

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:1-3).

"The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

"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).

"The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing" (Zephaniah 3:17 ESV).

"I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39 NLT).

"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).



ANXIETY

Calming the Fearful Heart

"With his love, he will calm all your fears."

ZEPHANIAH 3:17 NLT

*God longs to be your refuge and help you
through your fears and troubles.*

What Is God's Heart on Anxiety?

Anxiety inaccurately judges reality. It forgets the past and fears the future. It fails to remember how you've made it through past difficulties and focuses instead on potential threats in the future. Anxiety leaves you with a fight or flight response in the present, vigilantly preparing for possible outcomes or avoiding fearful situations altogether.

The Lord, however, sees all things clearly. He says, *"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please'"* (Isaiah 46:10). God has brought you through the past and holds your future in His hands. And in your present struggle with anxiety, He is with you. The Lord is at work in your life—your anxiety is not without purpose. God longs to be your refuge and help you walk through your fears and troubles.

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

PSALM 46:1

God wants you to remember that He is good and gracious—and compassionately cares about you.

"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 is with you when you're fearful.

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

God wants you to pray and experience His peace when you're feeling anxious.

"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).

God wants you to look to Him and His Word when you're filled with anxiety.

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

God wants you to align your thoughts with His truth when you feel anxious.

"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).

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

"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" (Psalm 56:3).

God wants you to talk to Him about all that causes you to feel anxious.

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

God wants you to talk to others about your fears and anxieties.

"Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory"
(Proverbs 11:14 NASB).

God wants you to take care of yourself physically and spiritually.

"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

God wants you to encourage others who struggle with anxiety.

"Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up" (Proverbs 12:25).

Reflection & Prayer

Which truth or verse from this section speaks most directly to your situation right now?

God is compassionate and cares for you. When you feel anxious, how does remembering this truth change your perspective?

What anxious thoughts can you bring to God in prayer today?

Prayer: *Father, sometimes it feels like I can't help but be anxious. Thank you for caring about me and for the reminders in your Word of your presence, your compassion, and your peace. Right now, I release all my worries and fears to you. Help me walk in your truth, each day, each moment. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Key Verses to Memorize

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

1 PETER 5:7

Key Passage to Read

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, 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.

⁹ Whatever 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 4:4–9

My Personalized Plan

For those who wrestle with anxiety, the future can feel bleak—void of hope and joy but full of fear and misfortune. But God always offers hope for the future and help for today. He comes alongside you and says, “Do not fear, for I am with you” (Isaiah 41:10). To the fearful heart, the Bible says, “With his love, he will calm all your fears” (Zephaniah 3:17 NLT). With God’s help, you can move forward today and have hope for tomorrow.

“There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.”

PROVERBS 23:18

As I seek God’s help with my anxiety, I will . . .

Remember God’s character

When I’m anxious, I’m tempted to think that God doesn’t care about me, He’s not in control, or He’s not powerful enough to change anything. This can lead me to believe that I have to hold everything together. I need to realize that my view of God amidst anxiety can either make matters seem worse or help me remain calm and see things clearly.

- I will seek to know God’s character by reading His Word and praying for Him to continually reveal Himself to me.
- I will believe that God is good, that He is with me, and that He will help me—and trust that He is in control and has my best interests at heart.

“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. . . . The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does” (Psalm 145:8–9, 13).

Address physical issues

Anxiety is not just emotional or cognitive but also physical. It can be caused by or result in physical changes, so it is therefore important to address any physical issues that may be contributing to my anxiety.

- I will talk with a doctor about the symptoms I am experiencing and seek treatment.
- I will seek to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating well, exercising regularly, getting plenty of rest, staying hydrated, avoiding harmful substances, and learning relaxation techniques to manage stress and anxiety.

“I discipline my body and keep it under control” (1 Corinthians 9:27 ESV).

Talk with others

Anxiety can consume my thoughts and emotions and impair my ability to work and go about my daily life. Given the impact it can have on me, sharing my struggles with others and receiving guidance can help me process my experiences and move forward.

- I will seek the help of a professional counselor, supportive group of people in my church or community, and/or talk with trusted friends and family members.
- I will be honest about how I’m feeling and what I’m experiencing.

“Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory” (Proverbs 11:14 NASB).

Reorient my thoughts

Much of the experience of anxiety occurs in the mind. It can cloud my judgment and hinder my decision making. Anxiety can cause difficulty concentrating and lead me to believe the future is grim. Addressing my thoughts and thought patterns is critical to managing and even overcoming anxiety.

- I will keep a journal and write down my honest thoughts.
- I will seek to align my thoughts with God's Word, identifying thoughts that are based on lies and replacing them with God's truth.

"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).

Be in community

Anxiety leads many people like me to avoid social interactions. Taken to an extreme, I can become isolated and alone. But God made me to be in relationships with others. Having supportive friendships and relationships can go a long way toward helping me gain a sense of wholeness, wellness, and normalcy amidst anxiety.

- I will regularly meet with friends and family members to talk, share a meal, or go out together.
- I will look into joining a local church, small group, Bible study, or community support group.

"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"(Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NLT).

Stay active spiritually

God clearly states in His Word that He cares about me. When I'm anxious, He wants to hear from me. He provides help for me through His Word, His people, and most of all, His constant presence.

- I will maintain an active spiritual life by praying, reading God's Word, and meeting with other believers to help me grow.
- I will constantly seek to grow in my relationship with Christ, who loves me and gives me grace each day.

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"(2 Peter 3:18).

Hang on to hope

It's been said that a person can live weeks without food, days without water, seconds without air, but not a moment without hope. Anxiety leads me to focus on the future, and often not a bright future. How important it is to maintain a hopeful outlook on life.

- I will remember that true, lasting hope is found not in my circumstances but in God and His Word.
- I will meditate on God's promises in the Bible, remembering that I can always have hope.

"Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope"(Romans 15:4).

Application

Which of the steps mentioned above do you need to put into practice more regularly?

What is one truth or Bible verse you can memorize and hold on to when you're anxious?

What can you give thanks to God for today?



DEPRESSION

Walking from Darkness into the Dawn

"It is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness."

PSALM 18:28 ESV

*God wants to lift us up
when we're feeling down.*

What Is God's Heart on Depression?

The pressures and stresses of life often weigh us down. When our hearts are heavy and our heads are low, the clouds of depression seem to block out any ray of hope. But even in our depression, God walks with us, carries our burdens, and shines the light of His Word on our despair.

"The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us."

PSALM 118:27

God is with us in our depression.

"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 our pain and suffering.

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

God hears our cries and listens to us in our pain.

". . . the LORD has heard my weeping" (Psalm 6:8).

God wants to give us light in our darkness.

"It is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness" (Psalm 18:28 ESV).

God wants to lift us up when we're feeling down.

"The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down" (Psalm 145:14).

God wants us to talk to Him when we're depressed.

"Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge" (Psalm 62:8).

God wants to comfort us.

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

God wants to give us peace.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

God wants to give us 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 us to trust Him.

"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me" (Psalm 28:7).

God wants us to comfort others who are depressed.

"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 will one day wipe away all our tears—and there will be no more sorrow or suffering.

"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).

Reflection & Prayer

What truth or Bible verse mentioned above gives you hope when you're feeling down? Why?

What does it mean to you that God sees your pain and hears your cries?

What is one honest prayer you can pour out to God in this season? (See Psalm 62:8 above.)

Prayer: *Lord, I need hope. Every day, every moment, especially when I'm feeling down. When I feel like I'm in the dark and clouded by despair, please shine the light of your Word into my heart and fill me with true, lasting hope. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Symptoms of Depression

The American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (DSM-5) lists nine key symptoms of depression. It says that a person must have at least five of the following symptoms, lasting two weeks or longer, to be considered a major depressive episode.¹ At least one of the five symptoms must be either persistent sadness or loss of interest.

- Persistent feelings of sadness, anxiousness, or “emptiness” most or all of the time
- Complete or near complete loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyable
- Significant change in appetite or weight
- Difficulty sleeping most nights or sleeping too much
- Agitated thoughts and movements (e.g., fidgeting, pacing, tapping fingers or feet) or slowed responses (e.g., pausing more when talking; speaking slower, more quietly, or infrequently; moving slowly)
- Chronically fatigued, easily decreased energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or disappointment in oneself
- Lack of concentration, focus, memory retention, or inability to make decisions
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts

Instead of diagnosing yourself with depression, first consult a mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed professional counselor) who can give you an educated assessment after conducting a detailed analysis of your situation and symptoms. There is no shame in reaching out for help.

The psalmist, by his own admission, reminds us just how necessary it is to admit our need for help—first to God . . . then also to others.

*“Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.
My soul also is greatly troubled.
But you, O LORD—how long?
Turn, O LORD, deliver my life;
save me for the sake of your steadfast love.”*

PSALM 6:2-4 ESV

Key Verses to Memorize

*"Why am I so depressed? Why this turmoil within me?
Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him,
my Savior and my God."*

PSALM 42:5 HCSB

Key Passage to Read

*"The thought of my suffering . . . is bitter beyond words.
²⁰ I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss.
²¹ Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:
²² The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease.
²³ Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.
²⁴ I say to myself, 'The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!'
²⁵ The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him.
²⁶ So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD."*

LAMENTATIONS 3:19-26 NLT

My Personalized Plan

Depression can hide the light of day from my view and leave me in the darkness of despair. A sense of hopelessness lingers. But amidst the heaviness and dark clouds of depression, God wants to lift my heavy heart and show me there is hope.

*"There is surely a future hope for you,
and your hope will not be cut off."*

PROVERBS 23:18

As I seek to manage my depression and live with hope, I will . . .

Recognize that my depression is real.

- I will acknowledge my feelings of sadness, anger, hopelessness, and other overwhelming emotions.
- I will not live in denial about my depression but will educate myself about depression and seek help to move forward.

"I am suffering and in pain. Rescue me, O God, by your saving power"(Psalm 69:29 NLT).

Remember that my pain is temporary.

- I will put my pain in perspective and acknowledge that God can help me.
- I will remember that God will one day put an end to all pain and suffering.

“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).

Reaffirm the importance of caring for my physical needs.

- I will talk with my doctor about my depression and get regular medical check-ups.
- I will eat nutritious meals, get adequate sleep each night, and exercise regularly.

“Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come”(1 Timothy 4:8).

Restrict the amount of stress in my life.

- I will identify the environmental or situational factors related to my depression, such as difficult life events, losses I’ve experienced, and the various sources of stress in my life.
- I will seek to adjust to stressful life events and deal with my losses in a healthy, productive manner.

“Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer”(Psalm 4:1).

Reveal my emotional needs.

- I will talk with a trusted friend or family member, counselor, and especially with God about my emotions.
- I will honestly confront my feelings and process them with God’s help.

“I call to you, LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you”(Psalm 88:9).

Restrain negative thought patterns.

- I will acknowledge negative self-talk and lies I believe about myself or my situation.
- I will replace negative thoughts with God’s truth by meditating on His Word.

“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).

Renew my commitment to get my spiritual needs met.

- I will cultivate my relationship with God through reflective prayer and Bible reading.
- I will attend church regularly to receive encouragement from God’s Word and to be with other believers.

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer”(Acts 2:42 NLT).

Application

What step mentioned above do you need to put into practice?

What is one truth or Bible verse you can hang on to that will give you hope when you're feeling down?

How to Help a Depressed Loved One

When you have depressed loved ones in your life, you want to do something that will make a difference, but the question is *what*?

First and foremost, do not avoid them. Because of the tendency to withdraw and isolate, help them get involved in activities whenever they are open to doing so. Encourage them to find a new hobby. Realize, you may be their only lifeline of hope, and they need to stay connected. Do what you wish someone would do for you if you were struggling with depression.

"Do to others as you would have them do to you."

LUKE 6:31

12 Things You Can Do to Help

Learn all you can about depression

Read books, watch videos, attend conferences, visit websites such as the National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov).

"Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge" (Proverbs 23:12).

Be an accountability partner

Communicate both with words and actions, "I'm with you in this, and I won't abandon you."

"I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare" (Philippians 2:20 NLT).

Initiate regular dialogue

Send frequent text messages and phone calls. Make intentional contact and encourage them sincerely and often.

"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).

Listen to their pain

Take time to hear their story and let them share their feelings without fear of judgment. Listening affirms their value and helps them process their emotions and circumstances.

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19).

Talk about depression

Talking about depression helps remove the stigma of it.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver" (Proverbs 25:11 ESV).

Help them find a support group

There is strength in numbers. Inquire at a nearby hospital, local church, or search the web for listings of support groups in the community dealing with depression or mental illness.

"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" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 NLT).

Realize the power of touch

As appropriate, a hand on the shoulder or a hug can be a great comfort.

"Greet one another with a kiss of love" (1 Peter 5:14).

Play inspirational music when you're with them

Music is therapeutic and can lift their spirit.

". . . speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:19).

Bring laughter into their lives

Share funny cards, pictures, stories, videos, or movies.

"A cheerful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22).

Work with them to set small, daily goals

Encourage them to set and achieve small goals that require minimal effort. Check on their progress regularly.

"The desires of the diligent are fully satisfied" (Proverbs 13:4).

Enlist help from other family and friends

Be specific about your concerns and engage others in caring for the one depressed.

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

Take all threats of suicide seriously

If suicide is a concern, ask, "Are you thinking about hurting yourself or taking your life?" While asking this may create some discomfort, awkwardness, or make them initially upset—it is worth the risk. Don't shy away from the hard questions, but always ask them in a kind and gentle way.

"A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions" (Proverbs 27:12 NLT).

Application

Who in your life is going through a difficult season and could use some encouragement?

What is one thing you could do this week to help a friend in need?

How to Respond to Suicidal Thoughts or Threats

If you, or a depressed loved one, are having suicidal thoughts or planning to harm yourself, it is important to talk with someone immediately. You will find information for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line below. These free and confidential services are available 24/7 to provide emotional support and helpful resources for those facing distress and having suicidal thoughts. When you contact them, you will be connected with a real person who is trained to provide guidance and support. You are not alone.

*“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified . . .
for the LORD your God goes with you;
he will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

DEUTERONOMY 31:6

NOTE: If you are ever in imminent danger, call 911 immediately.

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

- 988
- For Deaf or Hard of Hearing (For TTY Users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.)
- Ayuda disponible en Español
- 988lifeline.org (Live chat available)

Crisis Text Line

- Text HOME to 741741 (United States)
- Text HOME to 686868 (Canada)
- Text HOME to 85258 (United Kingdom)
- www.CrisisTextLine.org

Don't hesitate to call or text these hotlines if you're thinking of harming yourself. Remember, no matter what you're feeling or how bad things seem . . .

“There is surely a future hope for you.”

PROVERBS 23:18



LONELINESS

From Longing to Belonging

"Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

MATTHEW 28:20

*The Lord understands the pain of
loneliness and isolation.*

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, a job loss, a strained relationship, the 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 . . . disconnected 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).

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).

Reflection & Prayer

What Bible verse or truth mentioned above encourages you the most, and why?

What is one step you could take this week to connect with someone else?

Prayer: *Father, thank you for always being with me. When I feel lonely, remind me of your promise to never leave me nor forsake me (Hebrews 13:5). Surround me with encouraging people, and show me the people in my life who could use a friend and a kind word. In Jesus' name, amen.*



SUICIDE PREVENTION

Hope When Life Seems Hopeless

"There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."

PROVERBS 23:18

God is extending a lifeline of hope to you.

NOTE: If you are having suicidal thoughts and intend to harm yourself, call 911 immediately. You can also call or text one of the following suicide prevention hotlines anytime. These free, confidential services are available 24/7 and exist to help and support you. Remember, you're not alone. Help is available—and there is hope.

Call **988**
(Suicide & Crisis Lifeline formerly known as
the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)

Text **741741**
(Crisis Text Line)

What Is God's Heart on Suicide Prevention?

If you struggle with suicidal thoughts . . . if you feel trapped in a storm and see no hope for a brighter tomorrow . . . know that God is extending a lifeline of hope to you. He loves you. He cares about you. He wants to help you—and other people will too.

Remember, God is full of grace and compassion for you.

*"The LORD is gracious and righteous;
our God is full of compassion. . . .
when I was brought low, he saved me."*

PSALM 116:5–6

God wants you to know it's never too late to find hope.

"Anyone who is among the living has hope" (Ecclesiastes 9:4).

God wants you to know there is hope for you.

"There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off" (Proverbs 23:18).

God wants you to know He is with you and can help you get through difficult times.

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

God wants you to know you are loved and valued.

"You are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you" (Isaiah 43:4 NLT).

God wants you to know you have purpose.

"The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands" (Psalm 138:8 ESV).

God wants you to know your pain and suffering are not meaningless.

"We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:8-9 NLT).

God wants you to talk to someone and find help if you're having suicidal thoughts.

"In an abundance of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14 ESV).

God wants you to come to Him for refuge and help.

"The LORD is a shelter . . . a refuge in times of trouble" (Psalm 9:9 NLT).

God wants you to know He will not reject you when you come to Him.

"Whoever comes to me [Jesus] I will never drive away" (John 6:37).

God wants you to know He can heal your broken heart and the painful wounds of your past.

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3).

God wants you to receive His free gift of salvation.

"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 wants you to have hope and rest in safety and security.

"You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety" (Job 11:18).

Reflection & Prayer

Which truth or Bible verse mentioned above gives you hope?

How does it make you feel to know that God has a plan for you (Psalm 138:8) and that He says to you, "You are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you" (Isaiah 43:4)?

What do you need from the Lord today?

Prayer: *Father, when I feel hopeless, remind me of your love for me. Be near to me, give me strength, and help me remember that there is always hope. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Key Verse to Memorize

*"There is surely a future hope for you
and your hope will not be cut off."*

PROVERBS 23:18

Key Passage to Read

LAMENTATIONS 3:19-26

My Personalized Plan

When I feel hopeless and suicidal thoughts occur, it's important to have a plan to find immediate help and ongoing support. I will remember that I am not alone. The Lord promises to be with me, to guide me, and to watch over me. . . .

*"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

When I'm in despair and struggling with suicidal thoughts, I will ...

Talk to someone

- I will reach out to a friend, family member, pastor, counselor, or someone I trust and honestly tell them what I'm thinking about doing.
- I will call the **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** at **988**, text the **Crisis Text Line** at **741741**, or call 911 when I'm in danger of harming myself.

"In an abundance of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14 ESV).

Seek to be safe

- I will remove any harmful or lethal objects from my possession/home—any guns, knives, ropes, drugs, pills, or other harmful objects that I am able to easily access.
- I will identify the safe people and places I can go to when I'm struggling with thoughts of self-harm.

"But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge" (Psalm 73:28).

Hold on to hope

- I will try to put things in perspective and remember that no matter what I'm feeling or thinking, I can have hope.
- I will read God's Word to find true, lasting hope and read stories of survivors to remind me hope is a solid anchor. (**Note:** You can find "Stories of Hope and Recovery" on the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline website at 988lifeline.org/stories.)

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19).

Address physical issues

- I will get a medical check-up and talk with a doctor to see if any physical issues may be contributing to my suicidal thoughts (or depression) and consider any recommended treatments to help me.
- I will take care of myself physically and try to live a healthy lifestyle by eating well, getting adequate sleep each night, exercising as I'm able, and avoiding harmful substances such as drugs and alcohol.

"I discipline my body and keep it under control" (1 Corinthians 9:27 ESV).

Take care of my emotional needs

- I will avoid unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drinking alcohol, using drugs, or self-harming behaviors.
- I will consider new, healthy ways of managing my emotions such as talking with others, journaling, drawing/painting, praying, meditating, or exercising.

"In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help" (Psalm 18:6).

Replace negative thoughts

- I will acknowledge negative thoughts and lies I believe about myself and my situation.
- I will replace negative thoughts by meditating on the truth of God's Word.

"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).

Acknowledge that pain is temporary

- I will put my pain in perspective and acknowledge that the pain I feel is temporary—it won't last forever.
- I will remember that God promises to one day put an end to all pain and suffering.

"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).

Be in community

- I will remember I'm not alone—that many other people have been in my place and found help.
- I will seek the support of others and consider joining a community support group, a local church, or other helpful groups.

"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" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 NLT).

Look to God for help

- I will regularly pray and search God's Word to find help, hope, strength, peace, and guidance.
- I will remember that God loves me, cares about me, and that He is always with me.

"The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety" (Psalm 18:2 NLT).

Stay connected

- I will remember that even when I'm not in a crisis or having suicidal thoughts, it's important to stay connected with others.
- I will regularly check in with others (counselor, doctor, pastor, trusted individual, etc.) to evaluate my suicide risk and get help as needed.

"Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25 NLT).

Application

Who is one safe person you could reach out to today if you felt overwhelmed?

Which of the steps above would help you live each day with a little bit more hope?

My Contract of Hope

The following is a solemn binding contract. This contract cannot be declared null and void without the written agreement of both parties.

I promise that if I should consider harming myself, I will talk with you before I do anything destructive.

I sign my name as a pledge of my integrity.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

"Anyone who is among the living has hope."

ECCLESIASTES 9:4

What Are Some Misconceptions about Suicide?

Misconceptions abound on the topic of suicide. There are many common myths about suicidal behavior . . . why it happens, when it happens, who is at risk, and what can be done about it. There are also misconceptions about suicide and faith. We need discernment to determine facts from myths, truth from falsehood, so we can rightly and wisely respond to suicidal behavior.

"Give discernment to me, your servant."

PSALM 119:125 NLT

12 Common Misconceptions about Suicide²

Misconception #1: "People who talk about suicide won't really do it."

Truth: An estimated 80% of people who die by suicide gave clues or warnings to friends or family. Therefore, you must take any threat of suicide seriously. Someone who talks about suicide gives others the opportunity to intervene.

Misconception #2: "You should never talk about suicide with depressed people—it could give them ideas."

Truth: Talking about suicide doesn't create suicidal thoughts. For a struggler, having someone to talk with can be a powerful preventative. Asking direct questions and discussing suicide is one of the most helpful things you can do to prevent suicide.

Misconception #3: "Everyone who dies by suicide is mentally ill."

Truth: No, not everyone. Roughly 90% who die by suicide are afflicted with a diagnosable psychiatric disorder. However, suicide can occur for reasons unrelated to mental illness. External factors such as the loss of a loved one, job loss, divorce, or physical factors such as chronic illness can increase the risk of suicidal behavior.

Misconception #4: "People who are depressed are suicidal."

Truth: People can be depressed without having suicidal thoughts. Having depression does not automatically mean someone is suicidal. And yet, people who are depressed are at a higher risk of suicide.

Misconception #5: "More suicides occur during the winter holidays."

Truth: This is a long-standing myth. The opposite is actually true. Suicide rates peak in the spring and summer, and the rates are lower in the winter months.

Misconception #6: "Suicide only affects specific groups of people."

Truth: While certain demographics show higher rates of suicide, people of all backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic levels attempt and/or die by suicide each year.

Misconception #7: “Most suicides happen suddenly without warning.”

Truth: The majority of those who die by suicide give some hint, clue, or warning. That’s why it’s important to know the warning signs of suicide and always take any suicidal thoughts, statements, or behaviors seriously.

Misconception #8: “Suicide is genetic.”

Truth: No one is destined to die by suicide. Just because one or more family members die by suicide doesn’t mean that other family members will do the same. However, those who have lost family members to suicide are at an increased risk for suicidal behavior.

Misconception #9: “Talking about the method of someone’s suicide with all the details and the emotional impact on loved ones will help prevent others from attempting suicide.”

Truth: Presenting precise details of a suicide can lead to copycat suicides. People in the media and school officials have learned that suicide can be contagious, so to speak. Therefore, they curtail details of what happened and instead focus on why it happened and what can be done to prevent further suicides.

Misconception #10: “If someone is determined to die, nothing can be done to prevent a suicide.”

Truth: Many people who struggle with suicidal thoughts, even the most severe strugglers, still have a desire to live. They often just want the pain to stop. There is always help and hope for every person who has suicidal thoughts. Suicide can be prevented.

Misconception #11: “Once someone is suicidal, they will always be suicidal and unable to face difficulties.”

Truth: In the context of a person’s entire life, a true suicidal crisis usually lasts only a brief time. Struggling with suicidal thoughts is temporary; it does not last a lifetime. Many people find help, get answers, and learn how to handle the issues that underlie suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Misconception #12: “When a suicide crisis is over and the person has improved, there is no longer a risk for suicide.”

Truth: The time following a suicidal crisis is critical as many suicide deaths occur within a few months after the initial crisis. Even when people improve and find help, regular, ongoing follow-up and evaluation is needed and beneficial.

Misconceptions about Suicide and Faith

Misconception #1: “A deeply committed believer would never consider suicide.”

Truth: Sincere believers can and do struggle with suicidal thoughts, and tragically, some die by suicide each year—even ministry leaders. Many pastors face tremendous stress and are at an increased risk for burnout, depression, and suicidal behavior. The godly prophet Jeremiah once lamented, *“Cursed be the day I was born!”* (Jeremiah 20:14). Job, the most righteous man of his day said in his suffering, *“Let the day of my birth be erased, and the night I was conceived”* (Job 3:3 NLT).

Misconception #2: “Suicide is the unpardonable sin.”

Truth: Nowhere in the Bible is suicide presented as the unpardonable sin. The unpardonable sin is the unwillingness to yield to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit—the refusal to receive salvation through Jesus Christ. In other words, it is rejecting the very means of forgiveness—Jesus Christ.

Misconception #3: “Christians who take their own lives lose their salvation.”

Truth: No. According to the Word of God, once you have believed in and accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the Spirit of God is the promised guarantee that you will inherit heaven and live eternally in the presence of God. The Bible says, *“You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession”* (Ephesians 1:13–14).

In all matters, especially in matters of life and death, our thoughts and actions must be based on truth and the reality that there is always hope.

*“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

What Are the Risk Factors of Suicide?

Risk factors indicate the likelihood of suicidal behavior—not the cause of suicidal behavior. Having a particular risk factor does not mean that a person is destined to become suicidal. The risk factors simply mean that there is a greater likelihood of suicidal behavior if a person has one or more of these factors.

"I am suffering and in pain. Rescue me, O God, by your saving power."

PSALM 69:29 NLT

Risk Factors of Suicide³

Personal factors

- Depression, anxiety, a mental disorder, or substance abuse disorder
- Prior suicide attempt(s)
- History of trauma
- Medical illness, including chronic pain
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or being isolated
- The belief that suicide is a legitimate or noble solution to a personal crisis or dilemma

Familial factors

- Family history of suicide
- Family history of a mental health disorder
- Family history of an alcohol or drug abuse disorder
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse

Social and situational factors

- Stressful life event (job loss, financial problems, trouble at school, being bullied, loss of a loved one, end of a relationship, war, trauma, isolation, etc.)
- Difficulty getting access to health care (especially mental health and substance abuse treatment)
- Lack of social support; isolation
- Local clusters of suicide
- Exposure to suicidal behavior of others (peers, relatives, etc.)
- Recent release from jail or prison
- Access to lethal means (firearms in the home, pills, etc.)

Knowing these factors can help you determine when someone is at risk for suicide and take appropriate precautions. The Bible says . . .

"A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions."

PROVERBS 27:12

What Are the Warning Signs of Suicide?

Warning signs of suicide are different than the risk factors of suicide. Risk factors of suicide indicate an increased likelihood of suicidal behavior. The warning signs of suicide, however, indicate an immediate danger of suicidal behavior. Knowing these warning signs can help save a life.

"Save me and rescue me . . . Turn your ear to listen to me, and set me free."

PSALM 71:2 NLT

Warning Signs of Suicide⁴

- Talking** about wanting to die or wanting to kill oneself
- Talking** about being a burden to others
- Being** preoccupied with death, dying, or violence
- Buying** a gun, stockpiling pills, looking for a way to kill oneself
- Making** a plan to kill oneself (searching online, etc.)
- Feeling** empty, hopeless, or like there is no reason to live
- Feeling** trapped or in unbearable pain
- Increasing** the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting** anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Displaying** extreme mood swings
- Showing** rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Sleeping** too little or too much
- Withdrawing** from family or friends or feeling isolated
- Saying** good-bye to loved ones, putting affairs in order, giving away belongings

If you or someone you know is displaying any of these warning signs, seek help immediately. Call the **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** at **988** or text the **Crisis Text Line** at **741741**.

*"Rescue me . . . don't let me sink any deeper!
Save me . . . and pull me from these deep waters."*

PSALM 69:14 NLT

How to Assess Suicide Risk

The assessment questions below are based on the Columbia Protocol or the Columbia–Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C–SSRS). This professional tool helps identify risk and prevent suicide. It is used in many settings: healthcare facilities, first responders (police and firefighters), military bases, colleges and schools, correctional facilities (prisons, jails), athletics and sports, support groups, employment settings, and more. Spouses and parents use it as well. It is an effective, evidence–based tool that has saved many lives.

“Save me, O God.”

PSALM 69:1

Suicide Assessment Questions⁵

1. In the past month, have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?
2. In the past month, have you actually had thoughts about killing yourself?
3. In the past month, have you thought about how you might do this?
4. In the past month, have you had any intention of acting on these thoughts of killing yourself (as opposed to having the thoughts but definitely not acting on them)?
5. In the past month, have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?
6. In the past three months, have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life? (Examples: collected pills, obtained a gun, gave away valuables, wrote a will or suicide note, held a gun but changed your mind, cut yourself, tried to hang yourself, etc.)

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, you should seek a behavioral health referral and contact the crisis numbers listed below.

If you answered Yes to questions 4, 5, or 6—you are at high risk of suicide and should seek immediate help:

Call 911

Call **988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline)**

Text **741741 (Crisis Text Line)**

Go to the emergency room

Note: If you are with someone who answered Yes to any of these questions—especially questions 4, 5, and 6—stay with them until they can be evaluated. Remove any potentially dangerous objects if necessary. Get help immediately through one of the numbers listed above.

“The LORD helps them . . . He saves them, and they find shelter in him.”

PSALM 37:40 NLT

How to Help Someone Struggling with Suicidal Thoughts

At some point, God may use you to be a lifeline of hope to someone struggling with suicidal thoughts. God can use you to encourage those in despair, comfort the downcast, and give hope to the hopeless.

*“But God, who comforts the downcast,
comforted us by the coming of Titus.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 7:6

Learn the warning signs and risk factors. Review the risk factors and warning signs in this resource. Identify which warning signs and risk factors they may have.

Assess risk. Use the Suicide Assessment Questions in this resource to help you determine the level of crisis and identify appropriate next steps. Keep them safe. Remove any access to lethal means (guns, pills, etc.). Stay with them in a crisis. Help them find a safe place to stay when they are in danger of harming themselves.

Be present and available. Call, visit, and check in on them regularly. Invite them to join you in activities (going for a walk, running errands, etc.). Your presence and consistent encouragement can show them they are loved and valued.

Listen with compassion. Don't feel like you have to say something to “fix it.” When Job's friends saw his suffering, the Bible says, *“Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words”* (Job 2:13 NLT). Listen to their story and their feelings. Express concern and empathy. Acknowledge the reality of deep pain and suffering.

Talk about suicide with the person. Contrary to common belief, talking about suicide does not plant the idea in someone's head. Rather, it offers them an opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Ask direct questions regarding the existence of a plan. Ask how, when, and where in order to gain valuable information to help prevent an attempt. Do not promise confidentiality if this is the case.

Ask for a signed contract that obligates the suicidal person to talk with you or with someone else before taking harmful action. You could ask something like: “Will you promise that you will first call me if you are considering harming/killing yourself?” Write the words out like a contract and then both of you sign and date it. (See the “My Contract of Hope” in this resource.)

Suggest helpful activities that can serve as self-coping strategies when suicidal thoughts occur, such as:

- Keeping a journal to write down their thoughts throughout the day.
- Exercising, painting, or playing a game to distract them and take their mind off things.
- Going out often with friends and family, even if they have to push themselves to do so.
- Memorize encouraging passages from God's Word such as Psalm 46:1; Psalm 145:8–9; Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 29:11; 1 John 3:1.

Help them build a support system. Don't think you (as a caring party) can "do it all." Help them build a support system of family, friends, church members, community support groups, and suicide hotlines as well as a pastor and/or counselor. Assist them in gathering emergency contact names and numbers so they have a list of people and places to call when they need help.

Know your limits. You may begin to feel stressed and overwhelmed when helping a person who is suicidal. Recognize when you need to refer the suicidal person to someone better equipped to care for them. Take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Ask others for help when needed.

Encourage them to pursue professional help such as medical treatment and professional counseling. Help them find a local counselor or clinic. Keep a list of numbers you will need to call in case there is an emergency. Direct them to emergency services such as the **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** at **988**, the **Crisis Text Line** at **741741**, the police, or local emergency room.

Follow up. Stay connected with them. Check in with them regularly in person or by phone or text. Ask how they are doing and how you can help them.

For someone struggling in the darkness, you can be a light of hope as you help, pray for, and provide support.

*"Help those in trouble.
Then your light will shine out
from the darkness,
and the darkness around you
will be as bright as noon."*

ISAIAH 58:10 NLT

*God can use you to encourage those
in despair, comfort the downcast,
and give hope to the hopeless.*



GRIEF

Living at Peace with Loss

"I, yes I, am the one who comforts you."

ISAIAH 51:12 NLT

*We don't grieve without purpose
or without His presence.*

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).

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).

Reflection & Prayer

Which Bible verse or truth mentioned above gives you comfort?

How does it comfort you to know that Jesus Himself experienced grief and understands your sorrow (Isaiah 53:3)?

What do you need to cast onto the Lord today (Psalm 55:22)?

Prayer: *Lord, you are a man of sorrows, familiar with grief and pain (Isaiah 53:3). Thank you for understanding what its like to grieve and live with loss. When the waves of grief wash over me, please draw near to me with comfort, peace, and hope. In Jesus' name, amen.*

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

My Personalized Plan

As I seek to process my grief with God, I will . . .

Acknowledge my feelings

- I will remember that God welcomes my lament, tears, and sorrow—so I do not need to hide or minimize my feelings.
- I will express my feelings to God, to other trusted people, and consider journaling as an outlet to express my emotions.

“Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge” (Psalm 62:8).

Receive God’s comfort

- I will read God’s Word and meditate on His promises to find comfort and peace.
- I will remember that God often uses people to comfort me.

“My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life” (Psalm 119:50).

Give myself time and grace

- I will remember that grieving is a process, and I may experience feelings of grief months or years after the loss.
- I will take things one day at a time, remembering the Lord is always with me in my grief.

“For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven ... a time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4 NLT).

Honor my loved one

- I will find ways to honor my loved one’s memory, being mindful of important anniversaries and consider how these days might affect me.
- I will acknowledge that healing and moving forward does not mean I am dishonoring or forgetting my loved one.

“I thank my God every time I remember you” (Philippians 1:3).

Remember God’s promises

- I will rejoice in the promise that I will see my brothers and sisters in Christ in heaven.
- I will remember that one day God will wipe away all my 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).

Reach out to others

- I will prayerfully consider how God can use me to comfort others.
- I will reach out to others who are grieving and find ways to support and comfort them.

“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).

Move forward with hope

- I will learn to be grateful for the past and the time I had with my loved one.
- I will acknowledge my present new reality, establish new patterns and habits, while maintaining hope for the future.

“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).

Application

Which step mentioned above can you take to help process your grief?

What are three specific things you can do to find comfort when you're grieving?

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

Application

Is there someone grieving or hurting in your life right now? What is one thing you can do to help them?

*Instead of running away from God
in our grief, we can run to God. That's
a mark of healthy grieving.*



HOPE

The Anchor for Your Soul

"O Lord, you alone are my hope."

PSALM 71:5 NLT

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.

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).

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).

Reflection & Prayer

What truth or Bible verse mentioned above encourages you the most, and why?

Where are you currently tempted to place your hope outside of God, and how can you redirect that hope back to Him?

In what ways has the hope of Christ been an anchor for your soul in hard times (Hebrews 6:19)?

Prayer: *Father, you are the God of hope (Romans 15:13). When I'm tempted to put my hope in my circumstances, anchor my heart back to your Word and your promises. Thank you that no matter what happens, I always have hope in you. In Jesus' name, amen.*

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

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).

Application

What step mentioned above do you need to take to help cultivate hope in your life?

Who can you share the hope of Christ with this week?

4 POINTS OF GOD'S PLAN

Whether you're trying to make sense of your past, trying to overcome something in the present, or trying to make changes for a better future, the Lord cares about you. He loves you. No matter what challenges you or your loved ones are facing, no matter the pain or difficult feelings you may be experiencing, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, there is hope. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for your life, and it begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. The most important decision you can ever make is whether you will accept His invitation. If you have never made that decision, these four simple truths can help you start your journey together with Him.

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,
'plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.'"*

JEREMIAH 29:11

God's Purpose for You: *Salvation*

What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"* (John 3:16-17).

What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10).

The Problem: *Sin*

What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God's standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway"* (Romans 7:18-19 NLT).

What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *"Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God"* (Isaiah 59:2). Scripture also says, *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23).

God's Provision for You: *The Savior*

Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). The Bible says, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . ."* (Acts 16:31).

Your Part: *Surrender*

Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"* (Matthew 16:24–26).

Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your "good works" as a means of earning God's approval. The Bible says, *"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you've humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

*"God, I want a real relationship with you.
I admit that many times I've chosen to go my own way instead of your way.
Please forgive me for my sins.
Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins.
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.
Change me from the inside out and make me
the person you created me to be.
In your holy name I pray. Amen."*

What Can You Now Expect?

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . ."* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

*"Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me
has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."*

JOHN 5:24

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

God gives us His Word not just for information but for transformation. The Lord wants you to *“be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Romans 12:2). This isn’t something you do alone, but something God does in you by His Spirit.

The following questions are designed to help you reflect on the biblical truths in this resource. Take a moment to pray and ask God to settle your mind and quiet your spirit as you reflect on His truth.

“Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.”

2 TIMOTHY 2:7

What are two key truths, Bible verses, or takeaways from this resource that you found helpful—or that you simply needed to be reminded of?

In relation to these topics, what behavior(s) do you need to begin, change, or stop in order to help you grow into the person God created you to be?

In relation to these topics, what is the biggest obstacle you need to overcome in order to move forward?

What might your life look like a few years from now if you do not make changes regarding these issues?
How might your life be different if you do make changes?

Is there anyone in your life who needs help with these topics/issues? How can you pray for them, and what is one thing you can do to encourage them?

What can you give thanks to God for today?

*“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself
and God our Father, who loved us
and by his grace gave us eternal comfort
and a wonderful hope,
comfort you and strengthen you
in every good thing you do and say.”*

2 THESSALONIANS 2:16-17 NLT

HOPE *for the* HEART

At Hope for the Heart, hope gets real.

We know life is a series of challenges. But finding help shouldn't be.

That's why we create simple, easy-to-use resources. Professionally informed, all rooted in God's Word. We provide clear answers and practical guidance on over 100 real-life issues, helping you understand and apply the Bible to your life and those you serve.

It's all life-giving counsel that's key to living whole and free. For God's heart is to see you live abundantly and share the hope you have in Christ.

So that whatever you're facing—or whoever comes to you—you have every reason for hope, for every challenge in life.

Because hope means everything.

*"For everything that was written
in the past was written to teach us,
so that through the endurance
taught in the Scriptures and
the encouragement they provide
we might have hope."*

ROMANS 15:4

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**Help us share biblical resources like
this with more people who need hope.**

The Complete System of Care

Designed with the whole person in mind, Hope for the Heart's Complete System of Care provides a comprehensive library of resources and training tools that are all professionally informed, rooted in God's Word. Centered around our 100+ topic *Keys for Living Library*, these practical, biblical resources ensure you have everything you need when getting to the heart of common life issues.

Whether for personal help or training purposes, it's all key to being completely equipped for effective care and counsel. From practical guidance in our books to deeper insights through courses, events, and media, these tools work together to help you experience freedom and transformation in Christ—and equip you to share that hope with others.

Explore our resources today and get the tools you need to take better care of yourself and others.



OTHER TOPICS IN THE *KEYS FOR LIVING* LIBRARY

Addiction and Recovery

Alcohol & Drug Abuse
Anorexia & Bulimia
Codependency
Gambling
Habits & Addictions
Overeating
Sexual Addiction
Workaholism

Attitude and Character

Critical Spirit
Ethics & Integrity
Lying vs. Truthfulness
Manipulation
Perfectionism
Prejudice
Pride & Humility
Rebellion
Sexual Integrity
Stealing

Crisis and Trauma

The Abortion Dilemma
Abuse Recovery
Bullying
Childhood Sexual Abuse
Crisis & Trauma
Domestic Abuse
Midlife Crisis
Pregnancy . . . Unplanned
Sex and Human
Trafficking
Sexual Assault & Rape
Recovery
Spiritual Abuse
Suicide Prevention
Terminal Illness
Trials
Verbal & Emotional Abuse
Violence

Faith and Apologetics

Assurance of Salvation
Atheism & Agnosticism
The Bible: Is It Reliable?
Child Evangelism
Cults
Death & Heaven
Euthanasia
Evil & Suffering . . . Why?
God: Who Is He?
The Holy Spirit
Homosexuality & SSA
Islam
Jehovah's Witnesses
Jesus: Is He God?
Jewish Evangelism
Mormonism
New Age Spirituality
The Occult
Prosperity Theology
Salvation
Satan, Demons, and
Satanism
Spiritual Warfare

Thoughts and Emotions

Anger
Anxiety
Depression
Envy & Jealousy
Fear
Forgiveness
Grief
Guilt & Shame
Hope
Identity & Self-Image
Loneliness
Rejection &
Abandonment
Self-Worth
Stress
Temptation
Worry

Marriage and Family

Adoption
Adultery
The Blended Family
Considering Marriage
Dating
Divorce
The Dysfunctional Family
Infertility
Marriage
Parenting
Single Parenting
Singleness
Teenagers
The Unbelieving Mate
Widowhood

Counseling and Coaching

Aging Well
Alzheimer's & Dementia
Boundaries
Caregiving
Chronic Illness &
Disabilities
Communication
Conflict Resolution
Confrontation
Counseling
Decision-Making
Employment
Financial Freedom
Friendship
Intimacy
Leadership
Mentoring, Coaching,
and Discipling
Procrastination
Purpose in Life
Reconciliation
Success Through Failure
Time Management

To order additional *Keys for Living* topics or to learn more about the resources of Hope for the Heart, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit hopefortheheart.org.

A Legacy of Hope

Special thanks to June Hunt for her unwavering commitment to God's Word, her compassionate heart for hurting people, decades of faithful ministry, and countless hours spent developing, editing, and teaching the 100+ topic *Keys for Living Library*.



June Hunt, MA, is an author, broadcaster, counselor, singer, speaker, and the founder of Hope for the Heart. She began the ministry in 1986 to provide God's truth for today's problems. June developed the 100+ topic *Keys for Living Library* to provide biblical hope and practical help on real-life issues.

Since 1995, June has shared compassionate, biblical guidance with thousands of callers on her award-winning radio broadcast, *Hope in the Night*, a live, call-in counseling program, which she continues to host each weeknight.

A visionary with a heart to bring people together, June also founded The Hope Center in 2009, which serves as the permanent home for more than 60 nonprofit Christian ministries, allowing collaboration for greater Kingdom impact.

June is a true model of integrity, compassion, and a servant's heart. The Lord has turned June's simple desire to help people find answers to life's toughest challenges into a worldwide ministry of hope, impacting more than 60 countries on 6 continents in over 35 languages. Those who have had the privilege of serving the Lord alongside June, benefitting from her wise care and counsel, or simply enjoying the warmth of her voice and guitar, can attest to the impact June has made for the Kingdom.

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Endnotes

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Because hope means everything.