



EMBRACING HOPE

Day 1

VALUE IN EACH DAY

What is it that secures our hope? I believe it is rightly valuing the gift of each day.

“So teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.” (Psalm 90:12)

The original Hebrew for “to number our days” is translated to something like “allotted,” which makes me think of a finite amount. This verse says that we each have been given a certain number of days. Although it sounds like the psalmist is telling us to count our days, I think he’s really advising us to value our days, every hour and each moment contained in them, so that at the end of each day we can present ourselves to God full of wisdom. The Bible tells us that God is pleased with our good work. He honors and commends those who are good stewards of the days they are given. (Matthew 25:21, 23 and 1 Corinthians 15:58)

How does valuing our days give us wisdom? Let’s look at another psalm:

“This is the day which the LORD has made;
Let’s rejoice and be glad in it.” (Psalm 118:24, NASB 1995)

Once again, we are reminded of the importance of acknowledging Him. Before we can appreciate our days, we must remember *Who* made our days. Recognizing that He has purpose in the time He gives us shows us the importance of surrendering that time back to Him. Acknowledging, and following His direction in our lives proves us wise because it demands we live beyond our own desires, goals, and talents, and present back to Him a “heart of wisdom.” A heart wise enough to know that He alone can accomplish the good we may have been credited with in this life.

In all of that acknowledgement, we find that each day is no longer a square on the calendar. Each day is an opportunity to hear from God about our next step. Does that mean that every day will be a grand adventure? Does that mean that we are missing God if we didn't hear Him ask something audacious of us this morning? Of course not. Many of us find ourselves in a simple pattern of sleep, eat, work, and repeat. God may not give each of us something new *to do* every day, but He does supply something new *for* us every day. The book of Lamentations confirms this:

“The LORD’S acts of mercy indeed do not end,
For His compassions do not fail.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23, NASB 1995)

Isn't that a beautiful thing to consider? Regardless of how dull or monotonous we may see our daily routine; He provides new compassions and endless mercy each morning. As the sun rises in its faithfulness, the layers of color in the sky are unique. They vary moment by moment. He paints a sunrise for us every day. And beyond that, He will not fail to bring new insight, new contemplation, or new perspective to us when we spend time with Him each day. Even when we think our time in the Word of God was boring or unfruitful, we are gaining knowledge of His character and that knowledge is building a new and refreshing confidence within us. This story of today is but a small chapter in an ever-changing life. And still His mercies and compassions prove to be new every morning.

Action Steps:

Meditate for 60 seconds on Psalm 90:12, and the idea that there is value and purpose in the day we are in right now.

Read Psalm 90.

Write down one verse from Psalm 90 that illustrates God's intervention in our days.

Consider how you can shift your perspective on each day you're given.



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Day 2

PURPOSE IN EACH DAY

Hope is easily lost in an urgency that keeps us busy, but has no power to keep us fulfilled.

“To everything *there is* a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven:” (Ecclesiastes 3:1 NKJV)

The word “purpose,” and its meaning leans toward the notion that God offers us time for what is valuable, pleasurable, and even desirable. What we do should matter, and when we get caught up in doing only what is needed to get by, or get through, we slip past joy and land in the heap of busyness.

Being busy isn't necessarily wrong, it can be needed for a season, but it can also be a counterfeit for purpose.

Busyness simply for the sake of busyness traps us in cycles, robs our focus of the bounty in the big picture, and though we may get a lot of things done, they aren't often the things that matter most. In that trap we can easily lose our grip on hope, and slowly spiral into dissatisfaction and worry.

Purpose, on the other hand doesn't insist on a flurry of activity. Purpose mostly asks intentionality from us. When we are intentional, we are focused on a goal, a finished product, or a smoothly

operating and fruitful system. Purpose asks us to know where we want to go, and why we should be there.

As Christ followers, our purpose is inextricably tied to His purposes.

1 Timothy 1:15 tells us, "... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." (NASB 1995)

This purpose may sound impersonal, and daunting if we have not been immersed in its importance, but Paul goes on in that same verse to say that he is "foremost of all" among sinners. We too, were in need of being saved from sin. We needed Christ to fulfill His purpose for us. When we link our efforts to His purposes we regain, renew, or maybe finally begin, to walk in hope.

Look at Matthew 6:33. Jesus said, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (NASB 1995)

In this chapter Jesus is telling us all about the care and provision of our Heavenly Father. He insists that we do not need to be busy, worried, burdened, or frantic about our needs. Instead, He offers us the key to a hope that will not fade. Seek God first. Seek after His ways, His intentions, His purposes, and all the things we try so hard to maintain and achieve will be available when we need them. Our hope gets shifted into a greater vision, and our purposes are magnified by the loftiness of Who He is.

He will always provide what is needed to walk in the purpose of His kingdom, and that purpose will always walk hand in hand with hope.

Action Steps:

Meditate for 60 seconds on Psalm 57:2, and the hope and security that purpose offers.

Read Colossians 3:1-17.

Write down one verse from Colossians 3 that inspires you to walk in His purposes.

Consider how you can enliven hope by incorporating intentionality and purpose into your days.



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Day 3

GRATITUDE IN EACH DAY

When we seek to embrace hope, one of the best things we can do is exercise our emotional muscles in finding a positive perspective. Gratitude is one of the simplest ways to perform that exercise. Maybe things don't look so good around us, but we can still find ways to be grateful.

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing;
in everything give thanks;
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NASB 1995)

There was a song I knew growing up that said, “thank you for the valley I walked through today, the darker the valley the more I learn to pray.” *

It was the kind of song that made people cry when they heard it, because we've all had valleys to walk through, and many of us have turned to God in prayer in those dark moments and found we are not alone. Expressing gratitude in the midst of sorrow is one of the most unnatural responses we can give, but it's fruitful, and it's powerful.

1 Thessalonians tells us that giving thanks “in everything” is “God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” That alone tells us that there must be something positive in the practice of gratitude. Consider though, that it is also contradictory to the will of our enemy.

“The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy;
I came that they might have life, and might have *it* abundantly.” (John 10:10, NASB 1995)

The enemy wants to take from us, it is quite often his work that drives us into valleys, but God’s will is that we willingly offer something.

Satan’s wants to rob us, kill us, and spend us, but God’s gift is the life of Christ. It was already willingly laid down for us, and our response to that is the only thing that can offer lasting hope.

Our gratitude comes in recognizing the sacrifice that has been made for us, and then shifting our perspective to see that He not only gave us Himself, He gave us His provision, His glory, and His future.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28, NASB 1995)

God’s Word says, “ALL THINGS” because He knows we go through so many valleys we would surely qualify and exclude certain circumstances if He only said “things” in that passage. We can rest secure in His ability to make “good” out of any and all of the ungodly mess we may find ourselves in. Not only can we trust Him, we can be grateful in the middle of our story. Before we ever see the redemption, or the rescue, we can shift our perspective to gaze on the Savior. The One who calls us, the One who cradles us, the One who offers us His abundance. He will not budge from His promise to be with us.

No matter if we are in the middle of the darkest valley, or simply stubbed our toe, in EVERYTHING there is opportunity and the directive to keep walking in gratitude.

Action Steps:

Meditate for 60 seconds on 1 Thessalonians 5:18, and the simplicity of God’s will for us being our gratitude.

Read John 10:1-18.

Write down one verse from John 10 that illustrates the security we have in God’s presence.

Consider how you can shift your perspective toward gratitude each day.

* Thank You for the Valley – by Dottie Rambo



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Day 4

CONNECTION IN EACH DAY

One of the greatest parallels to a loss of hope, is the loss of connection. We are meant to be in relationship. We are designed to function best when connected to other people.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1 NASB 1995)

“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 NASB 1995)

“Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15:5-6 NASB 1995)

It’s not a surprising concept we find in these passages. It’s a fairly natural thing to respond to another human in hopes of friendship and connection. I do love that the Bible shows us that God sees our need for each other, and encourages our joining to each other in relationship. Psalm 133 tells us there’s a richness in the give and take of relationship. In Ecclesiastes a logical argument is put

forth. You're not better off alone. You can work faster and more efficiently with two or three, and you're safer too. Paul tells us in Romans that harmony among friends and brethren is achieved through perseverance and encouragement and produces a desired worship to God the Father and Jesus our Lord. We glorify Him well, when we bring one voice to the throne. (More on worship in the next devotion.)

How does relationship tie in to hope? Relationships are a venue for purpose. Hope is renewed when we are pouring out. When we give ourselves: our gifts, our talents, and even our perspective to someone beside us, we see our unique outlook adding to the viewpoint of another. What I may miss, a friend may pick up on, and what she misses, I may be able to warn her about. I see my usefulness more clearly from the vantage of harmony with another.

“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”
(1 Corinthians 13:13 NASB 1995)

Love is the greatest, but hope is among its friends. Hope abides with love. When there is unity, companionship, harmony, friendly banter, pats on the back, cheering, and raucous singing, you will very likely find hope is easily accessible.

When we know there's a shoulder to lean on, when we know there's a voice of encouragement available, and when we know we can anticipate a friendly face within our day, hope will prevail.

Action Steps:

Meditate for 60 seconds on 1 Corinthians 13:13, and the idea that love and hope abide with one another.

Read Romans 15:1-7

Write down one verse from Romans 15 that illustrates God's gift in relationship.

Consider how you can better offer yourself in friendship to others.



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Day 5

WORSHIP IN EACH DAY

What is worship? One of the best definitions I've heard, says that "worship is a lifestyle of confession." What sort of confession does worship demand? Worship requires us to admit that we are not God, and He is. Look at Psalm 100.

"Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.

Serve the LORD with gladness;

Come before Him with joyful singing.

Know that the LORD Himself is God;

It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving

And His courts with praise.

Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

For the LORD is good;

His lovingkindness is everlasting

And His faithfulness to all generations." (NASB 1995, emphasis added)

Do you see the powerful confession right in the middle? I bolded it for you, just in case. This Psalm of praise establishes right in its center that there is nothing about me, the reader, the singer, the writer, or the one proclaiming these words, that brings credibility to the table. He alone is God. I am no self-made human. I am a product of His hand, and His Word.

When I am put in this place of confession, a pure humility rises in my soul. Humility is the foundation of true worship. Jesus said...

“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.” (John 4:23 NASB 1995)

Worship in spirit and truth cannot be done outside of humility. Spirit and truth have no room for self-righteousness, or false pride. They leave no support for worship based on tradition or religious practice. That doesn't mean traditional singing, choirs, hymns, or old songs are bad, it means they are not the foundation of worship. But the same is true of volume, lighting, electric guitars, or a charismatic crowd. Worship doesn't need a style to provide its identity. Worship is defined by each person as they live their lives as an offering to God.

In practice we think of singing when we think of worship, but in reality, worship is the honor we give to God in the way we live. If we are singing, are we honoring God with our singing, or are we honoring our image? If we are hosting a dinner, are we thinking of how God will be honored in our effort, or are we thinking of how good we will look to our guests? Worship isn't simply how we sing; it's how we live. Worship is active honor toward God.

What does any of this have to do with hope? Daily worship means daily confession, and that confession is what allows us to hope. If I am my own God, my hope is limited to what I am capable of. If I am worshiping the One True God, I can hope with a limitless hopefulness. He is worthy, because He is able...

“Now to Him who is **able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think**, according to the power that works within us,” (Ephesians 3:20 NASB 1995, emphasis added)

We can walk in HOPE, simply because we acknowledge that He is who He says He is.

Action Steps:

Meditate for 60 seconds on Ephesians 3:20, recognizing that even our imagination cannot compete with His plans and purposes.

Read John 4:15-30

Write down one verse from John 4 that illustrates how Jesus offered hope.

Consider how you can better offer yourself in worship to God.