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# Hope for Hard Days

90 REFLECTIONS  
OF COMFORT, CALM, AND  
THE CERTAINTY OF HEAVEN

MAX LUCADO



THOMAS NELSON  
*Since 1798*

*Hope for Hard Days*

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# Introduction

**W**hy talk to God about my troubles? Can he truly understand? According to the Bible, he can: “For we have no superhuman High Priest to whom our weaknesses are unintelligible—he himself has shared fully in all our experience of temptation, except that he never sinned” (Hebrews 4:15 PHILLIPS).

The writer of Hebrews is adamant almost to the point of redundancy. It’s as if he anticipates our objections. It’s as if he knows that we will say, “God, it’s easy for you up there. You don’t know how hard it is from down here.” So he boldly proclaims Jesus’ ability to understand. Look at the wording again.

*He himself.* Not an angel. Not an ambassador. Not an emissary. But Jesus himself.

*Shared fully.* Not partially. Not nearly. Not to a large degree. Entirely! Jesus shared fully.

*In all our experience.* Every hurt. Each ache. All the stresses and all the strains. No exceptions. No substitutes. Why? So he could empathize with our weaknesses.

Every page of the Gospels hammers home this crucial principle: God knows how you feel. From the funeral to the factory to the frustration of a demanding schedule, Jesus understands. When you tell God that you’ve reached your limit, he knows what you mean. When you shake your head at impossible deadlines, he shakes his too. When

your plans are interrupted by people who have other plans, he nods in empathy.

He has been there.

He knows how you feel.

So go ahead and tell him your troubles. Give him your burdens, your worries, and your fears.

Because he himself has shared fully in all our experience.

He is your source of hope, for this life and the next, in all your hard days.

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**We wait in hope  
for the LORD; he  
is our help and  
our shield.**

**Psalm 33:20 NIV**

## DAY 1

# Live in the Light

*God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.*

1 JOHN 1:5

What if this is as good as it gets? Many people assume it is. They mistakenly think their fondest moments, deepest joys, and most profound experiences happen sometime between birth and the hearse. Someone needs to tell them the good news: As good as it gets? In no way and by no means. If you are in Christ, this life is as *bad* as it gets.

Every page and every promise of the Bible invites and excites with the lure of a new age and a renewed world. Your best life awaits you!

It only gets better. What's more, we have been handed an itinerary. We know what happens next. Let the promise of the next life define the way you spend this life. Live in the light of heaven.

When you've been knocked down more times than you can count, when the days are longer and the paychecks are shorter, when tears have etched a pathway from your eyes to your heart, remember . . . this life is as bad as it gets. So hold on. Keep trusting. Keep going. God has something infinitely better waiting for you on the other side of this struggle.



## My Scripture of Hope

There will never be night again. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light. And they will rule as kings forever and ever.

REVELATION 22:5

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## My Hope to Hold On to and My Worries to Release

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## God's Promise of Hope to Me

One day, darkness will end. Tears will end. Struggles and troubles will end. There will be only God's light, love, joy, and peace. And I will live in it forever . . . *with God.*

## My Prayer

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## DAY 2

# Everyday Miracles

*The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*

PSALM 19:7 NKJV

A small seed becoming a towering tree. A thin stalk pushing back the earth. A rainbow arching in the midst of the thundercloud . . . “God’s testimony,” wrote David, “makes wise the simple.”

God’s testimony. When was the last time you witnessed it? A stroll through knee-high grass in a green meadow. An hour listening to seagulls or looking at seashells on the beach. Or witnessing shafts of sunlight brightening the snow on a crisp winter dawn.

There comes a time when we should lay down our phones and laptops and step out of our offices and libraries. To really understand and believe in the miracle on the cross, we’d do well to witness God’s miracles every day.

When was the last time you stepped out of your house, the office, your everyday routine and sought out God’s testimony? Take a moment—a bunch of moments—to notice all the declarations of God’s presence that fill up your day.



## My Scripture of Hope

Through his power all things were made—things in heaven and on earth, things seen and unseen, all powers, authorities, lords, and rulers.

COLOSSIANS 1:16

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## My Hope to Hold On to and My Worries to Release

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## God's Promise of Hope to Me

I can see the power of God in this world. I can know that he is real and at work by the witness of his creation.

## My Prayer

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## DAY 3

# You Can Know the Future

*For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!*

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17 NLT

**H**ope is an endangered species. We are more troubled than we've been in years. Happiness is down. Loneliness is up. And optimism has taken a right hook to the chin.

You can relate. Your heart has been broken. Your dreams have been shattered. Your body has battled disease and aging. And maybe you've wondered if this life is worth living.

God's therapy for our trepidation reads like this: "For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!" (2 Corinthians 4:17 NLT).

Face the problems of this life by focusing on the promises of the next. The future is not as frightening if you know the future. And you can know the future when you know who controls it.

Troubles don't feel small or short-lived when you're right in the middle of them, do they? But when time is measured against the standard of eternity, they're less than the blink of an eye. God isn't dismissing your problems; rather, he's inviting you to remember that this moment of trouble will be swallowed up by an eternity of wonder. When you need help holding on, remember who holds the future.



## My Scripture of Hope

We don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:18 NLT

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## My Hope to Hold On to and My Worries to Release

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## God's Promise of Hope to Me

The struggles and troubles of this world will soon be over. God—his love, his goodness, and my life with him—will last forever.

## My Prayer

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## God Doesn't Remember

*I will remember their sins no more.*

HEBREWS 8:12 RSV

I was thanking the Father today for his mercy. I began listing the sins he'd forgiven. One by one, I thanked God for forgiving my stumbles and tumbles. My motives were pure, and my heart was thankful, but my understanding of God was wrong. It was when I used the word *remember* that it hit me.

"Remember the time I . . ." I was about to thank God for another act of mercy. But I stopped. Something was wrong. The word *remember* seemed displaced. It didn't fit.

Then I remembered. I remembered his words: "I will remember their sins no more."

Wow! Now, *that* is a remarkable promise. God doesn't just forgive; he forgets.

For all the things he does do, this is one thing God refuses to do. He refuses to keep a list of my wrongs.

God refuses to remember the sins he has forgiven. He *chooses* to forget. But do you? Do you allow yourself to forget? Or do you hold on to the sins of the past and let them weigh you down and hold you back? If you've confessed your sin, he has already forgiven you and made you whole. Because he's faithful, you can let it go.



## My Scripture of Hope

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

ISAIAH 1:18 NIV

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## My Hope to Hold On to and My Worries to Release

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## God's Promise of Hope to Me

When I take my sins to God, he not only forgives; he also forgets. I can forgive myself and forget those sins too.

## My Prayer

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## You Are Pursued

*It is not our love for God; it is God's love for us. He sent his Son to die in our place to take away our sins.*

I JOHN 4:10

In the days of Jesus, it fell to the groom to pursue the bride. She might glance as he passed by, she might smile as he turned, but any initiative for marriage was always taken by the groom. As much as she might long for him, she had no hope of a wedding unless he took the first step.

It's the same for us. Even if we had the charm to entice heaven, we don't know the phone number. If we have any hope of standing at the altar, God must make the call. And he did! He took the first step. He left his house and came to ours.

Jesus is romancing us. Can he exist without us? Of course—but he doesn't want to. He is smitten, captivated, head-over-heels enchanted with us. And he will do whatever it takes to win our affection.

When was the last time you were pursued? When was the last time someone pulled out all the stops to capture your heart? Has it been a long time since someone thought you were worth the effort?

Someone does think you're worth the effort. The same One who put rings around Saturn wants to wrap a ring of love around you and keep you close for all eternity. His name is Jesus. Let your heart delight in knowing he is pursuing you.



## My Scripture of Hope

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

PSALM 139:9–10 NIV

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## My Hope to Hold On to and My Worries to Release

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## God's Promise of Hope to Me

There is nowhere I can go where God's love will not find me.

## My Prayer

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## God Chose You

*Before I made you in your mother's womb, I chose you.*

JEREMIAH 1:5

**Y**ou are heaven's custom design. God "formed you in your mother's body" (Isaiah 44:2). He designed your every detail.

At a moment before moments existed, the sovereign Creator resolved, "I will make \_\_\_\_\_" (your name goes in the blank). Then he continued with, "And I will make him/her \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_" (fill those blanks with your characteristics—insightful, clever, detail oriented, restless).

Because you are God's idea, you are a good idea. What God said about Jeremiah, he said about you: "Before I made you in your mother's womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work" (Jeremiah 1:5).

What work? That question trips up a lot of well-meaning folks. God wouldn't let me do what I like to do—would he? Actually, he would. Your Designer couples the "want to" with the "able to." Your Father created you for a purpose. And he is too gracious to assign you to a life of misery.

What have you always done well? What have you always loved to do? Those desires and abilities aren't happenstance. Your "want tos" and "able tos" are gifts from your Creator. They intersect at a place called "divine." Our days are less hard when we are living out the gifts God has given us.



## My Scripture of Hope

God is working in you to help you want to do and be able to do what pleases him.

PHILIPPIANS 2:13

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## My Hope to Hold On to and My Worries to Release

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## God's Promise of Hope to Me

I am God's custom design. He will enable me to live out the purpose he has assigned me—a purpose that will please him and bring joy to me.

## My Prayer

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