

**Friday, May 31st**

## **"He Will Uphold You"**

by Dona Hake

Isaiah 41:10 (The Voice) So don't be afraid. I am here, with you; don't be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, and help you. I am here with My right hand to make right and to hold you up.

The King James Version says, "Fear not, do not look anxiously about you for I AM your God..." Looking anxiously about me implies that I would be uneasy, fearful or panicking. It is good to know that our loving Heavenly Father is there for us in those times to come under us and lift us up and hold us closely. He will sit us on the solid rock where we will not be moved and He is able to keep us.

Today as I was meditating on this scripture I had an interesting thing happen with my parrot that was just a great analogy of this scripture. As I was preparing for the devotional, I had my coffee sitting at my sofa and my parrot was having her "freedom time." As long as I can supervise JJ I will leave her cage door open and she usually climbs around her cage exploring. It is kind of cute because she has this "I'm big stuff" attitude as she is enjoying her freedom. Well today she got a little bit daring and decided to try to go from her cage over to a cupboard that sits about one foot away from her cage. She was trying to be ever so cautious before she went from point A to point B so I felt sorry for her when her exploration turned into fear for her. Her mistake was that she did not have proper footing and she slipped. She frantically started to flap her wings but could not fly because I just had her wings clipped. She went from frantic to real panic. I calmly walked toward her and spoke softly saying, "it's ok JJ, I'll help you." It was amazing how I could see the fear in her eyes. I gently reached my hand out and slipped in under her feet, she stopped the panic, rested on my hand, and she immediately calmed down. You see, as she felt my hand she felt safe again. As she sat there resting she looked at me with such a thankful look and I put her back on her cage where she felt safe again.

It reminded me how sometimes we can get ourselves in trouble and we lose our "footing." You know...those times when you get a little over confident and you get into your own ability and from there you got yourself in trouble. There are also those times that you are stepping out on faith and you really have yourself out on the "limb" and it can cause fear to grip your heart. It is very easy to

panic, get in anxiety, and be fearful. Isn't it good to know that our loving Heavenly Father is right there ready to hold out His mighty right hand, calm us with His loving voice and lift us up to that safe place. Psalm 91:4 (The Voice) Like a bird protecting its young, God will cover you with His feathers, will protect you under His great wings; His faithfulness will form a shield around you, a rock-solid wall to protect you.

I pray that you will see Him today as the One that is always nearby you and only an arm's reach away to rescue you in your time of need or trouble. Only He can calm our hearts when we are in anxiety and fear. We serve a loving and caring God. He is so good. I pray you will have a day that is prosperous and blessed!

**Thursday, May 30th**

**"Acknowledge Him In Everything"**

by Dona Hake From the day I received Jesus over forty years ago it has been of utmost importance to me to know that God is in as many details of my life as possible! I desire that God is blessing me and His hand upon every day of my life. Being an achiever and being a planner has made me very aware of how time can be wasted if you are not planning your day properly. Mary Kay of Mary Kay Cosmetics was a very successful lady and I can remember her saying that we should all go to bed at night with at least six things on our "to do" list if we desire success in our day. I too find that "to do" lists are such a help to me, but I want to always stay flexible and willing to allow the Lord to interfere with my "to do" lists and my days. I can testify of the many times He has interrupted my schedule and I am glad He did. The blessing that comes with obedience in response to His plans is just wonderful!

It is so important to understand that God's Word says that He will give us all things that pertain to life and godliness. He desires to be in every detail if we

allow Him. If your life has something stressful going on He will give you peace. If you are sick He will bring healing if you believe Him for it. If you are afraid of your future, He will give you hope for your future and give you the peace and grace that you need. 2 Peter 1:3 (The Voice Translation) "His divine power has given us **everything** we need to experience life and to reflect God's true nature through the knowledge of the One who called us by His glory and virtue."

Now I would like to share some scripture with you that go along with what I am sharing today: Proverbs 3:5-8 (NKJV) " Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil."

I would like to share how I have broken this one down for myself...

Trust God from deep down inside. Don't try to figure things out. Listen to God all the time and keep your own thoughts out of it. He's the one that will keep me walking the "chalk line" (as my Daddy used to say) Don't depend on your own wisdom because God's wisdom is higher and if I fear and esteem His Word as my highest standard I will be empowered by Him to run from evil.

From the depths of our heart we must trust Him above anything else. We just cannot remain in faith and still embrace thinking two different things at the same time. This is simply leaning on our own understanding. We cannot expect God to lead us in His ways if we have plans to depend on our own. When we walk with Him the path is narrow and we must stay focused on Him. We must keep our spiritual balance. He is well able to keep us standing up straight and strong. Even if we fall He is faithful to lift us up, dust us off, and send us back on our way walking along side of Him. As we fear God in a reverential way He will expose evil and help us to overcome anything that would hinder our walk with Him.

We serve a wonderful God that is quite eager to be in all of our affairs. Allow Him to do that today. Enjoy serving Him and expect Him to do wonderful things through you! Be blessed.

**Wednesday, May 29th**

**"To Forgive Is To Set the Prisoner Free!!!"**

by Dona Hake

Today I want to share with you what I see as a powerful thing and it is forgiveness. I often marvel just thinking of all the torture Jesus went through as He was beaten and whipped before His crucifixion. He carried His own cross and there He hung...for you and for me. As He hung there He cried out, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." God's Word empowers us to do all that Jesus did as His Spirit dwells within us yet there are many that feel they have a choice of who they have to forgive. Many believers live their lives in unforgiveness and they are very bitter people. Is this God's will?...Absolutely not!!! The act of unforgiveness on our part is absolutely inexcusable. For a believer to say they are unable to forgive is taking the work Jesus did on the cross and saying it is not enough. Unforgiveness keeps you out of God's perfect will and keeps you living in the past. 1 John 2:6 (The Voice) " anyone who says, "I live in intimacy with Him," should walk the path Jesus walked."

Might I add at this point that John was clearly stating that WE CAN walk as Jesus walked. He did not say if you have intimacy with Him that some days you can walk like Jesus, he said you should. Knowing that this verse says we should than I know we can! John Mason said it this way, "There are two marks of a Christian: giving and forgiving." When you think about it, they both require the love of Jesus. With Jesus dwelling within us we clearly are capable of that kind of love therefore there is no excuse.

I shared an anonymous quote on the image that went along with this devotion and it says:

**"To forgive is to set the prisoner free, and then discover the prisoner was you."**

It is vitally important to the health of our spirit, soul and body to just forgive someone if they have hurt you. As you release that person of the hurt they caused you and you forgive them by faith, I believe the Lord will bring healing to your heart and mind. We can not allow ourselves to be held back because we refuse to do that which we have been commanded to do. If you do not forgive you will be held back in many ways and deep down you will be tormented thus being a "prisoner."

I will add at this point that I think it is important to know that many times those that we forgive may never treat you the same again. In this life relationships can be broken and many times they are never restored. This is a sad thing, but the fact of the matter is that sometimes it goes this way. God's Word is true and it does not matter how someone reacts to you if you forgive them. As you are obedient to His Word to forgive, you will be free from the bondage that unforgiveness brings.

I ask you today to examine your heart. If there is anyone in your past that you know hurt you and you have struggled to forgive please consider what I just shared. Take that step toward extending forgiveness from your heart to theirs. God's Word is true and He is able to work in even the most impossible situations. Praying that this word has blessed your heart and as you think upon it, it will become even a greater revelation to you. Blessings to you this day.

**Tuesday, May 28th**

## **"...AND THEIR VOICES GOT LOUDER!"**

by Dona Hake

Psalm 46:1-3 " God is our protection and source of strength. He is always ready to help us in times of trouble. So we are not afraid when the earth quakes and the mountains fall into the sea. We are not afraid when the seas become rough and dark and the mountains tremble." Selah

Governor Mary Fallin of Oklahoma quoted excerpts from this portion of scripture during a memorial service that was held in Moore, Oklahoma. After the tornado killed 26 and injured hundreds, the town of Moore gathered to remember those that lost their lives and look to God and each other for strength to go on.

I was so blessed as an elementary school teacher shared during the service about how she handled her classroom of small children as the deadly tornado approached. She exclaimed how she did not want her children to be frightened so she asked them if they wanted to play a game with her. She told them to move their desks against the wall and get under them. As they huddled they began to sing songs and after a few songs one little one asked to sing "Jesus Loves Me." As the tornado hit they were singing this song and the louder the tornado got the louder they sang it. Even though the whole ordeal was a frightening one for this teacher and children, they lived to testify that they made it through the storm. During the memorial service these same children received two standing ovations -once on their way in and again after they once again sang "Jesus Loves Me."

During the service the Rabbi Veder Harris read from the book of Kings, noting that God was not in the storm but is in the "still, clear voice within us." I believe that even in the "storms" of this life if we stay still in our spirits and our faith strong in Him we can still hear His voice and proclaim His love for us. When we know we are hearing His voice we can always be assured that He is with us and He will bring us through.

I was so touched just trying to imagine little children in such a horrific situation huddled under desks singing at the top of their little lungs "Jesus Loves Me." I began to think about when the storms of life come our way that this is what our reaction should be. Does our spirits hold fast to "Jesus loves me!" as the storms

of our life get louder and louder or do we allow the storm to overtake us because of doubt and unbelief? Many times when this happens we may speak the wrong things and our faith weakens. Let us be reminded that the love of Jesus is to be meditated upon and nothing can keep that love from us.

" For I have every confidence that nothing—not death, life, heavenly messengers, dark spirits, the present, the future, spiritual powers, height, depth, nor any created thing—can come between us and the love of God revealed in the Anointed, Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39 (The Voice Translation)

Praise God that nothing can separate us from God and His love!! I would ask that you continue to keep the town of Moore, Oklahoma in your heart and pray for them. Many have buried their loved ones in the past days and they have also lost their homes. I can not even imagine the turmoil in their hearts. For those that do not know Him we need to pray that the Lord would bring laborers across their path to minister to them that which they need. Believe that this town will be restored and all that they need will come to them that they can get on with their lives.

I pray your day will be blessed!

**Monday, May 27th**

"Today, Let Us Remember"

by Dona Hake

As a photographer I have been blessed and privileged to be present and witness so many beautiful moments. I think about this often because many of my clients come to me as a complete strangers and they have asked me to capture their day because they want to maintain the memory of a special moment in time. I have witnessed fathers seeing their daughter in her wedding gown for the first time. Grown men that just refuse to hold back their emotions and I've witnessed the tears roll down their face as they hold their beautiful daughter in their arms.

I have been present to photograph childbirths and this is truly a privilege. I can remember one particular image that I was able to capture and that was when the baby was placed in the mother's arms for the first time and a tear of joy rolled down the mother's cheek. Recently I did a wedding where the bride and groom chose to see each other for the first time before the wedding. They made it very special and they asked me to capture that moment. The groom turns around and sees his bride for the first time and again I witnessed a moment that was unforgettable.

My eyes have seen many wonderful things behind my camera and some are just simply unforgettable. Today I want to share a little about unforgettable things that some have lived through and those memories will never be forgotten. I recently got to look into the eyes of a war veteran whose eyes had seen the horrors of World War II and he witnessed comrades give their life for his country. To me his eyes looked like a book that could have shared endless stories about all they had seen.

A few weeks ago I was given the opportunity and honor to photograph a war memorial being dedicated. This too will be one of those unforgettable times where I got to witness pride, and a variety of emotions. I arrived early on this assignment to determine lenses, lighting etc. There was a World War II Veteran and a Vietnam Veteran that walked toward me and I shook their hands and thanked them for their service. I felt honored to be able to chat with them. The World War II Veteran was very eager to talk and share with me as well. As I looked into his aged eyes full of a pride for his country I kept thinking how I wished I could of just asked him so many questions. This gentleman shared that at the age of eighteen he desperately wanted to serve his country during the World War II and he mentioned that his father was also serving at the same time. I can remember the one thing he mentioned...he said, "I came home from the war and I could not talk about it for three years." My heart goes out to the many veterans that served and have horrible, painful memories that are seared in their hearts and mind and some suffer from it even to this day.



After this veteran made that comment I thought to myself "What did he see?, what did he experience?, and I wonder what he thinks about the condition of our country today??" Today I think about families that lost a loved one in a war and they still live in the pain of missing them and trying to go on without them. One of the family members told me that when a woman she knew lost her son in one of the wars that she had a nervous breakdown. As a mother I cannot even imagine the heartbreak of losing a son in battle. My heart was touched as many just walked up to the memorial and gently reached out and touched the name of their family member. One veteran walked over and saluted the monument and said, "Thank you my comrades for serving my country." After the service was over and I got in my car and I began to reflect on all that I had just witnessed, and I began to cry while driving home. I felt like I needed to cry because my heart was deeply touched that morning. I was granted such a wonderful privilege to be a part of such an honorable event.

Today is Memorial Day, a day set aside to remember those that died for our freedoms. These are young men and women that not only paused their life and their dreams for their country, but they breathed their last breath while serving their country. I hope you take time to just remember those that gave it all. Remember those that gave their life that we might experience freedom today. I love what Mike Huckabee said last evening, "You may not of known them but their actions gave us freedom. They gave the ultimate sacrifice." As you go through your day today I hope you take time to think about your freedoms, your country, and those that gave their life...the ultimate sacrifice. God bless you.

**Sunday, May 26th**

**"Yes...I Can Smile At My Future!!"**

by Dona Hake

**Philippians 3:13-14**

"...but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Today is here and tomorrow is coming. What happened yesterday is in the past. Did good things happen to you yesterday? I hope you can say yes, but if you cannot you must make a choice to see this day as a new day with new beginnings. If your yesterday has brought pain to you then ask the Lord to bring healing to your heart and ask Him for the wisdom you need to walk forward. It is important to remember that when we do walk through hardships that we should seek to embrace whatever wisdom we can attain and pass it on to others in need. I have found that many times people seem to be very open to those that may be walking through similar hardships. What a blessing it is to share with someone that is hurting. You may be the only light they have in their dark situation.

God desires that we look forward into our future with faith in our hearts. It is a very bad mistake to live in your past. It is like trying to drive a car with your gaze continually in the rear view mirror. Yes, there are times we need to glance in our rear view mirrors so we can proceed cautiously. Those glances serve you as a good way to proceed with caution that you do not make mistakes or put yourself in danger. Just beware that your dwelling place is not behind you because it is so harmful for your growth as a Christian.

"The future frightens only those who prefer living in the past." John Mason

God does not want us to be fearful of our future but rather we need to rejoice in the days to come knowing that He is ready to use us as He wills as we give Him our all! I read a really awesome but powerful sentence the other day and it went like this...

**"MY UNKNOWN FUTURE IS IN THE HAND OF AN ALL KNOWING GOD"**

I will leave you with that thought today! We can all have our plans and expectations for our future and that is good but praise God that He is all knowing and He can cause our paths to be blessed and prosperous all the days of our lives. God bless you richly as you serve Him this day.

**Saturday, May 25th**

### **"Listening and Hearing Another's Heart"**

by Dona Hake

"If you spend more time asking appropriate questions rather than giving answers or opinions, your listening skills will increase." ( Brian Koslow ) I have to tell you that when I first read this quote I purposed to read it over about five times and each time it went deeper into me. It provoked me to ponder even more my inspiration for today's devotional. I felt today to share about being a good listener.

I used to have a poster I hung in my typing classroom and it said

"Did you know the same letters that are in LISTEN are also in SILENCE?"

Did you ever have someone finish your sentence before you complete it? Sometimes we may be amused by this because it shows how well the person may know you. Other times it is inappropriate if they end up finishing your sentence with their thoughts and not the ones you had in mind. Sometimes this happens because the hearer may be in some sort of assumption or they are not giving you the courtesy of being a good listener. I am sure that when this happens it is not an intended to be offensive but at times it can be. The fact of the matter is that most people just want to know that you are really listening. After they know you have really been a good listener they are more than likely going to be open to hear your heart on the matter. Colossians 4:6 (Easy-to-Read

Version) "When you talk, you should always be kind and wise. Then you will be able to answer everyone in the way you should." (The Voice Version) "When you speak the word, speak it gracefully (as if seasoned with salt), so you will know how to respond to everyone rightly."

It is important to understand that if people know you are really listening carefully to their words that you are really hearing their heart. Purpose to season your response or answers by the leading of the Holy Spirit. We must always be careful not to respond in opinion or answers from our own experience. God desires to use us to minister to one another in our conversations. Therefore it is important that our words are spoken with loving thoughts and wisdom. I absolutely hate when I say something that I regret. Even when you say something and it did not come out right, it is hard to take back words. Let us be mindful to ask the Lord for His help in this area...

### **Psalm 141:3**

(VOICE translation)

Guard my mouth, O Eternal One; *control what I say*. Keep a careful watch on every word I speak.

Today I encourage you as you encounter conversations of all kinds to keep yourself mindful to be a good listener. Ask God to lead you in your responses and reactions to people when they speak and know that He will use you to be a blessing to all those that you encounter today and days to come! Have a blessed day in the Lord.

**Friday, May 24th**

**"Sharing your strengths with others"**

by Dona Hake

Have you ever walked away from someone feeling inspired to be a better person or try harder in a particular area of your life?

I have been meditating on Hebrews 10:24 and when you read it from the KJ version it says: *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works..."* I wanted to share it from the Amplified as well: *"And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities..."*

God wants us to look beyond ourselves and be looking to bless and watch over those that we love whether that would be family, friends or church family. I want you to think about your strengths that the Lord has blessed you with. Do you try to encourage others with those strengths or do you just face your day thinking about you and a few?

Many times I have found myself to be guilty that strong people probably do not need encouragement. After all they are strong, why would they need me to speak a word of encouragement to them? I will say that we must never assume anything about anyone. Sometimes people that seem like they are strong may need your words of encouragement. None of us can get too much encouragement!

I think of different people that God has put in my life and they just provoke me and I mean provoke me in a very good way. I walk away from them being stirred in my heart to do better in an area of my spiritual walk. There are people in my life that are pillars of strength and I know their life is not easy...they provoke me to stand stronger than before. There are those that every time I encounter them they find a good word to speak about a bad situation...it provokes me to start thinking before I talk. It makes me realize how important it is to remain in faith even when things do not appear good. There are those in my life that carry joy and they just make me giggle just to hear their name. We are so blessed to be able to share with each other that which the Lord has given in abundance.

Recently I visited a couple's home and the young woman had a beautiful gift to decorate and create with purpose. Almost every detail in their home was symbolic to their love for family and life itself. The colors were carefully coordinated and everything was so pleasing to the eye. There was a "warmth" that just ministered to our hearts. As this couple entertained us there was a

feeling that everything was done with the purpose to bless our hearts. I walked away provoked to think more about how the smallest of details and decorations in my home should minister to another's heart. I thank God for all the people that He has put in my life that have strengths that I need to continue to develop in this life.

I leave you with the question and that is how do you think people feel after they have encountered a conversation or time with you? Have you left them something good to ponder and did you challenge their heart? I hope so. If you do not know, ask the Lord what your strengths are and ask Him to help you to understand how to freely pass them on. I pray that this has stirred your heart and that you have a wonderful day in Him!

**Thursday, May 23rd**

### **Changing With the Seasons of Your Life**

by Dona Hake

We all go through different seasons in our lives. The older you get I think you begin to realize that no matter what you walk through in this life you can make the choice to learn and grow from it. There are seasons of learning, growing, releasing...I am sure you can name a few. We must understand that there are things that can hinder us from leaving one season of our life in order to enter a new one. I would like to share about one in particular that affects people and that is fear of any kind of change. This kind of fear will cause you to want to cling to where you are and you will do anything to try to keep it that way. It is living in your own *comfort zone*.

An individual that lives like this does not want to be challenged and they want to keep it that way. I want to just say that when one continues to live in a *comfort zone* they actually hinder the Lord from taking them into a fresh new season of their life. There are many reasons people want to live in a comfort zone. Some do not like challenges, some do not want to do any more than they have to and some are just afraid of change or they focus too much on their inabilities. I

believe many times when people fall into this they position themselves that people cannot even speak into their lives. It is important at this point that I mention that we value those that the Lord has put into our lives to challenge and encourage us.

I want to share a testimony of my own with you and it relates to fear almost holding me back from blossoming in something I did not know existed in me. When we added our high school on to our Christian School my husband Bill had approached me about teaching typing to the high school students. When I attended senior high school the two subjects that I really excelled in were typing and art. Even though I was good at typing I was very fearful about the thought of stepping out and teaching this subject. I also was concerned that I would not be able to relate to the high school students and it would hinder my teaching. I feared I could not do it and I just could not fathom even the possibility of trying. Fear, fear, fear...oh my what fear can do and how it can cripple one from their potential. I can remember crying as I continued to think upon all the reasons I could not do it. I was just a mess. I am so thankful that my husband continued to encourage me and slowly but surely the Lord showed me that it was indeed His will for me to step out in this new "season" of my life. Even though I still had my apprehensions I prepared myself for the school year.

Even after knowing that I was to step out in this new venture of teaching I would still have times where I would get "butterflies" just thinking about it and the closer the opening of school came I was feeling very nervous. One day one of our missionary friends, Brother Emma Okorie from Nigeria stopped by the school to visit. Brother Emma is a powerful man of God and he speaks with great authority. He greeted me and asked me how I was doing and I began to share with him the new venture that I was about to step into. I shared how I was nervous about it and I spoke my apprehensions yet I shared that I knew it was the will of God. He looked me square in the eye and said, "Sister, God wants to unlock surprises within you that you do not even know exist." For me just the thought that there were unopened gifts within me just thrilled my soul. Those words shook my world in a very good way and I will always be thankful for his obedience. I will say this, that from that day on I had a courage and peace and I absolutely loved teaching typing. I was so blessed over the years with some of the greatest students and I praise Him that I was given that opportunity to teach them.

The lesson to be learned here is that your fears can keep you from doing God's will. If you heed to your fears and cling to a comfort zone you are the only one holding yourself back from releasing the "surprises" that may be lying deep

within you. I saw that day that there are many surprises that God desires to help me open up that have been planted in me since birth. I encourage you today to seek Him and know that you are allowing Him to do the same with you as well. Blessings to you and I hope your day is prosperous!

**May 22nd**

### **"To Everything There Is A Season"**

by Dona Hake At the leading of the Lord I have stepped away from Psalm 23 and I plan to pick back up with Psalm 23:4 at a later time. I am trying to be very sensitive to His leading with this devotional. It is important to me to bring you the fresh inspiration that He is putting on my heart for you.

At this point in time I have several inspired thoughts that seem to be around seasons and times in our lives. Today I want to look at how each of us as individuals have different times that consist of planting, learning, growing, blooming and then the Lord may move you on to a whole different type of giving in your life. As the saying goes "Bloom where you are planted." I think that it is so important to recognize that each of us are gifted and called differently and we need to respect that in one another. Never should we try to be what others say they think we should be. We need to follow the leading of the Lord for us as He has created us uniquely for such a time as this.

Each of our lives will consist of different stages. There may be times of stepping out into something new, learning, accomplishments, giving, mentoring, receiving mentoring, etc. There are so many aspects to the development of what God has put in us. Know this...God will give you what you need but it is vitally important to flow with Him and whoever He appoints to help you. The thing I want to touch on today is that many times you may be doing a certain thing and God sees that it is time for you to move on in His plan. You have not failed. You have blossomed in that particular thing and He is just ready to use you in another



area.

Last week my four year old granddaughter and I were in my flower garden together. Her excitement about all my pretty red and yellow flowers was so dear. It seemed like those were the only ones that she wanted to water. I tried to get her to water the ones that were budding and somewhat boring looking but I kept hearing, "No Grandma, I want to water the pretty yellow and red flowers." I let her go because I knew she did not understand. I proceeded with weeding and some of my Dahlia were needing deadheaded so I cut off one of the "pretty red ones" and threw it in my weed pile. Deadheading refers to the removal of dead or spent flowers either to encourage more flowering or to improve the general appearance of the plant. Most annuals and many perennials will continue to bloom throughout the growing season if deadheaded. It is just a needful thing if you want the beauty and benefits in your garden.

Little Marissa glanced over and noticed that pretty red flower in the weed pile and ran to it and was so upset that I cut it and threw it away. She ran over and picked it up and held it carefully in her little hand and glanced at my garden deciding she had her own plans for the bloom. She said, "Here Grandma, I lay it here." She gently laid it on the ground face up with some marigolds that were blooming. Again, I left it there because I knew she would not understand but yet the Lord began to speak to me how we too can be guilty of trying to hold onto certain things that have been fruitful in the past but He desires that we bud and bloom in another area of our life. He is desiring that we move on to new seasons and that may consist of walking away from one thing and facing new challenges. Yet we too will try to hold on to "the pretty flowers" that once were blooming in our lives not willing to let them go and move on.

I think that this is an appropriate scripture to share along with everything else..."There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven"—Ecclesiastes 3: NASB

You know that since that I popped that red Dahlia off that plant looks so boring and blah because it has not bloomed one more flower but yet there are many

buds all over it just waiting for it's appointed time to open up. So it is in our lives. Many times there may be time and distance between us moving out of one area into another before we see what God is working in us. We will all face times of waiting and seeking Him before we may see fruit and blossoming but we need to just believe that He knows exactly what He is trying to accomplish in our lives. Tomorrow I plan to share a personal testimony of my own that pertains to God moving me in different directions in my life. I pray your day will be blessed as you look to Him.

**Tuesday, May 21st**

### **"Seeing Things From A Godly Perspective"**

by Dona Hake

My heart is touched as I have been following the news regarding the devastation caused by the tornadoes in Oklahoma. I have been thinking how one's world can be turned upside down with very little notice. Before I sat down to dinner they said there was a school in Moore, OK full of small children trapped inside and buried under the rubble. My heart was so touched just thinking about how terrified those little children must be and the fear their parents must be going through. I was so blessed when they finally reported that every child was safely pulled from the rubble. I felt so much joy for these children and parents as they were sharing amazing images of parents carrying their children in their arms after they were pulled out from the rubble. Their expressions were priceless. It was an incredible feeling to see their faces full of joy as they were safe in their mommy or daddy's arms. Unfortunately, there will be those that will not be sharing a happy ending to this day. As they were interviewing one woman that lost her home they had asked her, "What do you need and how can people help you in this time?" With tears running down her face and her voice shaky she exclaimed that the only thing that was left standing was the bathroom in her home but everything else was gone. "All my animals are gone. My car is gone. I cannot reach my parents because the cell phones in this area are congested. Please, if you know me and you know my parents, tell them I am okay" She further exclaimed, "I don't even know where I'll sleep tonight." My heart was so sad to hear her in such helplessness and also because there are probably so many in this same predicament.

Many times as I see and hear things like this I question my own heart and I ask

how I would handle such a thing. You know we can say what we would do but until we walk in those shoes you just do not know. You never know what is in you until the pressure is put on. One thing I do know is that any individual that goes through a devastating tragedy is never the same again. They are either stronger than before or they become bitter. It is all how they walk through it.

I recently spoke with an individual that walked through a life threatening disease and they are free from it now. As this individual shared with me the one thing that stood out the most was when he exclaimed , "Now I see everything in a different perspective." This individual implied that the things that seemed important before just did not hold the same value. This person was experiencing a new appreciation for what was really important in his life. His perspective was changed because he walked a path he never traveled before.

In the midst of your day I would encourage you to stop and do a checkup on your perspective. Are you seeing things from the eyes of faith? Are you seeing things from a heart of thankfulness? Are you giving thanks for those little things that can be taken for granted. Be thankful that you have a roof over your head, clean water to drink, a warm bed to sleep in, food to eat, and you feel safe. Think about those that are not as fortunate as you and I would ask that you ask God to remind you to pray for these people that have been affected by this tragedy. Ask the Lord to put laborers in their paths to minister to them, and that the God of all comfort would minister to their hearts and heal them of physical injuries as well as the emotional trauma and that they would experience His restoration in the midst of losing so much.

God bless you and remember to ask Him to help you see as He sees!

**Monday, May 20th**

**"The Ultimate Light"**

by Dona Hake

Oh how blessed it is to know that He is with us in the "night seasons" of our lives. Even in our times when it seems dark He knows exactly what is going on.

Allow Him to lead the way, allow Him to speak to you along the way.

So let me ask you this...Are there times you get into your own ability when you are feeling a bit anxious? Do you start to depend on your own smarts to get you through? Let us remember that God's way will sometimes be very different than our way. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and we need to set aside all of our knowledge and any of our opinions that you can really see clearly what is going on in the spirit.

I would like to share this story that I shared many years ago with my Ladies Fellowship. It is called "Collision Course." This is a great analogy to ponder in light of staying in tune with God when your vision may be hindered because your path is dark and foggy.

### **"COLLISION COURSE"**

This was a conversation between a US naval ship and Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in late 1995.

CANADIANS: "Please divert your course 15 degrees to the south to avoid a collision."

Americans: "Recommend YOU divert YOUR course 15 degrees to the north to avoid a collision."

CANADIANS: "Negative. YOU will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the south to avoid a collision."

Americans: "This is the captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course."

CANADIANS: "No, I say again, YOU divert YOUR course.

Americans: "This is the Aircraft Carrier US LINCOLN, the second largest ship in the United States Atlantic Fleet. We are accompanied with three Destroyers, three Cruisers and numerous support vessels. I DEMAND that YOU change your course 15 degrees north. I say again, that's one-five degrees north, or counter measures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship.

CANADIANS: "This is a lighthouse. Your call !!!"

I do not know who wrote the above transcript and whether it is true or a joke. Nevertheless, it is a lesson in truth and life.

There are times that we need to change our course in accordance to the Word of the Lord. His Word is the highest authority yet many times we challenge it with our opinions or how we are feeling about things. It is those times that we do not heed to His instruction that we can end up with disastrous results. All because we did not pay attention and heed to God. No matter how smart and strong you are you can get hurt and you can make terrible mistakes all because you wanted to do it your own way.

Sometimes in the night seasons, things can appear to be in our way but they they really are not. The fact is that you are on the wrong path. I see God's Word as that "lighthouse" being the light we need when we face stormy seas and we need to know that we are heading toward the shores of certainty and that knowing that we will arrive safely.

I encourage you to listen to His voice and heed it as the highest authority as you purpose in your heart to serve Him. God bless you and have a wonderful day in Him!

**Sunday, May 19, 2013**

## **GOD'S WORD-A LIGHT TO US IN THE NIGHT**

by Dona Hake

I would like to share a little bit more about "He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake." What blessed assurance we have in knowing that God NEVER leaves us, He NEVER forsakes us and He promises to give us direction every day that we wake up to a new day! God is so good and so faithful.

Have you had those times though that even when you know He is close by your side you question yourself..."Am I doing all that God wants me to do?...Am I in His perfect will? There may have been times where things seem a bit unclear about a step you are to make or possibly a major change is coming and you really need to know in your heart that you are making the right decision.

I want to share two different scriptures with you for you to meditate on relative to this. His Word says in Psalm 119:105 "Your word is like a lamp that guides my steps, a light that shows the path I should take." (Easy to Read Version) There are two different ways we can view this scripture and that is we live in a world of darkness and uncertainty and praise God that we serve Him and His Word is the that Light that we need everyday to walk in His will. Another aspect of this scripture is I believe that there are times in our life that the answers we need may seem afar off. Many times when we are experiencing changes or unforeseen things that take us off guard we can have a hard time focusing.

In light of what I just said, let us look at another scripture from the Word of God. It is Psalm 16:7 (Amplified) " I will bless the Lord, Who has given me counsel; yes, my heart instructs me in the night seasons."

I see a "night season" being a time that things may seem unclear and you cannot see what is up ahead. Just as winter, spring, summer and fall come and go where I live, so do the "night seasons" of our life. They come and they go and as the old saying goes, "this too shall pass." Jesus said that we will have trials and tribulations and we are not supposed to allow ourselves to be troubled. Let us remind ourselves that just because it seems as if you cannot see ahead does not mean there is not an answer for your situation. Please allow me to speak bluntly...please, please, please...when you are in the midst of a situation that may seem dark and uncertain, NEVER say, "where is God in all of this?" My heart cringes when I hear a believer say such a thing because the very thought implies that your God is not faithful. We know He is faithful and that's that!!

I encourage you today that as you are faithful to feed on God's Word and stay rooted deep in Him that when "night seasons" come the Word of God that you have planted will begin to rise up within you and your steps will be illuminated as you take one step at a time upon His command. Stay in faith, stay in His presence, stay in the moment with Him. One step at a time He promises to hold your hand tightly and walk through those "night seasons" with you. God is good and He is faithful. Praise His Holy Name!

**Saturday, May 18th**

**'HE GUIDES ME IN RIGHT PATHS'**

by Dona Hake

He leadeth me in paths of righteousness sake. The word \*leadeth\* is more implying a driving forth according to the Hebrew translation of this word. Sometimes we all need to be driven by someone in order that we reach our goals. We as people can be like sheep for they can be stubborn and go their own way. Sometimes we can all be like the child that just goes from one thing to the next and we fail in maintaining our goals and focus. Children need to be driven and constantly reminded to do the right thing and even though we are all grown up we too need to be reminded to stay focused in doing the right thing in our walk with the Lord...we need to stay close to Him that we will walk in the paths of uprightness for His Name's sake.

As I was thinking about the scripture "He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His Names sake" I began to ask myself these questions and I encourage you to also think about these questions: \*Do I walk beside Him or do I run ahead of Him? \*Are there times I just stand still and refuse to walk in the way that He has set before me? \*When He speaks to me to change up my plans for the day, do I resist or obey?

God well knows each of us. He knows our stubborn side, He understands our weaknesses and He understands our fears. He knows all too well that this plays a major part in us staying on His path and walking closely beside Him. I will mention that He understands and He has provided a means for us to rise above anything that would hinder us from doing the right thing. It is important that we keep our minds renewed to why we are here on this earth. We are called to be a light in a world of darkness, and only God knows how to make you shine for Him and the sake of His Name. Each of us are all fearfully and wonderfully made and we have a unique path to walk, it is called His perfect will.

We have seen from the past devotional that our God is faithful to bring us the strength that we need. He restores us as He stands us back up on our feet when our souls are cast down. Now we see that He will drive us forth in the right direction for His Name sake. I leave you with the scripture below from the New Living Translation. Psalm 23:3 "He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name."

Today I encourage you to keep your feet on the right path. Ask yourself often if your words and deeds are bringing honor to His Name. God is good and He is faithful to continue to walk along side of us on this wonderful path called His perfect will! Be blessed this day as you serve Him.



**Friday, May 17th**

### **"My God Is the Lifter of My Soul"**

by Dona Hake Yesterday I shared a Psalm where David was speaking to his own soul. Today I want to review that and also go back to looking at how David was using a term that shepherds use about their sheep. The term is "cast down" and the scripture is Psalm 43:5 King James Version. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." A "cast" sheep is such a sad and pathetic sight to see. When the shepherd finds it this way it is lying on its back with its feet in the air. The poor thing lays there and frantically struggles to stand up but without success. Sometimes it will bleat for help but usually will just lay there trying its best to get back up and is frightened and frustrated. If the shepherd does not get there on time the sheep will die.

This is how a sheep ends up in a "cast" position. The sheep is either fat or her fleece is very heavy. A sheep with long fleece will lie down comfortably in some depression in the ground and may roll over to relax. The center of gravity in the body shifts so that it rolls on its back far enough that the feet cannot touch the ground. As the sheep lies there struggling, gases begin to build up in its rumen, and this in turn cuts off blood circulation to extremities of the body especially the legs.

Phillip Keller shared in his book "A Shepherd's Look at Psalm 23" that there would be times that he would spend hours searching for a single sheep that was missing. More often than not he would see at a distance one lying helpless on its back in a "cast" position. He said he would run as fast as he could toward it for every minute was critical. There would be two feelings he experienced and they were a sense of fear and joy: fear it might be too late; joy that it was found at all. When he reached the sheep he would tenderly roll it on its side and lift it back up to its feet. He would rub the sheep's limbs to restore the circulation and that often took awhile. When the sheep would go to walk she would often stumble, stagger and collapse. Little by little the sheep would regain its equilibrium and start to walk steadily and surely.

What a beautiful analogy of times in our life when our Great Shepherd finds us flat on our backs because our soul is cast down. We all have faced those times of discouragement and the effects it has brought to our soul. It is only Jesus that is able to gently lift us up and hold us with His strong and loving arms until we can stand spiritually strong again. He totally understands because He identifies with us in every thing that pertains to this life and it is as we seek Him for wisdom that we learn from the experience. We need to be a living testimony to the world that God is the only hope over discouragement in ones heart. Our God IS the lifter of our soul and the health of our countenance. Tomorrow we will look at the second part of Psalm 23:3..."He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake." I cannot help to connect that after He stands us back on our feet that we will be more eager than ever to stay close by Him in order that we can stay on the right path. I hope this blessed your heart and I pray that your day will be blessed.

**Thursday, May 16th**

### **"Why Am I Discouraged & Why Am I Restless?"**

By Dona Hake

Today we move on to Psalm 23:3 "He restores my soul..." For the past few days I have shared about we as sheep being led by the still waters. I shared regarding what can happen when the storms of life hit and we are taken off guard. If you did not read those devotionals I strongly urge you to scroll down to the most recent few days. These devotionals will help you appreciate today's in a greater way. There are those times in the midst of the storm that discouragement will hit your soul and bring you to an all time low. Your heart absolutely needs the restoration of your Great Shepherd. Your heart feels restless because you know deep down this is not the way to be feeling as a victorious Christian. We need to remind ourselves that Jesus identifies with everything we walk through. The following is a portion of scripture from Psalm 42:11 taken from the Contemporary English Version:

"Why am I discouraged? Why am I restless? I trust you! And I will praise you again because you help me, and you are my God."

David was speaking to himself and questioning himself why was his heart so cast down. Have you ever had those times where you go round and round in your mind with questions about why you are feeling the way you are? You are experiencing discouragement and you know all too well that you need to lay aside this hindrance and move on in the race that God has set before you. It is those times that we need to release our faith in God because He has every answer that you need. He will bring you out of discouragement and He will still your soul. Let's look at a story from Mark about a time where Jesus' disciples were scared and their situation looked hopeless yet Jesus showed Himself faithful in the midst of hopelessness.

*Mark 4:36-41 (Easy to Read Version)*

*So they left the crowd behind and went with Jesus in the boat he was already in. There were also other boats that went with them. A very bad wind came up on the lake. The waves were coming over the sides and into the boat, and it was almost full of water. Jesus was inside the boat, sleeping with his head on a pillow. The followers went and woke him. They said, "Teacher, don't you care about us? We are going to drown!"*

*Jesus stood up and gave a command to the wind and the water. He said, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind stopped, and the lake became calm. He said to his followers, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were very afraid and asked each other, "What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the water obey him!"* This scripture has come to my heart and mind many times when things in my life seemed confusing or I was disturbed. I want you to think about how you carry the Lord Jesus Christ within you and you are His temple. Just as Jesus was in that boat, He lives within your heart. When the "winds" of confusion and discouragement come out of no where ask Jesus to stand up within you, speak His Name and see your stormy sea come to a calm in your spirit. Know that as you speak to the storm He will be along side of you to bring every bit of wisdom and strength you need and He will bring complete restoration to you that you can continue to walk in Him victoriously.

God bless you this day as you know that He is well able to be your Deliverer from any situation and the Restorer of your soul.

**May 15th**

**"How you see the storm is how you face it"**

by Dona Hake I shared yesterday how there will be times that you are standing by the restful waters with the Lord and then there will be those times that the "storms" of this life take us by surprise. Most people do not like the unpredictable and they fear the unknown. I think it is important to realize that as we go through storms and we choose to face them with the right attitude we will come out a stronger person when it is over. Dolly Parton put it this way: "The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain."

Thought I would share this experience of mine because it goes along with the point that I am trying to make. I can remember a particular couple that I was photographing for their engagement pictures. They were coming from quite a distance to meet with me. They were driving for a good hour and they had made hotel arrangements to stay in York. It was a beautiful day but about thirty minutes before the session there was a report that a bad storm was going to hit. I will admit it made me a bit nervous so I contacted them and sure enough they were on their way. They were wanting to still go ahead with it as long as I was willing. I took extra umbrellas for us just in case the weathermen got it right this time.

When the couple and I finally met up the skies began to get super dark within minutes. I can still remember how there was a pavilion where we were meeting so we ran under it. I want to remind you that this was this couple's engagement session so it was very special to them. Their attitude was so great because they believed I was going to get good images of them no matter what. They laughed and giggled the whole time that it was pouring down raining, hailing, thundering and lightning. We felt safe where we were but seriously I was disappointed for them because I had all of these ideas how the session was going to go.

I felt at one point to just flow with the weather and we shot up my umbrella and they cuddled together under it and I got some of the coolest romantic shots for them. I would say the images were very unique and they absolutely adored and ordered many of those shots. The storm cleared and we jumped in our cars and headed for another location and got some more beautiful shots.

I can honestly say that it was a successful session but yet another client could have gotten upset over the whole ordeal. I think what I remember most with this particular situation was between their attitude and mine we had expectancy yet we had no clue how it was going to turn out. We just had fun and made the best of it. It was all about how we viewed the circumstances that were facing us .

That was just a little story to help you connect with a truth. We must purpose in our hearts how we are going to face storms and inconveniences in this life. No matter how mild or severe, remember Jesus knows the end and He knows you well. He will walk with you through the storm and hold you close in those times that fear tries to grip your heart but know this...He will never leave you!

I want to leave you with this scripture today: Romans 8:28 (NASB) "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." Know that as you keep your eyes on Jesus at all times He is well able to take your situations and turn them around to work for His glory.

**May 14th**

**"In the Calm and In the Storm, He Is With You"**

by Dona Hake

I feel to spend more time on Psalm 23:2 "He leads me beside the still waters"...this is the one verse that I can always just visualize in my mind. A beautiful sunny day, with sheep standing at the water that their good shepherd has led them to. The water is so still that as they go to drink they can see their own reflection and beside their reflection they see the reflection of their loving and caring shepherd. They drink in peace and they lay down to rest. I just think it is a very awesome scripture to meditate upon.

It is wonderful to drink from the still waters beside our Great Shepherd yet we all well know that some days we face restless waters. Today I want to talk to you about when we as sheep face the storms of this life. There are those days that you wake up to a beautiful sun shiny day and out of the literal blue the clouds roll in and the weathermen once again missed some details in the forecast. The clouds roll in with darkness and all of the sudden it just starts to pour down raining. Sometimes there is just no warning.

We used to have a little dog named Beau and he was more predictable in his forecasts of bad weather rolling in than the meteorologists on local news! We usually knew hours before a storm would hit that one was on its way. He would grow tense and restless and unable to just be his usual self. Beau's anxiety would cause him to pace about the house and we just knew something was on it's way. When the storm hit especially if there was thunder and lightning he would pant, tremble and there was absolutely no way to comfort him.

Many times we too can just feel like something is wrong but we cannot put our finger on it. You just feel like something is wrong or something has happened. Instead of reacting in a fearful way we need to turn to Him and find out what may be in the "brew" of something in your life or one of your loved ones or friends. It is in those times that we really try to stay keen to the Holy Spirit because He is trying to warn us that something is up ahead. His Word tells us that He will show us things to come and we can expect that. Jesus said that in this world YOU WILL have tribulations. Many times I feel in my heart that something is wrong and I just pray. Sometimes I may never know what it was and then there are times someone will say that they were dealing with something at that very time and they just felt the power of prayer over them.

Today I want you to be encouraged by the fact that the Lord is with you whether all is going well or not going well. He walks beside you and He desires to speak to you about everything in your life. He is with you as you drink by the restful waters and He is there when the storms of this life hit, and believe me they do hit. The King James version of the verse I am about to share says that He gives us ALL that pertains to life and godliness. The Easy to Read Translation says it this way: 2 Peter 1:3 "Jesus has the power of God. And his power has given us everything we need to live a life devoted to God. We have these things because we know him. Jesus chose us by his glory and

goodness," I am very excited about what I shared with you today because I feel like today's and tomorrow's devotional just dropped right from heaven into my heart and to be given to you. Last evening when I came home I was exhausted and just wanted to go to bed and the Spirit of God started to give me inspiration totally different from what I originally planned so I just began writing as fast as it was coming. I pray that this will go into your heart and bless you this day!

**May 13th**

### **He Leads Me Beside the Still Waters**

by Dona Hake

"... He leads me beside the still and restful waters. The good shepherd understands that his sheep have got to have good water as part of their intake to keep them hydrated and healthy. Because He understands their fears he knows that they will not drink from moving water because they are afraid of it. An interesting fact about sheep is for them to go anywhere, they must be led because they are followers. They will not go anywhere someone else has not gone first and shown them that it is safe. I see this as a good thing. We too should look so diligently for the leading of the Lord in all we set out to do. We should always have a knowing within our hearts He is walking before us leading us on His will. Psalm 27:11 KJV "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies." The enemy to a sheep could be predators, dangerous terrain, etc... but we are looking at their need for fresh, clean water. There is good water and there is bad water. Sheep are capable of walking up to a mud hole and drinking from it and becoming very sick. They are not very smart and it could get them into trouble if they are not following their shepherd to the fresh, safe water. If a flock of sheep drink from an unsafe source they can end up with all kinds of internal parasites and disease. This reminds me that if we do not maintain our convictions of the Word of God how we too can end up "drinking" of harmful things that can harm us spiritually. It must be so sad to God for Him to see His sheep lose their convictions and blindly follow someone that goes back to "drinking" from the ways of the world. We need to be careful that we know we are drinking from Him, the source of all our spiritual life and strength.

Our Great Shepherd desires to walk before us and lead us beside the still waters. He knows we need the waters of the Spirit that only come from Him. Phillip Keller says in his book, "All the long and complex history of earth's religions, pagan worship, and human philosophy is bound up with an insatiable thirst for God." We must be sheep that seek after the living water of Jesus Christ. I believe God wants us to constantly evaluate our lives and know that He is the only source from which we draw to satisfy our hunger and quench our thirst.

John 4:14 (Easy-to-Read Version) But anyone who drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. The water I give people will be like a spring flowing inside them. It will bring them eternal life." Let us live as believers that are full of Jesus. As we drink of His water we will be content and satisfied and that spring of living waters within us will be there to bless those around us that need that water as well. I encourage you to stop often today and drink by the "still waters" with Him. He is able to keep our hearts quieted and our souls rested and refreshed as we look to Him at all times. Be blessed as you serve Him today!

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**May 12th**

**HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!**

Today I am pausing from "Psalm 23" to reflect on Mother's Day. If you are a mother I would like to wish you a very blessed Mother's Day! I encourage you to reflect on what a blessing your mother has been to you throughout your life. If your mother was a godly influence on you, you should be so grateful. For many of you this day can be somewhat painful because your mother is no longer alive. I want to encourage you to reflect on her life and her love for you. Memories can always be kept alive in your heart and they are sweet to think upon. There may be many of you that can testify that your mother was a prayer warrior and was a great strength in your life and in your home as you grew up. I love the following quote by Abraham Lincoln: "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."



What a precious and powerful gift we can give our children as we carry them in our hearts and pray for them on a daily basis. No matter if they are young or all grown up and married, they are still your children and you need to commit yourself to pray for them often. Even though it is Mother's day I always find myself thinking about how precious my grandmothers were. I am sure there are many of you that have sweet memories of your grandmothers as well. I know both of my grandmothers prayed for me diligently at times in my life that I did not even know that I needed prayer. My life was transformed by the power of Jesus Christ when I was eighteen years old, and I am thankful that they persevered in prayer for me. The prayers of a righteous woman avail much! I love Abraham Lincoln's quote because we too have prayers that have followed us. Our life is fruitful because someone else was on their knees for us. We should never forget the prayers of those that were sown on our behalf. I pray that your day will be blessed and I look forward to sharing with you tomorrow! Tomorrow I will continue with Psalm 23:2 "He leads me beside still waters." I pray that your day will be blessed as you hear His Word today!

**May 11th**

**"He Feeds Me His Word And My Heart Is At Rest"**

by Dona Hake

Today I will share on the fourth and last hindrance that will keep a sheep from lying down and resting in a green pasture. It is the fear of hunger. In Palestine where David wrote Psalm 23 it is interesting to mention at this point that where he kept his flocks it was a dry, brown, and sun-burned wasteland. Green pastures did not just happen, it was something that was a product of tremendous labor by the caring shepherd.

The good shepherd knew that it was essential to have good green pastures because it was essential for the maturing little lambs and the ewes need lush green grass to maintain their heavy milk flow. As sheep were surrounded by lush green grass and legumes they would fill up quickly as they fed and then lie down quietly to rest and ruminate. When a sheep is ruminating he is chewing the grass over and over, and then they quietly and contently lay down and rest with the flock.

I see the analogy that we live in a world that without Jesus it is impossible to deal with life. Without Jesus one can be very restless because he has no source to satisfy the needs of his soul. This world has nothing to offer us because it is not where we are to look for our joy, strength and rest. When people look for rest and peace in this world their soul is never satisfied. There may be things that make us happy but we as believers can only thrive and grow spiritually as we look to the rich Word of God. His Word is our necessary food.

I believe we have so much available to us in this day and age. First of all we have the freedom to go and worship and hear God's Word and we are blessed. As you hear the rich Word of God in church you need to make sure you are receiving it with meekness and gladness of heart. Sit and ponder what you have heard. Ask yourself, "how can I apply this to my life?" Make a diligent effort to sit and read His Word that you will be full of truth and growing spiritually. As we meditate upon his Word it is like a sheep ruminating the fresh foliage. As we meditate upon God's Word we too are pondering over and over that which we have read or heard. The Word will cause blessings and benefits to flow from your spiritual being. Meditation upon God's Word will cause you to find rest and contentment because your spirit is being satisfied by the living Word of God.

We need to be careful at all times that we are feeding upon all of God's gracious blessings in His Word or your spiritual health will weaken. You will be a restless Christian lacking in His peace and strength. As we continue in His Word we will be a content people that are able to lie down in His green pastures. I will continue with Psalm 23 on Monday. Tomorrow I have a special word for you regarding the blessing of being a mother and recognize all the special mothers that are your friends in your life.

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**May 10**

**"The Watchful Shepherd Knows All Things About You"**

by Dona Hake

We continue to look at the hindrances which will keep a sheep from laying down in the green pastures and be at peace and rest. I will review those hindrances:

\*The sheep must be free from fear \*They must be free from any friction with others in the flock \*Parasites and flies will torment them and they cannot be still

and lay down \*They must be free from hunger Today we will look at how the torment of parasites and other insects keep sheep in a state of unrest . The good shepherd of a flock of sheep will always aim to keep his flock quiet, content and at peace. When these sheep are tormented by these pests it is literally impossible for them to lie down and rest. The sheep will just stay on their feet and stomp their legs and shake their heads. Sometimes they will even run into a bush for relief from the pests. The good shepherd inspects them daily and keeps a diligent eye over their skin and wool. He is watchful and will apply various types of insect repellents to stay on the preventive side.

Similarly in the Christian life we too are bound to get "bugged" about things. As long as we are on this earth we are going to have frustrations and upsetting circumstances. We too have a Good Shepherd that watches over us and knows us inside and out. He knows your weaknesses and He understands what frustrates and bugs us. Even though He sees and knows all about us, we must come to Him daily and speak to Him and hear His voice and hear His gentle, caring instruction. As we come before Him and lay our hearts open to Him, He can minister to us that which we need to be free from the torments of this world.

The main point I want to make in this devotional is that we need to be open and honest with ourselves when things are bothering us. When we come humbly before God we can ask Him to help us. We cannot try to hide what bothers us because He sees it even before we do. I want to share Psalm 139:23 and I wanted to share two that I really thought were good:

Easy-to-Read Version - "God, examine me and know my mind. Test me and know all my worries."

The Message - "Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about; See for yourself whether I have done anything wrong— then guide me on the road to eternal life."

The Holy Spirit is all about bringing comfort, peace and strength to us but we must acknowledge our need for help and be willing to repent if need be. I believe that when we expose ourselves open and honestly that God will be faithful to

bring us healing and He will help us deal with anything that is keeping us from total rest in our hearts. I encourage you today to lay your heart open to Him and allow Him to inspect your heart and mind. Let Him reveal to you that which you need and expect the rest and comfort of the Holy Spirit to make you to lie down in His green pastures.

Devotionals below are all archived and listed by most recent date.

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May 9th

**"His Presence Causes Me To Lie Down and Rest"**

by Dona Hake

Yesterday I stated the four things that sheep deal with that would keep from lying down in his pastures. The first hindrance was that a sheep must be free from fear. I encourage you that if your missed that devotional to scroll down and read it. It is right below this devotional. We will look at the second one today which is the sheep in the flock. The author of "A Shepherd's Look at Psalm 23" noted that among sheep there is a "butting order" and this can cause a restlessness hindering them from lying down in the pasture. One female will fight for the best grazing spot and this causes the rest of the flock to be very tense. edgy, discontent and restless. I see an analogy to this and that is as we are obedient to flow with whatever God has called us to do we WILL be content. We never have to "butt" in line for the good things that God has for us or for position within His Kingdom. I personally feel very uneasy when I am discerning that someone's motives are wrong t and they are pushing for a position or recognition in the Kingdom of God. Believe me, there is enough out there for all of us to do. When your heart is humble before God you will be content and relaxed with the tasks He sets before You. He has a very special task for each of us!

I would like to mention at this point that when there is contention and lack of agreement in your midst you will always find an uneasiness in your heart. Any

time there is unrest, strife or confusion in the midst of a church, God's people will be hindered. In the book of James he says that where there is envy and strife there is confusion and every evil work. It is a very sad thing to me to see conflicts or divisions among God's people. I think of how sad God's heart must be when He sees this. God greatly desires that His people live and flow together in peace and unity.

The analogy of friction among the sheep can help us see that when there is disagreement between you and a brother or sister in Christ or things are not right in your home that it really affects your heart and mind. It will affect how you hear the voice of the Lord. The lack of peace in your heart and mind will make you a very restless person therefore your joy will not be there, and your discernment will be dull. This type of hindrance will keep you from receiving the daily wisdom and direction you need to walk through a day in this life, and you will turn to your own ability to do it.

Now I will go back to sharing about the sheep and the issue of "butting order" in a sheepfold. The author stated in his book that when the shepherd would show up while any sheep were showing dominance that all competition was put to a stop. As I reflect on this I see that as we make a conscious effort to be aware of the presence of Jesus in our midst we will be constantly aware of His loving voice and direction in our lives. When we look to Him and keep our hearts open to Him, we will stay in a place of humility. When we are in a place of humility, we WILL have rest and contentment in our soul therefore we can lie down in His pasture in our time of need.

Today I encourage you to declare in your heart "Lord you make me to lie down in Your green pastures! I love your presence Lord and I want to walk closely to You. As I walk hand in hand with you, my heart will be rested and refreshed." Hope your day is restful, refreshing and blessed as you walk with Him!

**NOTE:**

**(ARCHIVED DEVOTIONALS ARE BELOW THIS DEVOTIONAL BY MOST RECENT DATE)**

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Wednesday, May 8, 2013

## **"He Makes Me To Lie Down In Green Pastures"**

by Dona Hake

Today we will look at Psalm 23:2 and I would like to share some natural facts about sheep that will help you appreciate this scripture and gain deeper understanding as well. Many years ago I studied a book entitled "A Shepherds Look At Psalm 23" by Phillip Keller. He expounded about so many natural facts about sheep and the shepherd and this gave me a deeper revelation of Psalm 23. As I share I will be referring to my notes from his book that I kept from when I taught this Psalm in our Ladies Fellowship. It has been over thirty years ago and it has been interesting reviewing all the notes that I took.

Let us begin this devotion recognizing the four requirements that must be met for a sheep to lie down in green pastures. They are the following:

\* they must be free from fear \* they must be free from friction with others of their own kind \* they cannot be tormented by flies or parasites or they cannot relax \* they must be free from hunger

The wonderful thing to be noted about these four things is that ONLY the shepherd can meet these needs for his sheep. In today's devotion I will cover the first of the four requirements The good and watchful shepherd of any flock is watchful and committed to care for his sheep 24/7. The shepherd's love and care is vitally important for a thriving flock of sheep. It is as the sheep learn to behave and listen to the shepherd's voice that all goes well for them.

The first requirement is being free from fear. I think about how we as the sheep of His pasture are to live free from all fear. Oh praise God, that His Word tells us that He has not given us the spirit of fear but of power and love and a sound mind!!!! I love how the Easy to Read version has translated it: 2 Timothy 1:7 The

Spirit that God gave us does not make us afraid. His Spirit is a source of power and love and self-control.

The loving, good and kind shepherd of a flock of sheep understands how to bring peace and calm to his flock whenever needed. That shepherd understands the sheep of his fold, he quiets their fears in order that they may lie down and eat from lush green pastures. Today I encourage you to set your sights on your loving Shepherd and in the midst of the busy day with all its pressures to stop and "lie down" and enjoy all that He has provided for you. Remind yourself that you have not been given a spirit of fear. In those times when fear tries to attach itself to your heart and mind look to Him and allow Him to calm your fears.

We are blessed as His people that we have that place in spirit to rest our souls and weary minds. We all know that there are days where our physical bodies grow tired and our minds can become weary but God has provided us a place to lie down and receive His rest. Rejoice in the wonderful, loving Shepherd that you serve!

**NOTE:**

**(archived devotionals are below this devotional by MOST RECENT date)**

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**Devotional for Monday, May 7, 2013**

**"Your Shepherd Diligently Watches Over You"**

(archived devotionals are below this devotional by MOST RECENT date)

**by Dona Hake**

I left you yesterday sharing that our Good Shepherd is watching you diligently. He knows your every move. He knows what you are thinking before you do, He knows your life from beginning to the end. I shared that I will be using

illustrations of a shepherd watching the flock that belong to him to help you grasp spiritual truths from Psalm 23. I will also be sharing some fun and interesting stories about our German Shepherd dog, Aasha. I can use no better illustration of a watchful animal than our dog. Our Aasha comes from an bloodline with an awesome history. The grandfather of Aasha's breeder began breeding German Shepherds back in World War II. He donated over 1,000 of his dogs to be used in the military. Her bloodline is bred to work as a seeing eye dog, seizure alert, search and rescue, and other police work. My husband and I love this breed so much and adore their loyalty, protectiveness, and their keenness to their surroundings. There have been so many times that we have been reminded of the nature of our Father God as we have seen her love and protectiveness in action.

I have watched Aasha sit in our front window, positioned, waiting, watching....eyes shift the left, then to the right...she studies everything around our property inside and out. She knows every child on the block and she permits no other dog to set foot on her property without having a fit. If there is anything different, her suspicion level goes over the top and the "sirens" in her brain go wild. These dogs are just simply amazing. I will be shifting back and forth during the devotional using Aasha as an example and how the attributes of her nature will help you understand Psalm 23.

I believe it would be good for us to remind ourselves how the Lord watches us. His eyes are fixed on us and He watches us diligently. He does not take His eyes off of us EVER!! He knows when you are in danger and will go to any length to speak to you and alert you of problems ahead. He sees deep into the depths of your soul and is aware of all that is going on within you.

I have a friend that also loves to share her German Shepherd stories with me. She said when she was a young mother of a toddler how her dog watched her child like a hawk. One day that child started to wander off in their backyard and the dog abruptly but gently grabbed the back of his diaper and drug him back to where he perceived to be the "safe place" of their yard. It was so comical hearing her share this little story yet once again I am amazed at how these dogs are so keen to study and perceive when those they love are being threatened.



As I am sharing this I am thinking of many ways to go with this. I think we can be the same as a little toddler. There will be those times in life that we make wrong choices, disobey and we move to the wrong path. The loving Shepherd will go to great lengths to warn you and bring you back to the right place. Many times in this life we all can get off track and the consequences of this can vary accordingly. I encourage you to meditate on how the Lord is watching over you and how you must purpose to keep your eyes on Him no matter what. We serve a watchful and loving Shepherd. Have a blessed and wonderful day!

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Devotional for Monday, May 6, 2013 (archived devotionals are below by MOST RECENT date)

### **"THE LORD MY SHEPHERD"**

I will now begin sharing from Psalm 23 for our devotionals. I do not think I am wrong in saying that this is probably one of the most popular chapters in the whole Bible. This chapter is sought after for comfort and strength and it speaks volumes of our loving Shepherd. Today we will begin with Psalm 23:1 (Amplified Version) "The Lord is my Shepherd (to feed, guide, and shield me) I shall not lack." As Christians we can experience "no want" in our lives as we totally rely on Him for our every need. Throughout these devotionals I will be referring to what sheep are like in the natural and how we are so much like them. Sheep are fearful, timid, restless, and some can be destructive. I will add that sheep are not always the smartest and that can get them in trouble.

A good shepherd will go to any extreme to meet the needs of his sheep. He lovingly watches over them and tends to them diligently. We too have a Great Shepherd that truly understands all of our needs. He understands all of your needs and He knows every uniqueness about you. We can hide nothing from our good Shepherd. Many times we may think we are covering up our weaknesses and inabilities before each other, but know this, Jesus our Great Shepherd knows and understands it all. As you submit yourself to Him everyday and admit your needs before Him, He will begin to strengthen you and cause you to grow in all areas of your life.

I really love how the Amplified version of this verse has simply broken down

what our Shepherd is all about. **He feeds us, He guides us and He shields us.** In other words as we seek His Word it is our daily bread to live by. The Word is our source of all power and it is the strength that we will ever need for any situation we face. It is wonderful to know that He is always with us to guide us at all times. He sees the path you are on and He is quite aware if you are in trouble. Keep your ear tuned to Him because He will tell you when to turn right and when to turn to the left. As He shields you He is the ultimate protection that you need. He sees the circumstances in our life and He will keep you as you purpose to stay in His perfect will.

I encourage you to think about Him today in light of Him being your personal Shepherd and you being His sheep. Look to follow Him where ever He leads you. Remind yourself that you cannot live this life without Him by your side. You are never out of His sight, so purpose to keep your sights on Him. The Lord IS our Shepherd and we shall always have EVERYTHING we need. God bless your day! ~~~~~  
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May 5th

**"MEETING THE CHALLENGES THIS LIFE BRINGS"**

by Dona Hake

Have you ever spoken these words to yourself at the end of a day, "I just wish this day would never ever happened" or I wish I could just do this day all over again."

Truth is we have all probably thought this and we all have had those days. But the real truth of the matter is that you cannot make a day happen all over again. When we wake in the morning we need to consciously make an effort to remind ourselves that God's mercies are new and fresh every morning! He awaits you to seek His face and bring everything to Him that concerns your heart. There is not a one of us that were created to carry the burdens this life brings to us.

Psalm 143:8 The Voice (VOICE) Make me hear of Your faithful love in the morning, for I trust in You. Teach me how I should walk, for I offer my soul up to You.

Another version says "Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning for in thee do I trust, cause me to know the way wherein I should walk for I lift my soul unto you." As we greet our day let us ask Him to cause us to hear that which He desires to speak to us. He is faithful to show us the right paths. He is faithful to make the crooked places straight. It is as we lift our souls to Him that He will begin to speak to us that which we need to hear to meet the challenges of our day.

Throughout your day you will meet challenges. This is life and Jesus said we would deal with things. I read a quote once that went like this, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." How true these few words are. We can use problems or difficulties that arise in our day as an opportunity to grow. Only God knows how to take problems and turn them into something other than a bad ending. It is good to know that when we mess up or fall that God is faithful to pick us up and restore us as we repent of our wrong doing. Ask Him to teach you about your mistakes, your fears and every question that you have. His Word says in James that if we lack wisdom that He is faithful to give it to us. Pray and expect to hear from Him this day.

I hope you have a wonderful day in the Lord today! Blessings to you!

BELOW YOU WILL FIND ARCHIVED DEVOTIONALS

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May 4th

## **"Are you available to be used by God?"**

by Dona Hake

This is a question we need to ask ourselves on a regular basis. Our lives can be so full of our own plans that we leave no room for Him. Today I am sharing an experience I had last week in which the Lord used to speak to my heart.

After church last week I was just looking forward to resting and taking a little nap in the afternoon. To be quite honest I was up early and I was very tired and the nap was really looking good. As I was ready to lay down on my bed I glanced out the window and saw a little dog running with her lease trailing behind her. I immediately thought how I was just too tired to go out and catch this little dog but my love for animals quickly talked me out of that. As I approached this little dog she looked at me but she was very fearful and she ran as fast as her little legs would take her. I ran in the house to grab my cell phone to get a quick picture of her so I could help the owner identify her. I was sure that it belonged to someone down the hill from us.

When I came back out she was gone! As I walked past my husband's truck I found that her leash had wrapped around the truck tire, it was wedged under the tire and she was unable to move. She was really scared now. I sat quietly beside her and spoke to her peacefully. The leash was so wedged under the tire that I ended up cutting my hand trying to release it. I brought her to the front of the house and tied her and brought her a fresh bowl of cool water. Oh my...she looked so thankful and she rested and drank the water.

I got in my car to drive to this individual's home with the picture of her. I wanted them to be able to identify her before they came to pick her up. I knew as frightened as she was that there was no way she was going to get in the car with me! As I drove away I glanced at where I had tied her and she actually looked more at peace even though she was at a strange home. When I arrived at the home that I thought was hers they indeed identified it to be her. The young man ran up the hill within minutes after they realized it was his puppy and it was the sweetest thing to see those two reunited. The young man looked so grateful and he thanked me and needless to say the little puppy looked extremely happy to be back in his owner's arms.

I can remember the fear in this little dog's eyes when I approached her. She was totally clueless that I loved animals, I wanted to keep her protected and get her

back where she belonged. I knew I had to assure her that I wasn't going to hurt her so she would trust me to even get her free from being stuck under my husband's truck. Isn't it the same as when you remember being lost in the world and you came to that point of knowing you were bound by your own sin and you needed set free? I can remember wondering if God really loved me and if I could trust Him. I can remember the fears of not knowing where or who to turn to. I know I can relate to being bound and it was only God that could loose me and set me free. To this day I will never forget those friends that relentlessly exhibited God's love to me when I wanted nothing to do with Him.

I thought back at the moment when I was able to release the puppy's leash from under the truck tire she willingly walked beside me, but I was gently leading her and I then brought her the water. I thought of how the Lord gently leads us beside the still and restful waters when we are tired and weary. Then there are those times in our lives that we need to stop and drink but we are clueless how much we need that refreshment to our souls. The Master gently leads us and makes us to lie down and drink. I must tell you that little puppy drank a whole bowl of water when I put it in front of her. She was refreshed and she needed it since she was weary and thirsty from all her silly frolicking that could have gotten her killed. Do you think she realized she could have been killed? Absolutely not, and so it is with people that do not know Him. I can remember thinking Christianity was a joke and there was no way that I needed God. I had no idea that I was living a heartbeat away from hell without Him in my life.

The exhortation with this is be ready to be used by God to reach those that are lost because they do not know Him. Can God pull you away from the plans and preparations of your busy day and use you to be instrumental in seeing someone set free? He may have you "chase" them and you may be the one to calm their fears as you look into their eyes with God's love in your heart. I pray you allow Him to interfere with your day so that He can get into someone's heart and life. Stay available for Him because you just never know what He may have in mind for your day. Have a wonderful day and live in expectancy as you serve Him as a willing vessel.

**SCROLL DOWN TO READ ARCHIVED DEVOTIONALS...**

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May 3rd

**Take Back Courage!**

by Dona Hake

Discouragement is something all of us have dealt with at one time or another in

our lives. To be discouraged is to be drained of your courage. It is when we lose sight of our hope that discouragement can sneak in and pull us down. The enemy will use discouragement to keep us from seeing a desired thing that we are hoping and believing for. It is important to see that to overcome discouragement there is a process of taking back your courage.

To have courage is to withstand fear, to have firmness of mind and determination...it is when you feel equipped to face anything. We need to remember that when we are facing anything that threatens our courage and our faith that MUST keep our eyes on Him. I often think of when Peter got out of the boat and began walking on the water upon Jesus telling him to do so.

Matthew 14:29-33 The Message (MSG)

Jesus said to Peter, "Come ahead." Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, "Master, save me!"

Jesus didn't hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, "Faint-heart, what got into you?" The two of them climbed into the boat, and the wind died down. The disciples in the boat, having watched the whole thing, worshiped Jesus, saying, "This is it! You are God's Son for sure!"

Peter went from \*jumping out of the boat\* to \*he lost his nerve\*...I think we can all relate to this one. The Lord tells you to do something and you obey Him and do His Word but after you have taken the leap of faith you meet circumstances that are flat out scary and you lose courage. I think it is important to mention again about focus. Peter's eyes were on Jesus while he was walking. It was as he looked around and SAW the waves and HEARD the wind that he began to lose courage and doubt. You know what though????....I always have always thought about how Peter was only an arm's length away from Jesus because the Word says that Jesus reached down and grabbed Peter's hand. Peter was an arm's length away from victory. So many times we are an arm's length away from victory and yet this is when the circumstances can be the worse around us. Next time you feel like giving up remember Peter...just maybe you are only an arm's length away from your victory or answer to the prayer that you have been praying.

I encourage you that as you step out of the "boat" to keep your eyes on Him and you hand reached toward Him. He will hold you up and see you to the finish line. I think this portion of scripture also reminds us that in the event we fall that the

Lord is there to pick us up and restore us. Praying all you that have read this will stay encouraged in your heart and meet your day with strong faith in Him. Having a wonderful day!

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May 2nd

## **LOVE NEVER FAILS**

by Dona Hake

Today will be the last devotional on the Love chapter. The last of the attributes of love in I Corinthians 13 it is written that love NEVER fails. The longer you are alive the more you realize that there are things that you thought were guaranteed to last a long time and they simply do not, but His love is eternal. There are things that just cease to happen, but love never ceases.

As we rejoice in knowing that love never fails, we can rejoice greatly in the fact that we will never be separated from it. Romans 8:39 it says, "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." As we stay in fellowship with the God of love, light and life we will continue to go forward. Know that there will be times in this life that you may fail, but God and His love NEVER fail. He is always there for us and He promises to continue to be there for us.

Let us be reminded of His faithfulness as we meditate on the fact that love never fails. We serve a wonderful God and as I had said a few days ago, He understands our frame and He knows us very well. I love knowing that I serve a God that never ever changes no matter how high the "heat" of our trials ever get. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego understood that they served a faithful God and their deliverance exhibited God's love for them. Daniel 3:17 "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. "

Every day there will be new challenges that can bring potential frustrations that can tempt you to be weary and cause your heart to fear failing. Be encouraged, we serve a God of love that never fails. Our loving Heavenly Father is there to deliver us and bring us out of circumstances and we will be stronger than before!

I am looking forward to sharing in the next few days about keeping your heart

encouraged and not allowing discouragement to hold you back or keep you from going forward in His will. Be blessed this day!

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May 1st

## **LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS**

by Dona Hake

1 Corinthians 13:7b The love of God just simply does not give up, it does not weaken, it never stops trusting, never loses hope and it never quits. Another great scripture that I love that reminds me of what the love chapter is saying: Isaiah 40:28-31 (The Voice) Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Eternal, the Everlasting God, The Creator of the whole world, never gets tired or weary. His wisdom is beyond understanding. God strengthens the weary and gives vitality to those worn down by age and care. Young people will get tired; strapping young men will stumble and fall. But those who trust in the Eternal One will regain their strength. They will soar on wings as eagles. They will run—never winded, never weary. They will walk—never tired, never faint.

Isn't it good to know that even in times of weariness that as we look to Him He will enable us to regain the strength that we need to go on because God never tires in any situation. Paul said, "When I am weak, then I am strong." We serve a God that will help us to bear down and dig in when we just feel like giving up. In those times that we are losing hope He grants us fresh hope and strength.

I would like to share a personal testimony of mine in which God showed me His hope when there was none left in the natural. I remember the last week that my father was alive I was so physically drained from running back and forth to the nursing home and teaching at school. I can remember how the Lord had spoke over and over to me throughout the years that my father would have a "death bed" experience with Him relative to receiving Christ. The truth of the matter was I was told that my father would go into a coma at any time. I still did not feel that his heart was right with God.



I can remember laying on my living room floor one night crying and just totally exhausted as I prayed. The Lord gave me a vision of a candle that had burned so long and the melted wax was causing the flame to just burn out. I could clearly see that the flame was symbolic of how I felt. I was burning out physically and my hope was weakening. I remember asking God with every bit of faith I felt I had (remember it only takes faith the size of a mustard seed) to give me just one moment of clarity with my father. At that point he could not talk, his mental state was not good he was so weak he could barely do nothing more than stare at the ceiling. The whole situation looked incredibly hopeless.

The day before he died he laid motionless on the bed staring at the ceiling. I was holding Desiree on my lap as I spoke with him. I quietly whispered in his ear that he was dying and that I had to know that he was right with God. At that point I wasn't sure he was totally comprehending how far gone he was. I told him I was going to pray with him so I prayed over him. I asked him to give me some sign whether he was in agreement. After about fifteen minutes I saw him struggling to move his arm across the bed to grasp my hand. I knew in my heart that he was trying to communicate with me that he had made the decision. I later held a picture of Jesus in front of his eyes and I asked him if he knew him and he shook his head "yes." I must say that I am so glad that I did not give up on knowing that God was able to give me that literal one moment of clarity with him. I encourage you to not give up...no matter what you are dealing with...don't give up!

Praise God that we serve a God that never tires, never faints and He will keep us persevering while we serve Him here on this earth.

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