



LIVING OUT OUR HOPE

A Three-Day Devotion for Christian Nurses and Midwives



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Living Out Our Hope was a 3-session devotion for attendees of the CANA (Caribbean and North America) Regional Conference in Haut Limbé, Haiti 12-14, January 2019 with adaptations made for publication.

Introduction

The apostle Paul was a teacher of God's word, encourager of the faith, evangelist for the gospel, church planter, prolific writer, dedicated mentor and friend, and prayer warrior, among many other roles. If he lived today, his LinkedIn page would be filled extensively with people and contacts from various countries and backgrounds. Woven through the life of this amazing First Century Christian was his resolve to live out his faith despite his dire circumstances. We see evidence of steadfastness in his life as recorded in the book of Acts and his Epistles in the New Testament.

Paul's steadfastness was based on a sure hope, not a fleeting or wishy-washy hope. A vivid example of Paul's steadfast hope is found in Acts 27, where Paul is a shackled prisoner being transported to Rome on a ship to stand trial. The ship is in a horrific storm and everyone on board is destined to drown in the turbulent seas. Yet, Paul stayed resolute and provided us a courageous plan of hope that we can implement for ourselves and share with others. Paul said,

"Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on some island-" (Acts 27:22-26).

Facilitator/Participant's Guide

This is a 3-part devotional series centered on living out our Christian hope. Each session or step builds on the previous session, so don't skip a session. In the best circumstances, there would be time for reflection and study between each session. If the series will be used for a retreat, then allow some time for reflection between each session for the best application of the study.

Even though the devotion series was written as a group session or for individual study, we grow as believers when we are in community with others. Thus, we at NCFI encourage you to find at least one other nurse to partner with to complete the series.

The following notes are helpful if you are facilitating the devotional series with a group. Suggestions for the facilitator are in brackets [].

The preparedness of the facilitator sets the heart, mind, and spirit of the session. Thus, it is important that facilitators prepare ahead of the assigned day and time. Suggestions for preparing for each session:

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your study and open your heart to hear His suggestions.
2. Complete each session as if you are a participant. This includes reading the prayers and text and answering the questions. Write down your answers and include how others may answer the questions.

Each session includes the following format:

Prayer:

Each session begins with a prayer from Paul to consecrate our time under the Holy Spirit through the richness of scripture.

When it is time to conclude the session, use the provided prayer, or you can pray a 2-minute prayer highlighting the topic and concerns.

Reading:

There are assigned scripture to read. It is great to bring scripture alive by reading it out loud, even if you are completing the study individually.

Reflect:

These are questions and discussions that assist the participant in applying God's word to their personal life.

Blessing

The blessing is a wonderful opportunity to impart the Lord's favor on our colleagues and friends. Follow the instructions.

To assist with understanding Paul's predicament, read Acts chapter 27 before Session One

Session One: Where Does Christian Hope Come From

Prayer: [Facilitator can assign someone to read out loud the following prayer]

Paul's prayer to the believers in Ephesus:

"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places..." (Ephesians 1:16-20). Amen.

Read: [If in group, read the text out loud together]

Paul said, "Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night, there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on some island;" (Acts 27:22-26).

Reflect: [Facilitator read to group]

As Paul is fearfully facing starvation, shipwreck, and certain death, he confidently speaks of God, *"of whom I belong and whom I belong and whom I worship"* (27:23). Paul's confidence was not in the weather, the ships' crew, the construction of the ship, nor some miraculous rescue. His confidence was in God through the person and promises of Jesus Christ. Paul's courageous plan of hope began many years earlier on the road to Damascus where Paul (then Saul) met Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah (Acts 9:3-19).

Paul's transformative experience led to a solidly grounded faith in Jesus Christ. So much so, Paul proclaimed, *"Indeed, I count everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"* (Philippians 3:8).

As a Christian, our hope is rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ—who He is and His teachings. Take a moment to write down some of the attributes and teachings of Jesus Christ.

[Assign participants scripture passages to read and then share with the group]

- Mark 2:1-12
- Luke 8:22-25
- John 38:44
- Mark 9:21-27
- John 21:1-4

How can knowing who Jesus is provide you with encouragement and strength? [Give participants a few minutes to write down their thoughts. Afterwards, give time for participants to voluntarily share their thoughts.]

Paul’s encouragement to Titus, his son in the faith, is filled with our expectant hope that has been secured in Christ:

“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life- (Titus 3:4-7).”

How can our salvation, based upon God’s grace through the Holy Spirit, bring us hope for eternal life? [Give participants a few minutes to write down their thoughts. Afterwards, give time for participants to voluntarily share their thoughts.]

Blessing:

Impart a blessing on a brother/sister in the Lord by saying out loud the following verse:

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13).

[Switch speakers so that each person gives and receives the blessing]

Concluding Prayer: [Read the prayer as a group, or the facilitator or participant can provide a closing prayer]

Heavenly Father, we praise and thank you for providing for our lives and our faith all that is in Christ Jesus. Guide us in seeing the hope you have secured and promised. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Session Two: Embracing the Hope of Christ

Prayer: [Facilitator can assign someone to read out loud the following prayer]

Paul's prayer to the believers in Colossae:

"And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins-(Colossians 1:9-14). Amen."

Read: [Facilitator read to group]

In Session One, we reflected on the identity of Jesus Christ as the basis of our hope. Yet, many times Bible verses and teachings become words and stories that get lost on our journey of faith. As Paul stood on the ship destined for destruction, he confidently said, *"I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told"* (Acts 27:25).

Let's review Paul's experiences to discover how he was able to embrace such confidence in God's ability to rescue him. [Assign participants scripture passages to read and then share with group]

- Acts 9:23-25
- Acts 14:19-20
- Acts 16:22-24
- Acts 20:3
- Acts 21:27-36

- Acts 23:12-22

Reflect: [Facilitator read to group]

One way we can have the same confidence of Paul and embrace Christ while weathering the storms of life is to reflect on our personal journey and find points of faith. Reflect on a time when you may have experienced the following: [Facilitator, give people plenty of time to reflect on each point and possibly write down thoughts]

- God brought you through a difficult time—illness, finances, grief, etc.
- God provided a Bible study leader or Christian friend to assist in your faith.
- God rescued you from danger – physically, emotionally, relationally, spiritual.
- God affirmed his work in you through work, school, ministry, etc.
- God affirmed your work/ministry – through accomplishments, successes, open doors, etc.
- God removed doubt, fear, anxiety, worry, despair, and/or other emotions.
- God blessed you with the fruit of his Holy Spirit: peace, joy, love, forgiveness, etc.
- Other

In groups of two or three share an experience that affirmed the love and grace of the Father in your life. Be cognizant of time and limit the sharing time to less than 5 minutes per person. [Facilitator, oversee the discussions, keeping track of the time and encouraging equal sharing]

Reflect: [Facilitator read to group]

Did you notice your life is filled with positive or affirming experiences along with personal trials or challenging times? These and other experiences are steps on our faith journey and point to a loving Heavenly Father active in our life. When we reflect and ponder on all that the Lord provides for us daily, we embrace the hope he has secured for us. Discuss ways we can take our past experiences and build confident hope in Christ. [Facilitator to have participants voluntarily share their thoughts.]

Read: [Facilitator have a participant read out loud to group]

Paul shares his personal testimony of how the Father has intervened for his safety on many occasions!

Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? (2 Corinthians 11:23-29)

Repeat Paul's confident testimony to the crew of the ship: [Read out loud as a group]

"I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told." (Acts 27:25).

Blessing:

Impart a blessing on a brother/sister in the Lord by saying out loud the following verse:

“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39).

[Switch speakers so that each person gives and receives the blessing.]

Concluding Prayer: [Read the prayer as a group, or the facilitator or participant can provide a closing prayer]

Father God, you are the author and perfecter of my faith and the creator of every step and moment of my life. Give me strength to stay focused on you and the wisdom and guidance you provide for each moment in my life. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Author Note:

There is not enough time within the limitations of a devotion time to reflect on how God has worked in our lives. I encourage each participant to take time either before the next session, or at the conclusion of the series to reflect with the Holy Spirit on the mighty work of the Lord in your life. The abundant^{tee} fruit of grace, love and hope are discovered when we experience our loving Father ^{as} active in our lives.

Session Three: Living Out Hope

Prayer: [Facilitator can assign someone to read out loud the following prayer]

Paul's reminder to the Romans:

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:3-5) Hallelujah! Amen.

Reflect: [Facilitator read to group]

In Session One, we reviewed that our hope is rooted in the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. In Session Two, we looked at our own lives and discovered how the Lord had worked in our lives to strengthen our faith and keep us on a journey of faith. Life would seem hopeless without the Lord Jesus Christ and his promises. Thus, we are the hope for our family, our colleagues, our friends, and our neighbors.

When Paul was on the ship, and all seemed lost, Paul's hope not only encouraged and strengthened him for the perilous journey to Rome, but his hope was also lived out for everyone on the ship.

"Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night, there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you. So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on some island." (Acts 27:22-26).

As we reflect on Paul's speech to the crew and passengers aboard the ship, we see important points of living out our hope. Discuss how Paul lived out his hope in Christ through each of the following: [Facilitator, encourage participants to share their answers/insights]

- Active prayer life
- Love for others
- Trust in God's purpose and plan

Reflect: [Facilitator read to group]

Paul's hope was so confident that he encouraged everyone on the ship destined to sink, to eat! *"Therefore, I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish."* Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food (Acts 27:34-36).

Paul's actions demonstrate a final point for living out our hope—live it out! It was one thing for Paul to give an excellent sermon, an encouraging prayer, a truth-filled Bible study, and/or five steps to Salvation; it is another to live it out! This is truly what nursing needs—the hope of Christ lived out through each one of us. Write down under each heading how you will be living out the hope of Christ through: [Facilitator, give participants a few minutes to write their personal responses]

- An Active prayer life
- Love for others
- Trust in God's purpose and plan

In groups of two or three, share action points of how you will live out hope in your workplace. [Facilitator, give participants a few minutes to write down their thoughts. Afterwards, give time for participants to voluntarily share their thoughts:]

Blessing:

Impart a blessing on a brother/sister in the Lord by saying out loud the following verse:

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word” (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).

[Switch speakers so that each person gives and receives the blessing]

Concluding Prayer:

Heavenly Father, guide us through the Holy Spirit in living out this wondrous hope rooted in Christ Jesus. Where we doubt, give us faith; where we fear, give us courage; where we falter, give us forgiveness. In the name of Jesus, Amen.