

How the Holy Ghost Can Activate and Release Your Supernatural Anointing

Christian author Michelle McClain-Walters never takes for granted her calling as a chosen child of God. Daily she purposes to walk in the Spirit and not the flesh, as directed by Galatians 5:16, so she can fulfill her kingdom purpose.

It's a mandate, she says, that all believers should follow.

"I believe there is one thing and that is that God chose you, you didn't choose Him," McClain-Walters told Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of "Greenelines" on the Charisma Podcast Network. "He is the one who led you before you even had a thought. He knew you. His love is something you can trust.

"The Holy Spirit is the governor of the earth, and we have to learn how to walk in the Spirit so that we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh. We can do nothing without the help of the Holy Spirit. He's going to guide you down the path of life. You have to spend time praying in the Holy Spirit, like Jude who said, 'Beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Spirit.'

"Pray in the Holy Ghost. That keeps you in the love of God. So, you really have to develop a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. He's your prayer partner. He teaches you how to pray. He's the one that brings comfort to your heart."

For more about Michelle McClain-Walters' ministry and teachings, [listen to this podcast](#).

6 Types of Christian Friends You Don't Want to Be

It's a normal Friday night. Friends are eating together and hanging out. They are all believers and a close-knit group. They do a lot of life together.

It's a potluck kind of night. They are bringing hot wings, chips, dips and a variety of tasty appetizers. Everyone is upbeat, except one. One of the regulars is quiet and looks troubled. The elephant is in the room, but everyone looks away.

The evening continues with stories of the week. Friends sharing victories and struggles. Our troubled friend finds an open door and grabs the attention of everyone. Tears pour. Words hard to interpret roll off her lips. The room turns somber and friends gather around.

The troubled friend arrests the party, and everyone is taken hostage.

Do you have a friend like that? She continues. She explains her trauma. Her emotions are on full display. She calms down. Silent prayers begin. And then it happens. The worst is yet to come.

There is nothing wrong with a friend sharing their heart. Struggle and hardships are a normal part of life. And sharing struggles with good friends is healthy. But the advice is not always helpful.

Some Christians Are Know-it-alls

It's interesting that Christians believe they have the answers

to all of life's problems. Several friends offer contrasting solutions to her dilemma.

Let's see if your friend showed up at the party.

1. **The "self-righteous" friend.** The self-righteous friend wants to discover why this is happening. They say things like, "As you know, if you were living right, this could have been avoided." They continue, "You must have opened the door to the devil to come into your life."

The self-righteous friend makes it known that they would have never made the choice you made.

2. **The "cliche" friend.** The cliche friend has obvious solutions. "Well, you just need to get over it." They continue with things such as, "I know the pain is real, but God is a healer. You need to let go of that pain and cast all your cares on God. You know God loves you, don't you?"

The cliche friend offers shallow answers and lacks empathy.

3. **The "fix-it" friend.** The main concern of the "fix-it" friend is to fix your problem, at the expense of not acknowledging your struggle. The "fix-it" friend is not interested in your story. They will say things like, "That does not matter; skip the details. Let's sort this out. Here is precisely what you need to do."

The "fix-it" friend has the wrong approach to real problems.

4. **The "log in the eye" friend.** The "log in the eye" friend sees others' problems but not their own.

He spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not see the beam that is in your own

eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the beam that is in your own eye? You hypocrite! First remove the beam from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye" (Luke 6:39-42).

The Bible describes this friend as one who minimizes their own problem and maximizes their friends'. A not so great friend.

5. The "Bible bruising" friend. This friend knows the Bible. Fact is, they know it so well they can hurt you. The friend who uses the Bible to condemn and belittle others is not the best of friends.

The "Bible bruising" friend listens to your confessions and condemns you.

Let's say you confess your failure of adultery.

The "Bible bruiser" reminds you: The adulterers' path is toward hell and descends to the chamber of death (see Prov. 7:27).

Wow, that hurt.

6. The "compassionate" friend. This point seems out of place, but it's right on. The "compassionate" friend resembles a real friend but may not be. Human compassion can be a detriment to our spiritual growth and personal development. The compassionate friend soothes our current circumstances but delays our learning.

Compassionate friends can comfort, but God desires to use our failures to grow and mature us.

Compassion may make you feel better, but it can hinder you from being better.

A True Friend

The true friend listens well and is not afraid to share the truth.

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger” (James 1:19).

A true friend chooses their words.

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you should answer everyone” (Col. 4:6).

A true friend brings correction.

“Open rebuke is better than secret love” (Prov. 27:5).

Christian Friends

Christian friends should be the best friends you have. But that doesn't mean they all give great advice.

Friday night is coming, and friends are hanging out. What kind of friend will you be? {eoa}

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Female Preacher: How the Church Should Have Responded to John MacArthur

My heart has been saddened this week as I have read the articles about, and then the responses to, the words of John MacArthur concerning Beth Moore and her role in ministry.

I, as a woman in ministry, do have opinions that are based on the Bible concerning the role of women in ministry. You might be surprised at how moderate I am. That is not the purpose for this article, though.

I am not as concerned about where a person stands on the issue of women in ministry as I am about how we treat one another publicly and privately.

The purpose of my writing today is to address our heart attitudes toward one another. If we don't get this right in the body of Christ, we will be ignoring a great portion of Scripture. When a respected leader mocks a brother or a sister who is made in the image of Christ, a serious wrong has been committed. When a follower of Christ, who is passionately in love with the Scriptures, is labeled "narcissistic" publicly, it tells me more about the heart of the accuser than it does about the heart of the accused.

You see, grace has no stones in its pockets. Grace would have dealt with this in a much different manner, indeed.

Not only have I listened to the audio that recorded the words of John MacArthur and others on that panel, but I have also diligently read Beth's public responses this week:

"Hey, y'all. Let's cool it on the slander toward JMac et al. Doesn't honor God. Let's move on."

“Here is the beautiful thing about it and I mean this with absolute respect. You don’t have to let me serve you. That gets to be your choice. Whether or not I serve Jesus is not up to you. Whether I serve you certainly is. One way or the other, I esteem you as my sibling in Christ.”

We were all called to be fruit-bearing Christians whether our ministry takes place on a very public platform or within the walls of an obscure home on an unknown street. We are all called, as sons and daughters of the God who is love, to honor one another with our words and with our actions. When a difficult conversation needs to happen, it needs to happen privately and honorably.

I am outraged. But I am not just outraged on behalf of all of the anointed women who I know who have given their lives to ministry—I am outraged that a brother of mine would treat a sister with such public shaming.

I grieve that a well-respected conference such as The Truth Matters would allow this type of mocking and degrading. Perhaps in years to come, The Truth Matters conference should be renamed to “Fruit Matters,” just as a reminder of our call in Christ.

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, reminded all of Christendom yet to come that as believers in Christ, it is our goal to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). I have learned after 42 years in ministry that if I cannot address a difficult issue with deep and gracious love, then it is not my call to speak to it.

“Each tree is known by its own fruit” (Luke 6:44a).

Beth—thanks for sharing your fruit with us this week. It was delicious. Brother MacArthur, you are deeply loved by the body of Christ, and I pray that you will be able to lead by example and remove the rocks from your pockets. {eoa}

Carol McLeod is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats, where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written five books: *No More Ordinary, Holy Estrogen!*, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart*, *Defiant Joy!* and *Refined: Finding Joy in the Midst of the Fire*. Her teaching DVD *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming.

2 Spiritual Disciplines Every Spirit-Led Writer Needs to Adopt

As a writer and editor for more than 40 years, Andy Le Peau has seen thousands of book manuscripts—some good and some not so good. Along the way, he's learned some valuable guidelines for Christian writers who burn with hunger to make a kingdom impact with their work.

“What I have found is that spiritual disciplines we practice every day in life will help our writing,” Le Peau told Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of “Greenelines” on the Charisma Podcast Network. “First and foremost is the spiritual discipline of gratitude. I am saying thank you to God, thank you to other people in my life for what they provide for me,

what they do for me. If I have that openness, I have humility because I am recognizing that what I have is not my own doing, that God has given it to me.

“That also gives me confidence. I have confidence because the gift came from God. Whatever good thing He brought into my life, I know it came from Him. So, that’s what I encourage in writers—to develop confidence and humility, so that they are open to receiving correction or input. If they have confidence in God and in themselves, they know that they need not fear failure.

“Don’t let fear inhibit your writing and keep you from moving forward. Have a prayerful approach to your writing and read your Bible. Just seek the Lord and expect the Lord to feed you when you put your hands on the keyboard.”

For more of Andy Le Peau’s ministry and how you can become a strong Christian writer, [listen to this podcast](#).

Prophetic Word: Holy Spirit Wants You to Receive His Overflowing Love in This Season of Abundance

Apostle Kathy DeGraw, host of Charisma Podcast Network’s “Prophetic Spiritual Warfare” podcast, offered an unexpected word for listeners during a recent “Greenelines” podcast. Here is her prophetic proclamation:

“Right now, the Holy Spirit is really just speaking about the overflowing, the overwhelming love of God, and that you need to feel that tangible love of God. I just really feel like God’s countenance is shining upon your face right now, and you even feel that transformation. What I hear the Holy Spirit saying is you’ve been locked up; you’ve been paralyzed; you’ve been stuck in your mind, not being able to get through the emotional hurt, the torment, the trauma, the pain. Your mind has been processing it and thinking it and trying to discern it and dissect it and figure it all out.

“God is just saying to you in this moment in this time, just to receive my overwhelming love for you. He says, ‘My child, I love you with an everlasting love. I love you whether you’re whole, whether you’re broken, whether you feel worthy, whether you feel adequate or not.’ He’s just saying, ‘I love you. Just step back and just yield and rest in my presence and the assurance of what I want to give you.’ He says your trauma does not define you. He says, ‘I define you. Who I am, who I am through you is who you are, not the trauma, not the product of your past.’ And He says to ‘let go of that, My child, just let go of that, and allow Me to come into you like that fresh water, like new wells, that living water that just wants to rise up and flood.’

“And He’s saying to this person, and I believe this is for several people right now, is there’s just this well coming out. I just see it in your belly, from the depths of your soul. There’s this well, there’s just new life. There’s just new abundance. God wants to give you a fresh drink, and I see this as just a beautiful garden of His love and nourishment that’s going to come into you. I see flowers and green and trees and just new life—a season of abundance, and what God says to you is ‘a season of hope.’ He says that you have lost hope. But He says, ‘I am the God of hope. And because I am the God of hope, inside of you has never truly lost hope because I am in your spirit.’

“And He says, ‘pull on your spirit man—not on your soul; not on your mind, will and emotions—but pull out who you are, who I created you to be, because out of that is going to flow this life-giving stream of water that so many others are going to drink from.’ That’s what God is saying to you in this moment. He said, ‘You have something to give others; you have something to offer others. And so,’ He said, ‘I need you to receive for me so that you can get the increase and then release what I want to establish through your life to others.’”

“So, Father God, we thank You for this word for the people. We thank You for that unction, that prophetic flow of Holy Spirit. We just seal this word in; we call it forth in the name of Jesus. We thank You, Lord, that Your word does not go forth and fail, but God, You don’t know how to fail. You prosper in everything. And so, we say that this word, we seal it in, and it will prosper. And that every person who needs to receive would just open their heart in an abundant way, open their senses and to hear from You, God, and to receive the overflowing love of God that You have for them.”

For more of this “Greenelines” podcast with Kathy DeGraw, [click here](#).

Prophetic Vision: Angels to Dispatch Your Breakthrough

Decrees

God showed me a prophetic vision in prayer of angels with scrolls in their hands responding to the prayers and prophetic decrees released by believers. The unusual thing about this vision was that angels were summoned only when God's people would ascend to the courts of heaven in prayer petitioning the Lord for a righteous verdict and judgments on their behalf.

As the people of God would pray, fast and wait on God's answer in worship, angels would appear suddenly with scrolls that looked to me like a subpoena or a court order. On the scroll, I saw the words "breakthrough decrees."

"You will also decree a thing, and it will be established for you; And light will shine on your ways" (Job 22:28, NASB).

We can see from several passages of Scripture the power of our decree. The people of God will receive their breakthrough by what they decree, decide on a matter and declare prophetically for breakthrough in the area of their need. A decree is based on our decisions. In addition, angels only respond to God's Word and are sent to carry out His will in our lives.

"Bless the Lord, you His angels, who are mighty, and do His commands, and obey the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all you His hosts; you servants who do His pleasure" (Ps. 103:20-21, MEV).

When we return the Lord's Word to Him, angels are supernaturally dispatched to carry out the fulfillment of the Scripture and Word of God. Other translations of this Scripture declare that angels both listen for His Word and are responsible for executing Scripture according to the way He intends the Word to be fulfilled. If we want our prayers and declarations to be successful, it is vitally important to utilize the Word of God.

What is the power of the decree? It becomes sound waves that are sent out like a ripple effect or sound waves into the atmosphere in the realm of the spirit. Those sound waves do not diminish, but stay in the environment where the decrees are sent out. The power of our words will create divine boundaries and barricades against enemy interference or activities. That is why a believer should not stop praying and speaking the Word of God by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible also says in Proverbs 18:21 (NLT), "The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences." Interestingly enough, Matthew 12:37 (MEV) declares emphatically about our words says: "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." We can see the power of our words that it has the power to condemn us or acquit us.

The definition of "acquittal" or "to acquit" is "to relieve from a charge of fault or crime, declare not guilty, to release or discharge (a person) from an obligation, to settle or satisfy (a debt, obligation, claim), to bear or conduct (oneself); behave and to free or clear oneself." The enemy doesn't want you to speak the Word and will of God over your life.

In the English language, the word "decree" implies not only that a judgment has been implemented, but also that it is implemented with the degree of impact, or the level of authority, of an order being issued by a court. The breakthrough is decreed and final when we release it out of our mouths.

Angels will come to war over and fight for us on our behalf to deliver the breakthrough we prayed, decreed, prophesied and fasted for. Get ready for your breakthrough decrees to become established in your life today. What does the power of a decree look like legally? For example, if a defendant is found guilty of a criminal act and by the judge is now ordered to

serve a prison sentence, that defendant cannot refuse prison time.

In fact, that defendant no longer has a say in regard to the order. Why? Because of the power of a court order that now overrides the will, choice or decision of the defendant. If that defendant is sentenced to jail, he or she must, and definitely will, serve mandatory time in jail that they were served by the court order.

For example, when we decree breakthrough (for healing and financial liberation to happen in our lives), in the spiritual realm, things will begin to accommodate those words we speak. This is not naming it and claiming it. It should be decreeing and declaring it by God's Word. In addition, if there is sickness or disease in your body, by the power of your decree, sickness has to obey and exit your body in Jesus' name because of a divine court order of heaven. Sickness and disease have no further say in the matter to remain in your body as a legal host.

Why? It is the power of our decree, which is prophetically claiming healing breakthrough by the power of Jesus' blood and the finished work of the cross. The power of our decree that "by Jesus Christ's stripes we are totally healed" is such that sickness must leave.

While we may not see sickness leave with our natural eyes, we need to understand that by absolute definition of the word "decree," sickness now has no further say; it cannot refuse to leave. It must go. Stand in that authority.

Did you know that kings rule by their decree or edict? An edict is a proclamation having the force of law. What they decree becomes law, constitutional and legal—and it cannot be revoked, reversed or changed. In addition, when kings speak words by a decree out of their mouth or it is written in the form of a decree (and then proclaimed to others), the words of

a royal ruler are received as law.

We can see Jesus understood His authority and power when we look at the story of Him in the wilderness with Satan, who was tempting Him. Jesus always responded with, "It is written ..." and would then quote the Word of God correctly. Satan had no choice but to do what Jesus ordered by the power of the decree of Scripture.

The military uses stealth-type aircrafts that are specifically created to perform certain tough tasks in secrecy and have the capability to break through impenetrable enemy defenses. These specialized military aircraft are designed to travel extremely fast in order to be able to intercept the enemy with an unexpected sneak attack of surprise.

Furthermore, these stealth bombers have unique technology and a powerful ability to carry out long-range strikes while at the same time remaining virtually undetectable by radars. Breakthrough decrees can function in the same way and create breakthrough in both the spiritual and natural realms for you.

Satan has no ability to anticipate the decrees that will be spoken, prayed or prophesied and thus has no capacity to formulate a counterattack plan. He doesn't know what will be spoken or where they are going to hit. Breakthrough is in your mouth! Get ready to receive angelic help to bring you your breakthrough! {eoa}

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Spirit-Filled Pastor: Why You May Be Missing This Crucial Element of Your Calling

Moral failure. It's become all too common today. And it's especially painful when it happens to [Christian leaders](#), as [recent news stories](#) have shown us.

As a Spirit-filled pastor, Doug Stringer daily walks in the power and authority God has given him to use the gifts of the Spirit to minister to others. While those are available to all believers, he says some who struggle with their walk with Christ miss the most important element of their calling.

"No leader ever sets out to fail, but yet we see so many failures," Stringer, the founder of Somebody Cares International, told Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of "Greenelines" on the Charisma Podcast Network. "Sometimes we forget to be tethered to that place of God's presence, the foundations, the fundamentals of that place that God has called us.

"David Livingston, the great missionary to South Africa, used to ask, 'Why is it that when an earthly king commissions us,

we considered it an honor? But, when the heavenly King commissions us, we call it a sacrifice?’ For me, every morning in my prayer time, I thank the Lord for the privilege of His calling. It’s an honor and a privilege. I think people need to recognize that we really need His presence to empower our generation.

“And what are the fundamentals and the foundation? We need a relationship with God to walk in authority and do great exploits. That relationship comes by spending time with Him in prayer, in His presence, and to stay low in humility because humility and the fear of the Lord guarantees a stewardship of riches and honor in life. So often we want to circumvent that place of humility, but we cannot.”

A cancer survivor, Stringer delivers a powerful message through his podcast, [“A Word in Season,”](#) with practical teaching and powerful stories of Christ’s love for a hurting world.

For more about Doug Stringer and his ministry, [listen to this podcast](#).

Are You Seeking God’s Presence or His Glory?

A group of people had just finished a worship service. As they exited the sanctuary where they had gathered, I overheard their comments. I heard one person say, “G-D surely was here

today.” Another said, “I totally felt the Spirit moving.” One more said, “There was a special move of G-D this morning.”

I had been in the service, and I was in full agreement with each comment. The worship service was exciting and moving, and the sermon was equally powerful. It seemed that everyone who attended the service felt the same way: G-D had shown up and His people had worshipped him. The experience and the conversation made me think about a series of verses from Exodus 33:

“After Moses entered, the pillar of cloud descended, stood at the door, and He would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the Tent, they all rose up and worshipped, every man at the entrance of his own tent” (Ex. 33:9-10, TLV).

In these verses, Moses and all the people of Israel had gathered at the Tent of Meeting and the visible presence of G-D descended as a pillar of cloud in the sight of all the people. Everyone rose up and worshipped together. What a powerful moment that must have been. Just imagine the sight of that cloud lowering in front of the Tabernacle. It would be nearly impossible for someone not to enter into deep, meaningful worship.

For most of us, when we gather together to worship, this is the type of experience we are seeking. An experience in which we see or feel the presence of G-D in our midst. A powerful experience where we know that G-D was there with us. When we have this kind of worship service, we all leave feeling as if we have had successful worship and communion with the Spirit of G-D. Some would say about a service like this that “We saw the glory of G-D.”

Yet when we read just a few verses down, Moses is having a conversation with G-D in which he is pleading with G-D in Exodus 33:15:

“But then he said to Him, ‘If Your presence does not go with me, don’t let us go up from here!’”

Then in Exodus 33:18, we read the following words: “Then he said, ‘Please, show me Your glory!’”

Notice that Moses clearly understood there was a difference between the presence of G-D and the glory of G-D. Please remember that this conversation between Moses and G-D is taking place directly after Moses and the people of Israel saw the Spirit of G-D appear as a visible cloud in front of them. Moses had just seen the visible presence of G-D and was pleading with G-D not to remove His presence from Israel. At that moment Moses says, “Please show me Your glory.”

While we today tend to use the presence of G-D and the glory of G-D as synonyms, Moses understood that you could be in the very presence of G-D and not be seeing His glory.

We see the response to Moses’ request to see G-D’s glory in Exodus 33:19:

“So He said, ‘I will cause all My goodness to pass before you, and call out the Name of Adonai before you. I will be gracious toward whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will be merciful.’”

Notice that G-D connects His goodness with His graciousness and His mercy. But that doesn’t tell the whole story. Because when we read verse 19 we see that G-D’s goodness is within His judgment of who He will be gracious and merciful to. You may be asking, “So what does G-D’s goodness, graciousness and mercy have to do with His glory?”

The answer is in Exodus 33:22: “While My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and cover you with My hand, until I have passed by.”

G-D tells Moses that His glory exists not in His presence but

in His grace and mercy—grace and mercy based completely upon His judgment or His choice. He will have grace, and He will have mercy toward whom He will.

You see, many of our congregations are totally satisfied when our services are over, and we feel as if we experienced the presence of G-D. In other words, we are happy when the cloud falls in front of us. But we need to become more like Moses who, while blessed by the presence of G-D, asked G-D to please not remove His presence.

Moses was not satisfied with just G-D's presence. He wanted to see G-D's glory, a glory that is represented by an outpouring of grace and mercy. In other words, too many of us are focused totally on our experiencing G-D's presence when we need to be more focused on an outpouring of G-D's glory, which is focused not on ourselves but on those who are experiencing G-D's grace and mercy.

In other words, our worship services are successful not when we know G-D showed up for those of us who are born again, but when G-D shows His grace and mercy so others are born again.
{eoa}

Eric Tokajer is author of *With Me in Paradise*, *Transient Singularity*, *OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry*, *#ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer*, *Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians* and *Galatians in Context*.

How Mark Batterson Discovered the Secret to Receiving God's Exponential Blessings

Mark Batterson knows that God is in the blessing business. The bestselling author and lead pastor of National Community Church in Washington, D.C., also knows that although it's God's instinct to bless His people, it can take some action steps on our part see those infinite blessings come to fruition.

"We really must rediscover God's heart toward us," Batterson told Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of "Greenelines" on the Charisma Podcast Network. "Before original sin, there was original blessing. God wants to bless us beyond our ability to ask or imagine.

"I think it's so important that we understand He is not going to bless greed or pride or laziness. We've got to position ourselves for the blessing. Blessing is not good luck. It's not zero gravity. At the end of the day, God is with us; He is for us; He is in us. But let's not reduce it to a material thing. It's joy unspeakable. It's peace that surpasses all understanding."

For Batterson, the revelation of blessing started with a simple experiment. Whenever he received a blessing, he would give a similar blessing away. If someone paid him a compliment or gave him a gift, he paid it forward.

"We flip the blessing by blessing others in the way God has blessed us," Batterson says. "That's how the blessing becomes a double blessing. It turns giving into a game—one we can't win because God will always outgive us. In other words, we are blessed to be blessed. The first blessing is receiving, but it doesn't end there. The second blessing is giving it away.

That's the double blessing."

For more of how to receive God's double blessing, [listen to this podcast](#).

Believers Refuse Jesus When They Refuse This Kingdom Virtue

"Hope" is a four-letter word that often confounds. It is meant to encourage, but is certainly a challenge to embrace.

Where does hope come from? Can hope be bought or sold? How can just four letters make such a profound difference in the life of a desperate man or woman?

Can you smell hope? Does it bloom only in the spring?

Is there a store that sells hope? If so, where is that store, and how much does hope cost? I am sure at times that hope is way too expensive for me as I take stock of my current life circumstances.

Is there a radio station that plays hope? I must know—I simply must know—what does hope sound like? Will I recognize its melody if I hear it?

Is there a restaurant that serves hope on its menu? Does it have taste? Is hope meant to be a main course or a dessert? Am I allowed to take more than a nibble?

I have discovered in my lifetime that hope may be the most

valuable intangible I ever embrace. If I refuse to hope, I am refusing to believe. And I am ignoring an umbrella of faith.

I have also come to acknowledge the fact that you can have hope without faith—but you can't have faith without hope.

Life is hard, and it is in the “hard” of life when hope becomes the most valuable resource a person can tap into. Your money will run out from time to time, and it is then that you certainly need hope. Your body might betray you, and the only cure for a broken, weakened body is hope.

Difficult people may come in and ravage your world, and in that devastation, what you need is hope.

Hope is not a Pollyanna-like attitude that ignores the facts of life. I have found it much more difficult to live without hope than I have found it beneficial to ignore facts. I will choose hope over facts any day. Every day, choosing hope really is the best possible choice.

But the question is this when I am in the cave of despair: Is it possible for hope and facts to co-exist? Are they compatible or mutually exclusive?

This is what I do know: My facts don't tell the end of my story. What I see with my natural eyes may actually be the pretense. What I am unable to see with my eyes may be the solid stuff of life.

And so, I hope. I believe. I refuse discouragement and shake off despair. When my circumstances whine and scream and demand, I choose the quiet whisper of hope.

When the facts of my life thunder and quake and pontificate, I choose the sweet smile of hope.

We all choose. Our choices are hope or despair. Our choices are hope or discouragement. Our choices are hope or anything.

I don't know what circumstances are shrieking at you today, but I can tell you that if you can choose to hope, you are choosing strength. If you choose hope, you will also receive its twin, whose name is joy. And by embracing hope, you will also be wrapping your heart around new purpose and refreshed possibilities.

Perhaps the facts we face are actually only the fog that surrounds and therefore clouds our view from the truth of hope. Maybe when the cloudiness of our human existence lifts, what we will realize is that hope was not ignorance, but it was substance and held more truth than the fog. Perhaps what we will know then that we ignore now, is that facts mask what is true, real and genuine.

And maybe, just maybe, what I need to remind myself every day is that hope is the foundation of the life that was meant for me.

And so, I will embrace and develop a friendship with hope. I will wrap my mind around all that hope declares and promises. I will speak in hope and think about hope. I will use hope as the anchor of my very fragile soul.

"Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord" (Ps. 31:24, NASB).

Carol McLeod is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats, where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written five books: *No More Ordinary, Holy Estrogen!*, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart*, *Defiant Joy!* and *Refined: Finding Joy in the Midst of the Fire*. Her teaching DVD *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming.

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