

Your Hope-Giving Secret in a Season of Waiting

We have all kinds of words for it.

“Type A.” “Perfectionist.” “Do-er.”

In a world where we believe good things come to those who work hard, the thought of letting go of the wheel in any life situation seems incomprehensible. If we fail for any reason, we want to be sure it was not for lack of effort.

For those of us who approach life with the intent to succeed in all things, we are quick to identify needs, establish a strategy and execute the necessary action at the appropriate time.

And it's for this reason that the concept of hope has fallen to the wayside of current culture.

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) tells us, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

The ambiguous nature of hope makes it somewhat tricky to define—in the Bible, there is rarely a time when the action of hoping stands alone, apart from other actions such as faith and love. 1 Corinthians 13:13 is a hallmark example, “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

The very word itself seems to be best defined by other words.

Hope is active waiting and trusting that the proper result will be achieved due to efforts and timing not entirely our own. Hope is the belief that by giving ourselves over to the process, in all its twists and turns, what we desire will ultimately manifest itself in the end.

It makes sense, then, that those created with a desire to establish efficiency in all things find the process of learning to hope more than a little foreign. And this is where a disclaimer is necessary: If you were created with a natural tendency to lead and express authority, you are not flawed. The world needs your passion and drive to tackle obstacles and break down walls.

However, you are probably confusing hoping with striving.

If hope is active waiting, striving is the action of manipulating circumstances to produce a particular result—usually much earlier than would be healthy or would have occurred naturally. Striving is usually us acting against the time frame God had in mind for a result. Striving is the belief that if we can just perform well enough, we will *earn* what we so earnestly want.

The thing about striving is that it stands in direct opposition to God's gift of grace. Grace, or unmerited favor, isn't something that can be earned. In fact, what makes grace so miraculous is that there is literally nothing we can do to make ourselves worthy of it.

Chances are if you have trouble accepting grace, you also have difficulty resting your efforts in hope.

This can be a hard one to swallow. We grow up being taught that the success or failure of our lives rests on our own shoulders, and so we measure our steps carefully, wary of losing control. But while the act of pursuing a goal is appropriate and admirable in certain situations, pursuit becomes unhealthy when we think we can create a result through our own power.

If we believe in a God who has a plan for us to prosper, then we can believe He will not let our hope be destroyed. He holds our hearts gently and will not ask us to let go of the wheel unless He is willing to take control.

If you are tired of pushing and pulling, rest in the knowledge that there is a God who loves you and will order your steps. Letting go is not an act of failure; it demonstrates incredible faith.

Unlike people, God doesn't go back on his Word. Trusting His timing is the gutsiest thing you could do. His grace—unmerited favor—is strong when you're tired of striving.

You won't be made foolish for your hope.

For more on finding hope in a season of waiting, listen to Carol McLeod's teaching on Hannah in the podcast below.

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