

How to Lock Yourself Up in a Prison of Hope

God is good. He has a good plan for each of our lives.

No matter what may be going on right now, God's plan is unfolding. In the meantime, Romans 12:12 tells us to "rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying" (MEV).

I think that's good advice, especially in times when it feels like we've been waiting and waiting ... and waiting for something to happen in our lives. Hope is vital in times like these and it will keep us looking ahead, anticipating, expecting whatever it is we're *hoping* for.

Over the years, I've learned how to lock myself up in a *prison* of hope, knowing that God has nothing but His best planned for me. He promised me things concerning my ministry and my life. Hope is what helped me hold on in those early years when it got hard.

Anticipation. I remember it was only three weeks into my marriage to Dave, when he asked me one day, "What's wrong with you? You have such a negative attitude!" And I said, "Well, if you don't expect anything good to happen, then you won't be disappointed when it doesn't." That was how I felt based on my feelings about past experiences. I had a very negative outlook on life, so I spoke negatively about it.

This is the way I *used to* live ... before I became a prisoner of hope. As I grew in my relationship with God, I learned how to trust Him, how to stand on His Word, and how to stand my ground in prayer when it got tough. Today my outlook on life is completely different from what it was many years ago. Now I enjoy my life and I encourage others to enjoy theirs as well. Jesus died for us to live an abundant, fulfilling life. And

hope is the confident, favorable expectation of this life.

Double for Your Trouble. I do realize there are many things that can happen to us that aren't so enjoyable. That can make it difficult to grasp the idea of enjoying life. So, think of it this way: What are you hoping for? What are you expecting in life? What are you looking forward to? *Focus on that.*

My negative outlook was due to my attitude about all the bad things that had happened in my life. I was stuck in the pain of my past, so I didn't believe anything good would happen in my future. Because of all of the negative things that had happened, I was programmed to believe that negative things would always happen. I lost hope.

God was there and He knew that. But over time, He kept loving me and dealing with me, promising me what Isaiah 61:7 says: "Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. So, you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours" (MEV). That's a promise for us all ... a promise of double for your trouble! Double the blessing ... double the joy ... double the peace! Hallelujah! Now doesn't that inspire hope in your heart?

Of course, this double-blessing promise isn't for the double-minded. When you walk it out in everyday life, there will be times when doubt, fear, unbelief and weariness will come against you. It's in these times you will need to fight a good fight of faith. You will need to guard your mind against negativity about your situation. I encourage you to find out what God says about it and then stand on the promises in His Word.

The Bible tells of many times when people encountered Jesus and He touched their lives, they wanted to stay with Him and follow Him ... understandably so. But He sent them home—back to everyday life—to live out and share with others what He'd

done. They had to hold on to what He had done for them. In the same way, we must hold on to whatever He promises us and be confident that He is working in our situation. Hope releases the power of the Holy Spirit in these times.

Hope. I want to encourage you to make a decision to cultivate an attitude of hope in your life. Speak positive things about your future and refuse to be negative. You may not always *feel* hopeful but don't give in to your feelings. Catering to bad feelings feeds and empowers them. But standing our ground and not giving in to negative feelings starves them and causes them to lose their power over us.

Simply ask the Holy Spirit to lead you. Line your will up with His and get excited about serving God. You could even be one who inspires others to become prisoners of hope!

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times *best-selling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc.* She has authored nearly 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *The Mind Connection* (Hachette). She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit .