

Joyce Meyer: God Is Calling You to Be a Prisoner of Hope

God is good. And 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, Rom. 12:12 (NLT) tells us to "Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying."

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. And hope is what helped me hold on in those early years when it got hard.

Anticipation

I remember when it was just three weeks into my marriage to Dave and he asked me one day, "What's wrong with you? You have such a negative attitude!"

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 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 the life we can have in Him.

Double for Your Trouble

Now, I do realize there are many things that can happen to us that aren't so enjoyable. And 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 to me. 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.

Well, 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. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours" (NIV).

That's an amazing promise for us all—a promise of double for your trouble! Double the blessing ... double the joy ... double the peace! 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, and how they wanted to stay with Him and follow Him. But He sent them home—back to everyday life—to live out and share with others what He'd done for them.

They had to hold on to what He had done for them. And 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.

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