

Joyce Meyer: Why It's Good to Be Locked Up in This Prison

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

That's true even when we're struggling and don't understand why or what's going on. In those times, Romans 12:12 (NIV) tells us to "be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."

This is wise advice, especially 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 and 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 put big dreams in my heart regarding my ministry and my life, and most of them took years to come to pass. Hope is what helped me hold on in those early years when it got hard.

The Effects of Expectation

I remember it was just 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 what I believed 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 circumstances 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 (see John 10:10), and hope is the confident, favorable expectation of this life.

Double for Your Trouble

I 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 or 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. My experiences from years ago caused me to believe that negative things would always happen. I had no hope.

But God was with me and 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."

That's a promise for you, too—a promise of double for your trouble! Double the blessing, double the joy, double the peace. Doesn't that inspire hope in your heart?

Be Single-Minded About Your Double Blessing

Now, 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 that you'll need to fight the 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.

We must hold on to whatever He promises us and be confident that He is working in our situation no matter how things look, how we feel or what we think. Because hope releases the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts when we're going through painful or difficult situations.

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 your ground and not giving in to negative feelings starves them and causes them to lose their power over you.

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you. Line your will up with His and get excited about serving God. Then your life will inspire others to become prisoners of hope! {eo}

For more on this topic, order Joyce's two-teaching CD series "Living with Hope." You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, Enjoying Everyday Life, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting .

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times' bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *Your Battles Belong to the Lord (FaithWords)*. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit .

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