

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter three: What we hope for

At the end of the day, all you need is hope and strength. Hope that it'll get better, and strength to hold on until it does- Jasmin Whitmore.

That about solves life in a nut shell. People say they have hope. Is that hope a solid truth? Well no, it's a concept. Hope is a word. A theme. We believe in hope. Sure, we do. I hear people saying they hope all the time. Yet, hope is hollow if there is no bite to it. Have you asked someone how they are doing? What do they commonly say? "I'm fine." Yet, weeks later you find out they were in the mist of a nervous breakdown. We all have common answers like hope or I feel fine.

Hope: *"a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen."*

There is a running gag in the Star Wars saga "I got a bad feeling about this." There is something within us that sets off alarms. We have other feelings too. How about a sweet tooth? It's time to go to Dairy Queen. There are a lot of feelings or expectations out there. I do believe in God. However, I do believe in fate, déjà vu, and premonitions. Do I believe in the Psychic? No, but I know people see things before they happen. That gut feeling is real somehow. My dog seems to know when someone is walking outside even when the door is closed. Hope; however, should be more than a feeling.

Then there is the actual word *hope*. It's commonly used all the time. *I hope it will. I hope you have a good day. Were hoping for the best for you.* Hope is a really nice word. It gives us hope. Then again, I'm not sure it does. What is in hope that will help you? It's the thought that counts Patrick. Ah yes, it's the thought. Do thoughts save? Does my thinking you will be healed, help heal you? The trouble is with surface words like hope. Happy is another. *I'll pray for you* works that way too. Well get into that later. We use words to help. Yet, words are toothless.

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These days we are under the politically correct police. Basically, we can't say anything that offends. The trouble is in what offends whom. I might be totally happy if you called me a jerk. I think it's funny. To someone else that might be a derogatory word to them. They become offended. So, we use surface words. These are generally words that can't offend. How about words like: we, all, us, community, society, global, and hope. Think of the conversations you have with those around you. How often do we use surface words? My goodness, my wife said she was ok, but was seeing the doctor behind my back. She said she did not want to worry me. People say I hope your well. We all could be healthier. Clearly some look sick, fat, disheveled, and lonely. Can't use those words can we. Least we offend, right?

How sad have we become. Let's bust hope down for a minute. In that dictionary description it begins with expectations. Why do we expect that things will be better? Does that mean they are worse right now? We hope Santa will bring what we want. We hope to have a job soon. I know people who refused treatment because they believed God would heal them. They died. They hoped, but they sat and waited. What if God provided hope in a doctor? Oh, that would be cheating wouldn't it?

I expect people to love and hate my writing. They sure do. Yet, that expectation does not come out of thin air. I get comments. The hits on my website go up and down. I can hope for better results but it takes work. I advertise, post, write better, and so on. Hits, emails, and texts don't come from God, fate, or even karma. No, they come from making good karma through hard work. Sure, there is dumb luck and the right place, right time. However, those incidents are rare and you know it. We use hope because we expect hope to work.

Let's move over to the end of the definition of hope. We expect a certain thing to happen. Not just anything, but a certain thing. Hope is always directed towards a thing. *We hope we get*

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better. I am hoping for good results. I hope to see someone today. I bet if we kept count, we hope a lot. There is a list of things we hope for too. *I hope to get a new stereo. I hope for more money to do it too. I hope to finish this book. You hope I'd stop writing.* We do a lot of hoping.

Why? It's because of the other word I left out in the definition: desire. We desire a ton of things. Hope is a surfacy nice way of desiring crud. *I want a new TV for Christmas. I hope she buys it for me. I also hope for more sex, money, time, and health.* I hope those things come my way soon. I hope God exists because if he does not, my prayer is going into thin air. In reality, I hope for the things I desire. I desire health, sex, a new TV, and that tweets about Donald Trump would end. Oh, I can hope, but my desires are rarely met.

That's the key really. Desires and having them met. In a nut shell, we rarely have desires met. I am mostly happy. How could I make me happy all the time? Well that is just impossible. We try and be happy, hopeful, and positive. I loved Jasmin Whitmore's quote at the beginning. *I hope for the strength until things get better.* Life is a process of up's and down's. It's fine to hope, but putting all your desires and dreams into hope is ludicrous. Hope is a concept, a surface word that is nice but nothing more.

I know Christians who say all their hope is resting in Jesus. If pressed, they say they hope he is real. They hope Jesus will answer their prayer. There is a hope that Jesus would heal them. Yet, their hope is in a concept that their desires will be met by a loving God. I hope that is true. What happens when God is silent. That most certainly happens. Atheists are probably atheists directly because God was silent. God did not act right away. Formula to an atheist: desire + time + results= belief. If any of those three are not met then an atheist is born. To be fair some people just refuse to believe in the unseen. Yet, unseen and silence from a God do seem to crush hope.

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This coming week I am going to do something crazy. I will be going to a therapist. My mom died a few months back and my body is not happy about it. I hope things will get better. The real thing is two minds. My outer mind sees my life as generally happy. My inner mind is contemplating behind my back. I can hope for health all I want. I can't control what the inner mind does, wants, needs, or desires. The therapist hopefully can communicate with my inner mind. This inner part of me can then talk with my body and straighten things out. In the meantime, I hope.

Here inlays the problem. We think that desires + something= happiness. A trip to Jamaica will make me happy. The bill after might not. A sudden tropical cyclone may change my happiness meter too. Yet, there I stand in Jamaica. Happy? Desires met? It all depends. Yet, I hope so. The issue most of us have is how to get desires and happiness together. I know a guy who loves to drink. He does not love what it's done to him. I know a woman who is rich. Yet, the price she paid to be rich haunts her. Hope is dangerous ground if happiness is not met.

In each case there was hope and desire. I have talked to my drunk friend. He has hoped to find a job. He has hoped for more money because he can't afford beer. He said he hopes the dentist appointment would be ok. He lost 12 teeth through his addiction to alcohol. 12! My rich friend hoped for a better life. She left her husband to get it. She got it sort of. Her relationships are strained. Her hands shake at times in the presence of others. I can imagine how trying to construct the perfect life takes its toll. Both of these people hope. Yet, it's their desires that rule the land. I'm not sure desire and hope are good bed fellows.

I feel hope is given a bad rap. How can hope have a bad rap? I think hope is assumed to work. We hope and it happens eventually. Why? Because hope works I guess. Yet, for some reason people trade time and hope for a bottle, drugs, divorce, and suicide. If hope takes too long

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then we get frustrated. If desires are not met then the happy meter gets critically low. Put that all together and you stop saying I hope and start saying I do, I will, I must seemingly at any cost.

This is the strange part. Remember I was saying that a person refuses remedies because they believed God would heal them. They hoped and died. This person had patience until patience ran out. It ran out because they died. Duh. Usually if there is a problem, then we fix it. We get up and take the time to put things back on track. Waiting is only ok, if you can afford the time to wait. The problem is that we usually put patience and waiting in the wrong column. We wait because of a line up. We wait because the mail is slow. We should not wait for hope to work. I still maintain the word hope is hollow.

1 Peter 1:3 *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”*

The trick is in the words *hope through*. Hope is just a word. That passage of scripture is adding Jesus to that hope. If *Jesus will* rather than if *hope will*. What I’m trying to illustrate is that we should add hope to something. If a fireman saves a house from destruction, we hoped he would. If a bullet missed me, I hoped it would. Hope is found in the fireman and bad aim. Hope itself is not a person, place, or thing. In the dictionary it calls it a verb and a noun. I personally disagree in calling it a noun. Hope is fictitious. Jesus and the fireman are not.

We want money. People work for money. They gamble and steal to gain money. Money in many ways is fictitious too. My bills believe that until I give them money. The problem is that money is only as real as what we call currency. People trade people. That’s called slave labor. There is bitcoin. It represents trade and currency. Canadian money is no good in Egypt. To desire

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money is really to desire things we use with the accepted currency. At a card show I trade cards, not money. Money is not necessarily real, but desire to have it is.

What will I do to get money? Will I gamble and hope I win? Will I pray to God that my lotto ticket is a winner? It all comes back to desire. What will you give up or do to make desires a reality. I have lost money. I have found money too. I have paid a speeding ticket. That cost money I did not intend for a ticket. I think those hurt the worst. My desire was to buy a CD, but I had to use that money on a speeding ticket. Not my choice and not my desire.

I desired to spend on my past wife. I wanted us to take trips and pay off the mortgage. That cost me time and effort to make more money. The hope was that we will be happy and retire debt free. Her hope was for more time with me. Yet, secretly she wanted more money too. Usually you can't have both. My divorce proved that my desire, hopes, and dreams are not always in-line with a spouse. My outlook on hope and money were different than hers. Hanging hope on our own efforts is fruitless.

I knew a guy who was about 55. He was preparing to retire. This man was ravenous about money. He owned several properties and had a nice nest egg of money to retire with. He hoped for a wonderful late stage in life. To gain that hope, he threw everything into working. His wife did too. One day he had chest pain on the way to working overtime. They turned around and went back home. At home, he felt better and convinced his wife to head out to work rather than the hospital. He died on route hoping he could work today.

I knew another woman who was a skin flint. She saved and saved. People knew she did too. This woman always talked about a penny earned is a penny saved. They traveled cheap. In time they bought a travel camper. Then they traded up. When she retired they bought another

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upgrade of the ultimate Winnebago. She got cancer and died three months later. She had hoped for a good retirement. Did she hope another woman would enjoy her Winnebago, retirement money, and husband? I bet not, yet she hoped for something.

Money is good. Money is speculative. Currency is the flavor of the day. What are you trading with. Is it a dollar or time? My thought is that you cannot buy hope. It does not work that way. On the surface this word is said when we gamble or dream. However, financially, it's worthless. Yet, we will give up money with the hope for more. We will trade time with the hope that something better will come along. Money certainly helps pay bills and put food on the table. Yet, hoping for money will not feed you, or make your dreams come true.

I am betting that you hope because your investing in the perfect. Who hopes for a crappy wife? Who hopes they are sort of healthy. Oh, I know you say you hope, but life is not perfect. Then why hope, pray, or wish at all? Life is what it is. Sometimes we win and sometimes we lose. Then why do people throw money in a well. Why do they purchase a lotto ticket? I know people who go to the doctor once a year for a checkup even if their healthy. We want the perfect. Let's be fair, there is nothing wrong with wanting the perfect. Yet...

Angelina Jolie went for a breast cancer checkup. The company said she was a significant risk of getting breast cancer. So, she got her breasts cut off in prevention. She hoped for health. She wanted perfect health. It stuns me. So, she cuts them off to keep perfect health? No, she is hoping that she did the right thing. What happens if she gets brain cancer? There is hope and there is the pursuit of the perfect.

Most people believe they don't live the perfect life. I bet most people would say that the perfect life is unachievable. Yet we try to obtain a piece of the perfect. We pray, wish, and hope

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for a better life. I have said this in all my other books. You cannot make it a goal to want a better life. But Patrick... Yeah, I know, we should strive for it right? I say no. That seems so odd to say, but I really say no. We work to gain food, a house, or a car. We strive to be better. Yet, life is what it is. Sometimes we are healthy and sometime we go to the doctor because were not. Many times, we did not cause our sickness. Life happens. A spouse gets killed by a car. A speeding ticket comes. This is not Darwin's survival of the fittest. Sometimes crud happens.

We have all heard stories of people's lives being ruined by a lotto win. I read a story of a man surviving the Vegas shooting, but he got killed in a car accident months later. His family hoped he survived the shooting, and were happy when he did. They were sad he died in the car accident. He and they hoped for a better life. I firmly believe we would be far better off living life in the moment. We should work, plan, and strive to be better people. We should aim at that within this life. Could it be a good life regardless of the situation? I believe more often than not it is. We expect too much in life.

It's my hope that if I got terminal cancer (hope not) that I will still dream, work, and plan to the bitter end. I want to be a beacon of happiness more than sadness. Being angry at life's sharp turns is not the best way to go out. I read about a teenager that wanted the right to die on her own terms when she got sick. She did commit suicide. On her terms? She got sick and died. I doubt that was her terms. So, the next person who gets sick see's that girl as a beacon of hope? Of happiness? If I knew I was dying I'd want more life than less by choice.

It seems that if life is not perfect then we pout. We will do anything to make it as perfect as we can. Then cancer strikes. A car strikes. The bad economy strikes. Then we go on strike until life returns to the perfect. We need to recognize our pursuit of the perfect. It's just not realistic. I have no problem hoping, praying, and wishing. Yet, when they dominate our lives,

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yes, I do have an issue with that. When our desires dominate our ability to be happy, then yes, I do have a problem with that. The pursuit of the perfect will become the perfect crime: the destruction of a good life.

Hebrews 11:1 *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

We cannot see the love we have for others. Yet, we can see love when we give it to them. We cannot see success but we envision it. I know a person who thought success was having a house, wife, and good family. When I lost those things I thought, for a time, I had failed. The things I'd hoped for were in ruin. My love apparently was not enough. I thought my love was tied to my success. At least I hoped it was. There is that word again. We hope for a lot. Yet, that hope is dependent on other factors.

Years ago, I lost the love of my life. She was my high school sweetheart. We were together for almost two years. It was a rocky relationship, yet I was tumultuously raptured by her. I was more than devastated when it caved in. Through the sands of time, I had to let it go. It was not meant to be. Through fate (I guess) we met once again outside of school. We got married and had a tumultuously bad marriage for almost 12 years. Go figure. It ended in a fiery divorce. We are not friends.

This is a lesson on love and success. We hope for love. We hope for success. Yet, hope is dependent on something other than hope itself. I had it in my head that if something went away then it was not meant to be. However, if it returned then it was meant to be. Meaning: fate, karma, Murphy's law, success, and love concurs all. Oh, I was wrong.

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1 Corinthians 13:13 *“So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*

Yes! Love concurs all. It was meant to be. My love won out. I will gain success through love. I got the perfect beautiful wife, home, and family. I will have 2.3 kids. What is the .3 anyways? Then my hope was turned into a messy nightmare. I worked in love. I loved in love. I hoped to grow old together in love. Hope is fine as long as the things outside my hope, hope for the same things. When two hopes are different then things go badly. All the love and success in the world cannot save your hopes and dreams when other factors are involved.

This whole chapter seems pessimistic. Where is a world without hope? I totally get that. We need hope. I just want to put our hope in its rightful place. Our happiness and life's desires cannot hinge on hope. I knew a lady that hoped she would lose weight. She never did. She always said she hoped one day her ship would come in. In the end she died mired in debt. In retirement, she had to work. That seems wrong doesn't it.

I read an article on the hope meter. This is interesting. C. R. Snyder developed the idea that high hope achieved better self-esteem results than lower hope. Makes sense to me. High self-esteem trumps low self-esteem. Yet, many successful people are afraid in public. Addictions run high in successful circles because fame and success are not best friends. Someone might be good at something and gained success from it. Yet, they might be just good at it, but not at being a public rock star.

Michelle McQuaid interprets C.R. Snyder by saying *hope not only lifts your spirits, it buoys your energy, makes life seem worthwhile and changes your day-to-day behavior.*

Certainly, positive thinking changes us. They say if you pray more, have more hope in eternal

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life, then; consequentially your stress level comes down. Charles Stanley believes that Christians live healthier lives than non-believers. I don't know, but it fits Snyder's findings. If you take death out of the equation then life is worth living. Being positive helps.

Hope in life is far better than hope in death. I just want us to have perspective on Prayer and Wishes. Don't hinge your life on a prayer or a wish. Don't make hope more than it is. We hope in a prayer. We hope in a wish. That is why we make them. That is why I would make them. Yet, prayer is so much more than just hope. I think positive thinking is so much more than hope too. I bet if I read more of Snyder's work he would say hope is the beginning of action. There is at some point the realization: I think I can. Then there can be also: I know I can. You have to begin at the beginning. It probably does begin with hope.

I love Doctor Who. It a crazy show. It's about a time Lord that fixes incidents in time to save the universe. They are always saying he will think of something in the nick of time. Give the Doctor time. The companions have experienced the Doctor. They have hope in him. They have confidence in him. Yet, many companions have died or left to find life outside the Doctor. The Doctor is hope, but there is more to life than just hope. We live in it too.

I feel that is the same with God and Jesus. If you experience the Christian life there will be peaks and valleys. Yet, hope is found in Jesus because we have experienced him. There are ways through with God. The best way to describe it is in this verse from Matthew 19:26 "*Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*" I heard a great analogy. Someone said Jesus is my savior but he is clearly not sitting beside me. Yet, Jesus is by my side. That is, it. Hope is good. Love is good. Prayer and wishes are good. We need positive thinking. Yet, they are fluffy nice themes and phrases we use. They are not real. Yet, the something greater we hope in is.

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In the first chapter I talked about the power within the things we pray to or wish on. A falling meteorite has no spiritual power to grant wishes. A well does not have the ability within it's stone to grant wishes. A prayer from an atheist might be lip service. Yet, if the thing we wish or pray to is powerful, then it's different.

In Star trek the voyage home they are trapped in the twentieth century. Scotty is standing before a twentieth century computer. He tries to talk to it. That does not work. The man gives him the mouse. Scotty proceeds to talk to the mouse. Scotty is talking to the computer the wrong way in that time period. You can't just hope. You can't just pray or wish. You need to communicate properly. I believe that means with the right attitude (positive thinking). The right desire (reasons). We put hope in perspective. If God has other plans then life goes on. Yet, we hope for more.

To make hope a reality means we have to act. Act in prayer and act in wishing. That is the beginning of a better life. Yet, trials will come and go. In the same Star Trek movie Scotty and Bones need transparent aluminum to get back home. If they give the company the formula they might be changing history, fate, or destiny. They decided that maybe they were supposed to give the formula in history. At least they hoped so. In their hope they had to decide, they had to act.

I have heard that a person in distress might need to repeat things 50 times to work it out. Maybe praying more is a good thing. Maybe even wishing and hoping more are good things. Isn't the perfect life more about being pointed in the right way? I believe God makes paths for us to find our hopes and desires. Sometimes those are unseen and dark roads. Sometimes we just need to take a chance and act.

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Luke 9:62 *“Jesus said to him: No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

Maybe that is it in a nut shell. To be fit for heaven means we positively look forward. We are mindful of the past but hope ahead to the future. We pray and wish for things to improve our lives. Those in heaven trusted something greater than themselves. They hoped in something greater than their circumstances. Use a wish but don't rely on a coin. Use a prayer but listen for the answer. It might be different than we asked. Hope for a better life and world. Yet, it seems that those who overcome tend to make the world a better place. Sometimes that's all we can hope for.

There does not need to be a fight between which is better. Hope points to something greater. A wish does too. Prayer points to God. All these things move us forward. What wrong with that? Just don't hang happiness on wishing, prayer, and hope. You will be disappointed. A friend wanted to be in a relationship after his divorce. His new flame works the opposite shift, so he does not see her much. He thought of leaving, but he said this:

I will live a single life within a relationship. It's better to be alone most of the time but not all of the time. It's better than not being with her at all. He hopes for a better relationship. In time, I'm sure they will work it out. In the mean time he would rather make the best of it than making it worse. There is hope. We act by praying or wishing. Yet, we live in the moment hoping for the best.

I wanted a good life. I am a dreamer. I hoped for the things, we all do. A good job, spouse, and adventure. I got it the long way around. Within that journey I have fought many battles. I have seen a few victories. There is hope. I know some Christians tell unbelievers to

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hope in Jesus. That night I came to Christianity changed me. Yet, I did not find hope in Jesus. I found this thing called hope through life experiences with Jesus. So much has happened. I should have written it down. My life since my 33rd year has been insane. I often wonder if I found hope or it found me.

I know people are leery of the Jesus thing. It seems to be an all or nothing thing with him. Some only say Jesus this or Jesus that. It's white noise. Then there are those who reject and block it all out. Half the time I can't blame them. It's all surface talk. What the hell is hope really? What Jesus did was point me towards hope. Oddly enough, I thought I knew hope. Boy, was I mistaken. I don't hope in a prayer or a wish. Instead, I hope that today will be a day like no other.

We will look at prayer and wishes. Hope is part of the answer to them both. A positive outlook stems from seeking a good way through life. Remember what Jasmine Whitmore said at the beginning of this chapter. *A hope that it will be better and the strength to hold on until it does.* Jesus created patience in me with hope. I have seen blessings in tragedy. That fuels hope. It's my belief that I am pushing my plough forward more often than not. What more can we hope for?