

I NEED
YOUR
STRENGTH,
LORD

EMILIE BARNES
with Anne Christian Buchanan



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A Sense of Tomorrow

You know the old saying, “Where there’s life, there’s hope”? Well, I would put it a little differently. I’d say, “Without hope, life as we know it is simply impossible.”

How can we survive without at least a tiny spark of possibility? How can we thrive without a healthy sense of promise? How can we grow unless hope keeps us looking and learning and moving forward?

That’s what hope really is, after all. It’s the desire and ability to move forward. It’s a forward-looking attitude and a forward-moving orientation.

It’s an interest and investment in tomorrow.

And oh, how we need that “tomorrow” orientation in our lives.

When “normal” life is spinning merrily along, we need that sense of possibility to keep the dailiness of home or office from wearing us down.

When life crashes and burns—when sickness strikes...or a pink slip arrives...or a friend lets us down...or we just seem

to lose the way—we need hope as a lifeline to pull us through and keep us going toward better times.

In the past few years, I've felt the need for hope more deeply than ever before.

During this time, I've come closer than ever before to understanding what losing a sense of tomorrow can do to a life.

You see, I've always been a positive, upbeat kind of person. I've weathered a lot of storms in my life with high hopes intact. But less than six years ago, I sat in an oncologist's office listening to a diagnosis that threatened to shatter all my hopes.

"I'd say you have a forty-to-sixty percent chance of survival," he said, "and that's *with a miracle*."

And then I felt the fear that can grab hold of hope and threaten to drag it under.

As I began treatment, with its side effects of weariness and nausea and pain, I saw more clearly than ever before how hope can diminish along with physical strength.

As I waited the outcomes of tests and underwent the seemingly endless steps in the journey of treatment, I realized how waiting and uncertainty can undermine even the strongest hope.

And as I lay open-eyed during long, painful, sleepless nights, I understood how hope can falter and flutter and seem to fail.

But I also discovered, in the midst of this difficult time, just how deep the wellsprings of hope are in the human soul—and what a persistent, resilient thing hope can be. For through this very difficult time of my life, I've actually grown more hopeful, not less.

The hope that resides deep inside you is stronger than you think. It's a survival mechanism built into you by the Master Designer. Even when it seems to be ebbing low, if you'll give it a chance, it will probably bubble back up again.

Think of all the improbable places in history where hope has managed to survive.

The Holocaust. The Civil War. The Black Death. Slave ships on the Atlantic. Atom bombs in the Pacific.

The Cross.

This last one is the most important, of course, for it's God's own answer to the question of what we can hope for. In the act of turning an instrument of torture into a symbol of redemption, he set the standard of hope for all of us.

Human hope, you see, is hard to kill—but it *can* be killed. It can run out of strength, or drain out into despair and depression.

That's why we need a hope that is bigger than we are to carry us where our human hope cannot survive.

We need a hope that is stronger than death.

I've tested the strength of a hope that prevails when human hope all but flickers out. In that sense, regardless of the final outcome of my cancer, I've experienced the miracle my doctor spoke of. For I've learned to lean on the hope of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—to let myself be carried by the one who is the hope of the world.

And that hope holds, I promise you.

Even in the darkest, sleepless night, it will hold you.



Where there's hope, there's life.



A Hopeful Hint

A guaranteed hope producer is spending time with children. If you have some of your own, get down on the floor and talk to them; most important, listen to them. Let their youth and enthusiasm rub off on you and freshen your hope.

Words of Hope— and Hope from the Word

*But now, Lord, what do I look for?
My hope is in you.*

—Psalm 39:7

*But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,
to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.
We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.*

—Psalm 33:18-22





*You, too, can find a place of silent power.
You can learn to see God in everything, to
listen for his silent language in your life....
Here on the wings of the wind God rides
into your life, whispering his presence,
catching your attention. He brings to mind
other relationships that exist right now,
because relationships on earth remains
after the body is gone, even as the glow
remains in the sky after the sun goes down.
This silent language of love, this voice in the
wind, this undying presence is the unending
gift of God that permeates earth and out-
lasts time.*

This language of love never dies.

—Don Osgood

I was just thinking one morning during meditation how much alike hope and baking powder are: quietly getting what is best in me to rise, awakening the hint of eternity within.

—Macrina Wiederkehr

Never fear, my friends.

The Center holds.

Whether we are centered or not, the Center holds.

—Howard E. Butt Jr.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

—Romans 15:13

