

**52**  
**DEVOTIONS**  
*for*  
**HUNTERS**

**STEVE CHAPMAN**



**HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS**  
EUGENE, OREGON

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## 52 Devotions for Hunters

Previously published as *The Hunt for Faith*

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Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-9361-6 (Hardcover)

ISBN 978-0-7369-9362-3 (eBook)

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**Printed in China**

26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 / RDS / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*To my fellow outdoorsmen and women...*

*My thanks to you for choosing to go with me via these pages into God's great outdoors, where so many life-changing lessons can be learned. It is my deepest honor to help guide you to some unforgettable trophies of truth that I hope will encourage you as you walk the trail of this life.*

*Steve Chapman*

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## ALWAYS HOPING

*...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.*

TITUS 2:13

**P**eople who hunt and fish share a common attitude. As one who is happy doing either, I can testify that this shared mindset is nonstop while enthusiasts are in the woods or on the water. What is it? The answer is...we are always hoping.

Why does hope remain constant the entire time I'm out there doing what I love to do? It's because I'm in a place where I believe something exciting could happen at any moment. I'm *never* bored when I'm hunting or fishing because it's virtually impossible to be hopeful and bored at the same time.

I've also found that hope grows stronger when the time is nearing to head back to the truck or

motor back to the dock. When I'm hunting, for example, and circumstances are about to bring an end to my adventure, such as a planned meeting that I can't miss or a setting sun, I get extra watchful and doubly hopeful. And if I haven't seen anything to that point, the intensity of the anticipation can reach lip-biting levels.

The same growing hopefulness also happens when I'm around water with a line and a rod. If I know I soon have to reel in, de-bait, and pull up anchor, my casting speeds up and the lure cuts the water just a little faster.

Why does this happen? Simply, I long for the hunt to yield an encounter with whatever I'm there to find. If I'm fishing, I deeply want to feel the tug on the line.

The hope that has kept me on the edge of my seat on a ladder stand or in a boat has served a good spiritual purpose. It has helped me as a follower of Christ to better understand the "blessed hope" of His appearing. Believing that it can happen any moment is indeed a sacred hope because it makes a life that is *never* boring and, more important, *never* hopeless.

One thing that makes the “blessed hope” grow even stronger in my heart is hearing the current and trusted teachers of Bible prophecy say with confidence that we’re not far from Christ’s return. To put it in hunter’s terms, the moment is nearing to leave the woods, so it’s time to listen harder and watch closer!

As one who is excited that the prophetic indicators point to a soon end of the age and the appearing of Christ as Redeemer of His people, my hope is intensifying. As it grows daily, I say with John the Revelator, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20 KJV).



*God, I'm so grateful for the blessing of hope. I truly enjoy its benefit in the outdoors, but how much more wonderful is the hope that You will keep Your promise to return and deliver Your people from a world that is growing darker by the day. I want to be among those who are constantly excited, hoping and looking for Your appearance. By Your grace applied to my life, it will be so. Praise and glory be to Your mighty name. And...come quickly, Lord! Amen.*



## MOUNTED MEMORIES

*Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, “What do these stones mean to you?” then you shall say to them, “Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.” So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.*

JOSHUA 4:6-7

If you are a hunter who has paid a pickup load of hard-earned money to a taxidermist to display one of your most prized trophies, surely you know that in the eyes of some folks, you're one shell short of a full clip. I'm not one of them.

If I enter your home (or your “cave” inside your home) where you have animals' parts on display, such as heads, antlers, tails, feet, or hides, I won't look puzzled or startled. Instead, I'll likely point to

one of your cherished examples and say the words you hope most to hear: “Tell me about this one.”

Before you can smile and respond to my request, I’ll add some leading questions:

“Where and when did you get it?”

“What time of the day did the encounter happen?”

“Gun, bow, muzzleloader, pistol, or truck?”

“Distance of the shot?”

“Can you give me the name and phone number of the landowner where you got this one?” (I’ll ask this question with a sheepish grin, but if you want to divulge the information, I won’t refuse it.)

The reason I’ll quiz you about the details behind the mount is simple—I like hearing a hunting story. My ear won’t break if you’re bending it with the details of your adventure. And it’s even more enjoyable to see your eyes light up and your voice become excited as you look at your wall-mounted treasure and gladly cover the minute-by-minute, step-by-step, mile-by-mile account of your adventure. So bring it on. I’ll give you all the time you want, and likely you’d do the same for me.

If you came to my house and asked me about the Alaska brown bear cape, the fan and double

beard from a huge Tennessee gobbler, the Michigan buck, the South Dakota mule deer, my son's first deer, or the Arizona javelina, you'd see my face glow as I offered the details of their stories.

When a hunter sees a fellow hunter's walled evidence of success and asks to hear the story about it, the pricey mount has accomplished its intended purpose. We understand and appreciate this reason for displaying our trophies, and that's why we can easily understand the purpose of the large stones the Israelites placed in the Jordan River as they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 4). The stones were placed there to memorialize a very significant event—God's deliverance of the people of Israel from their enemies and the safe passage of the ark of the covenant to the other side of the Jordan on dry ground.

When the men who placed the testimonial stones in the river were later asked by their children to tell the story behind them, perhaps the fathers replied the way hunters do when asked about one of their mounted memories. No doubt there was joy in their eyes as well as praise on their lips for the One who had miraculously delivered His people.

Perhaps you have a story about your own "Jordan

River” experience and God’s gracious intervention. If so, may He bless your willingness to let others know about it, and may your testimony of His goodness be an encouragement to anyone who says, “Tell me about this one.”



*God, some events in my past are marked with the remembrance of Your timely and helpful intervention. Thank You for those experiences. When I have the opportunity to tell others, especially children, about Your deliverance, I will do it with great joy and in hope that the story will give You the praise You deserve. In Your mighty name I pray. Amen.*



## SMELL LIKE A BARN

*I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

1 CORINTHIANS 9:22-23 NIV

I'm not a tobacco user, but I am a hunter who has used tobacco smoke.

Through the years, the Tennessee county I live in has claimed the number one position in US tobacco growth and production. Planting begins around midspring, and harvesting starts sometime in August. Most of the harvested tobacco is hung in barns along rural roads. In some of these barns, the plants are simply drying. But many of the structures are built for “dark firing” the leaf-laden stalks with smoke from a well-controlled, slow-burning pile of hardwoods.

One of the barns is near our house and is owned by a farmer who lets me hunt on his property. I walked by it one day in late August when it was active and took in the aroma of the smoke that was boiling out into the air. As I did, I suddenly got an idea. When I returned home, I made a phone call to ask the farmer a question.

“Mr. Walker, would you object to my bringing my camo clothes to your tobacco barn around the third week in September and letting them ‘marinate’ in the smoke for a few days?”

Before he could ask why I would want to do such an odd thing, I said, “Archery deer season starts at the end of September, and since the local herd is used to the smell of the smoke coming from the barns around here, I’m thinking I could probably outsmart their noses if I smelled like a barn when I’m in the stand.”

Mr. Walker commended me for my scent cover idea and agreed to let me try it out using his barn. When the time came to “dark fire” my clothes, I put two pairs of pants, a couple of shirts and undershirts, a face mask, socks, and gloves on metal hangers and hung them along the inside wall. Almost a week later, I gathered my smoke-infused gear, put it in a plastic trash bag, and stored it in the covered bed of my

pickup. The smoky aroma couldn't be contained in the bag and filled the cab, but I didn't mind.

On the third morning of bow season, I was in a ladder stand next to a field. I knew the weather conditions were pushing my scent to the ground, but I wasn't too concerned because I smelled like a tobacco barn from head to toe. About twenty minutes after sunrise, my scent cover tactic paid off when a sizable buck walked under me, stopped and put his nose in the air, and showed no concern whatsoever. I'm convinced that as mature and well trained as his olfactory system was, the only reason he didn't run when he checked the wind was that he thought he got a whiff of a local smoking barn.

I really like recalling the memory of that hunt for two reasons. First, there's nothing like getting a fresh hunting idea, trying it, and seeing it work. Second, I always enjoy discovering a connection between a hunting experience and God's written Word, and in this case I realized that to some extent my "smell like a barn" method resembled the biblical approach to evangelism that the apostle Paul used:

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like

one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law...to the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some (1 Corinthians 9:20, 22 NIV).

Becoming “all things to all people” is an evangelistic method that can be as effective now as it was in Paul’s time. I have a feeling that if Paul were here today and wanted to win those who hunt, he would find a way to appeal to them even though he had never been a hunter. Perhaps he would wear camo while he preached or volunteer to be the camp cook for a group of guys on an elk hunt. By doing so, he would “smell” familiar to the hunters he was with, and they would be far more likely to be open to his message.

The difference between my reason for smelling like a tobacco barn and Paul’s reason for becoming all things to all people was that my intention was to deceive the deer while Paul’s purpose was to help his listeners find the eternal truths of Christ and His saving grace. And just as I didn’t become a deer to win a deer, Paul didn’t become a sinner to win a

sinner. He was careful to remain faithful to Christ as he shared the gospel with those who needed to hear it. May God help us do the same.



*Dear Lord, thank You for every opportunity to share the gospel with others. I pray for wisdom to know how I can present the message of Your love in an appealing manner. And I ask for Your guidance and grace never to stray from You while I'm among the lost. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.*



## A LITTLE BEYOND

*He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”*

MARK 14:35-36

**W**hen my buddy Lindsey and I are hunting spring gobblers, one of us will often say to the other, “Go up ahead and check over that rise to see if there’s anything in the field.” It’s a tactic we enlisted after realizing that when we walked together, we sometimes produced too much noise or movement to avoid detection by turkeys.

One particular field, which we have visited annually, definitely requires checking initially with only one set of eyes. On the west and southwest portions,

the hillside rises abruptly to the fence that stands between the woods and the grassy openness, leaving little room to hide once we get to where we can peek into the field.

The northwest and east entrances are very flat and wide open. We can hide behind some sizable trees at the field edge when we approach on our hands and knees, but it's just too risky for both of us to make the crawl at the same time.

Our goal is to avoid getting busted by the wary birds that live there, so you can understand why we have to resort to just one of us stealthily going ahead to get a visual of the field. The one who stays back watches the other like a hawk, looking for a quiet wave to come on, or in some happy instances, seeing him excitedly give that universal signal that turkey hunters love to see—a raised arm and curled fist shake that says, “Gobbler spotted—game on!”

We usually take turns being the one to go ahead. Each of us trusts the other to do it carefully and effectively enough not to mess up and send the boy and girl birds flying to the next farm. And I must admit that it's pure fun (for the human). The intense feeling of anticipation while engaging in the quiet

stalking maneuver is one of the things that keeps turkey hunters going back to the fields and woods.

When the duty falls on me to go forward and check things out, I don't even try to hide the wide-eyed joy on my face as I gather my gear and happily march—that is, crawl—away. I am, for lack of a better word, giddy about going. It's an elation that lingers long after the hunt, and I thoroughly enjoy recalling it even at this moment. As I do, my thoughts turn to the opening words of Mark 14:35. Speaking of Jesus, the verse begins, "He went a little beyond them."

That day in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing that He was nearing the time when He would be crucified, Jesus went ahead of the disciples with a heavy heart. There was no feeling of joy, though there was a sense of anticipation—the terrifying kind. He was surely aware of the Romans' skill when it came to torture. They were masters at inflicting pain and putting humans to death. No wonder He fell to His knees and entreated the Father in heaven to let the cup of woe pass by Him. Yet as we all know, He faced the cruel cross and gave His life for our redemption.

Someday on a future hunt, if you're with a friend and one of you says to the other, "Go up ahead and check things out," perhaps you'll remember what took place not long after it was said of Jesus, "He went a little beyond them." May it bring a feeling of gratitude to your heart as it does mine for what He willingly did for the sake of our redemption.



*Jesus, I offer You my deepest thanks for giving Your life on the cross for my salvation. When You went ahead of the disciples to pray, perhaps they didn't know what great anguish You felt. They know now, and so do we, and we praise You for enduring it. May all the glory be Yours and Yours alone forever. Amen.*