

Hope and Help for Single Mothers

by Ann Brubaker

You can find hope and victory in the midst of pain and difficult circumstances by choosing to believe God for healing, forgiveness, and love, and by persevering in the midst of pain.

Duration: 1:00:08

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:10, Psalm 119:11, Jeremiah 33:3, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 1:17-18, Philippians 4:6-7, Colossians 3:16

Topics: "Mothers"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of finding purpose and hope in life. They encourage listeners to break the cycle of broken homes and pain, and to set a vision for their children's future. The speaker also highlights the role of mothers in shaping their children's success or failure. They urge listeners to find contentment in God and to recognize that happiness is not dependent on circumstances. The sermon references the Bible, specifically Philippians 4, where Paul expresses his contentment despite being in chains.

Transcript

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Powerful words. Everybody's tummy full? If it's not, it's your own fault. Well, I get the privilege tonight to introduce the guest speaker.

And I call it a privilege because it's not just a guest speaker, it's a friend and a neighbor. When Mark and Ann moved to the area, I sort of selfishly found them a house a mile away from our house. I mean, it did open up and I thank the Lord for that.

And I know that God has something wonderful for all of us. And I'm coming to Him tonight with my cup held up. And with an open heart.

I guess I could say I told Rhoda this week we had breakfast and I said that I believe from last Friday to this Friday that I have had the most emotionally traumatic week of ministry that I've ever had in 22 years. Catching tears, moaning, wailing with people that were hurting. So I'm coming perhaps in a different position than you are.

But I know that there's lots of different positions across the room. Probably no two that are alike. So I'm very much looking forward to hear what the Lord has given Ann.

Ann comes to us as a sister who was a single mother for a painful season of life. And she's going to share with us some of the gems that the Lord has given to her under the title of Hope and Help for Single Moms. Is anyone else sitting here feeling pampered? This has just been so delightful.

You know, I was sitting there thinking, I wonder how it would have been if I'd have had an opportunity to sit in an evening like this through our hard years. My heart goes out to how you may be feeling. You know, as I have pondered this evening, memories have just washed up and washed up and washed up.

My mind has been so full of the memories. It didn't seem like it hit my heart. I was saying, Lord, can I stand in front of these ladies with a heart of compassion if I can't feel anymore? The pain is so gone.

And I praise Him for that. But I wanted to feel your pain. It seemed like the Lord was saying, well, I'm supposed to come with hope tonight, not with sympathy.

And that was okay. But you know, as we stood out here and you were coming, it began to hit my heart. And even as Jackie was doing an introduction, I thought, I remember how introductions were in those years.

Oh, I didn't mind telling someone I was Ann Brubaker, but I just sort of cringed at what was coming next. You know, they're going to say, oh, so you're married? And what's your husband's name? Well, yes, I'm married, but he doesn't love me anymore. You know, that's awkward.

And just all those memories. But I come to you tonight with a husband that does love me extravagantly. You know, I ask him, Mark, can I tell the ladies that you love me extravagantly? And he gave me a squeeze and he said, well, if you can't find a word to say it any better than that, I guess that'll do.

And that's the way it is. But it hasn't always been that way. And that's why I'm here tonight.

I hope to give you hope. We just sang, the girls just sang, but I had in mind to sing together the chorus Spirit of the Living God. Do we know it? Enough of us know it to sing it? And let's sing, Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us.

I know, I feel like I need it desperately, and maybe you do too. So let's sing, fall afresh on us, together, and then we'll pray. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us.

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us. Melt us, mold us, fill us, use us. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us.

Let's pray. Father, we come to you tonight as our God of hope, for you are that. Lord, you know the whole insides of every heart here tonight.

I don't, Lord. I do know what it feels like to have a chunk of lead where your heart's supposed to be. I do know what it feels like to be hollow and raw and just that empty feeling inside that just stays.

Father, perhaps there's those feelings here tonight, some who are smiling on the outside, but just crying on the inside. Lord, we come to you as a God of hope. Would you minister to us tonight with your sweet spirit, with your hope.

Father, you know it all. I praise you for who you are and what you've done and what you can do if we'll obey your principles. Lord, I just come with my heart so full tonight.

Would you help me somehow to be able to make sense out of what I want to say and what I want to share here that someone could go away from here tonight with a new vision, with more hope in their heart for their circumstances right where they are. Father, break me, break us, melt us, mold us, fill us, Father, so that you can use us for your glory. You're worthy, Father, you're worthy.

I ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Well, like I said, it hasn't always been for me the way it is now. And I know that there's all kinds of different situations here tonight.

Maybe for some of you there is no hope for a reconciled marriage. So I'm not going to talk tonight about hope in a new marriage, how to save your marriage alone, how to win your man, those are a topic all themselves. But tonight I want to give you hope in the circumstances that you are in right now.

And you may say, well, you know, that's easy for you to talk about. Things have worked out well for you. And that's true, and I grant that.

But I would like to tell you that I know what it's like to stand at the bottom of the stairs and need to be at the top and just not have the mental, physical, emotional energy that it takes to get there. I've been there, but I also know what it is to choose to believe God for my husband, to choose forgiveness and love and perseverance and contentment right in the middle of it. By God's grace, I want you to get a hold tonight of the fact that it's possible.

It is possible to live a life full of hope right in the midst of the circumstances, whatever they are. You can walk in victory. That's what I want to portray tonight, if I possibly can.

I will share some of our testimony just because I want you to understand that I do understand somewhat, perhaps, that I have a right to stand here and say some of the things that I would like to say tonight. It's difficult to share for Mark's sake. You know, Mark is walking in grace.

He is walking in the forgiveness of God and soaring with God in his life. But shame is still shame, and regret is still regret. And I hate the feeling that anybody would go out of here tonight and have less respect for him than you once did.

So I just ask you, in the hearing, if you would please extend grace and forgiveness. It's not difficult for my sake. Like I said as I pondered this, the memories just flooded back, and I just marveled at what God has done, and I marveled that there was no pain.

Just no pain anymore. And that's the first little seed that I would like to drop onto your hearts tonight. I don't know if you can read these, but the first one says, God heals.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that tonight, that God is a healer and he really can heal your hurts in the midst of where you are right now? Luke 18.27 says that what's impossible with man is possible with God. And we can choose to believe that. Mark and I agreed together when it began to look like that maybe we were going to be able to reconcile that God was going to take an impossible situation and bring us back together again.

We agreed that we were not going to waste our experience. God had been too good to us. We started out our marriage very good.

I would have at one point told you that marriage was a little heaven on earth, and it was for us. But gradually, through many events, our relationship began to crumble. Our communication completely cut off.

We had rented a farm, and we were all there together working together, and we had some drought years, and we came into some financial challenges. And then the landlords decided to sell the farm, and we couldn't buy it. So that meant Mark had to go to work, and that was very difficult for me.

And I didn't handle it well. He went to work as a teacher in our church school there, and you might think that sounds like a good idea, and it was. But on the heels of giving up our family farm life, going to work with seven women was very hard for me, and I was jealous.

And Mark knew it, and the devil used that tremendously. Following that, after that school year, he was hired as a manager in a business. And then the devil really had a heyday.

You know, popularity, and position, and power, and money, and a personal secretary, and inevitable fall. And so our lives just crumbled fairly quickly. What was a little heaven on earth kind of became a little hell on earth, and maybe some of you can relate with that.

I would go to him to the door every morning early, meet him at the door every night late, and it got earlier in the morning, and later at night I went into denial. Maybe some of you understand that. I covered for him.

I excused him to the children. But there came a morning. It was a Mother's Day, a Saturday morning, and I had wakened and rolled over against him in an effort to be warm.

He was very cold and unresponsive, and I don't know what the conversation was until the statement. And he said, Ann, I just don't love you anymore. There is someone else.

And I remember my first thought was, I don't dare move an inch or he's going to think I'm rejecting him. And that's seed number two that I have up here. Rejection is out.

Forgiveness is in. By God's grace, I chose to forgive immediately. I don't say that boasting.

I say I'm nobody extraordinary. We have an extraordinary God, and you can too. You can choose to forgive in the midst of your pain.

Mark 11.25 says, When you stand praying, forgive, that your Father in Heaven can forgive you. We all need forgiveness. And if we're going to get forgiveness from God, we're going to have to give forgiveness.

We need to forgive ourselves. We need to forgive Him. Miserable year after miserable year followed.

And he lost that job, of course, because of the relationship. Took a job out of state. Some years later, started building a construction job of his own.

He was in and out of our home some, not there a lot. Year after year after year, our children grew up in basically a dysfunctional home. At the time that this started, Rebecca was 11.

Jenny was 9. And we had three sons. They'd have been 6 and 4. Actually, I was carrying Rick, our youngest, at the time things began to crumble. I don't know how much to share.

I just want you to know I understand. One day the phone rang. There was a woman's voice on the other end, and she said, Are you Mark's wife? And I said, I am.

And she said, Well, I just thought maybe you ought to know I'm in a relationship with your husband. I said, Could we meet? And I met with that woman. We had tea, and I talked to her about my love for Mark.

And my forgiveness for her. And she thought it was crazy. She said, When men get on a roll like this, they never get over it.

And I said, Oh, but you don't know my God. And I talked to her about my God. And when we parted that day, she still thought it was crazy, I'm sure.

But, you know, there is no choice but to choose love. Matthew 5 says, To do good to those that hate us. To love our enemies.

To respond with good to evil. That's God's heart. And that must be our heart.

Bitterness is out. Number 3 over here. Bitterness is out.

Love is in. The next seed that I would love to fall into your hearts tonight, and take root and bring forth hope for your lives, is the reality of the necessity of love. We cannot be bitter.

I don't know what your temptations are to be bitter. Perhaps it's that God. Perhaps it has a husband or a man or a woman who stole your man or your children.

But bitterness just isn't an option. You know, you may be thinking, Well, you don't know what I've been through. I mean, how are you supposed to not get bitter? If we would think tonight about one person who had a right to get bitter, I would guess we would all come up with Jesus.

You know, everybody he had poured his life into just ran away and hid right when he needed them the worst. And he wasn't bitter. Even his father turned his face away from him for sin he didn't even commit.

And he wasn't bitter. He said, Father, forgive them. That's Christ-like love.

And that's the kind of love that I would like to encourage you that you can get a hold of, even in the midst of your circumstances, before anything heals for you, if nothing ever heals for you. We can get a hold of that Christ-like love. It's possible.

You know, bitterness is sin. If we look bitterness full in the face, we need to recognize that it's sin and we just may not choose it. Bitterness will eat your soul.

It will eat the souls of our children. It puts us into a self-made cage and we're in bondage to it. It's just not even an option.

We must choose love. Jesus not only said, Father, forgive them, but he said, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

He was that forgiving. He just assumed the best. And you might say, yeah, well, he knew what he was doing.

Your husband or maybe the man that has hurt you. Maybe. You know, I remember.

I remember that feeling. I remember talking to a woman one time and I was struggling. I said, it's just not fair.

He's out there having fun and here the children and I sit. She said, oh, Ann, don't go there. She said, Ann, in the position he's in, he's on his way to hell.

And here you sit, safe in the arms of Jesus. How can you be bitter about something like that? And I don't know if you're struggling with bitterness towards anyone, but if you are, ponder that. Where are they with God? And where are you with God? And do you really, is there really any room to be bitter? You know, the whole time in the middle of all this mess, I just thought, surely some way in this, something good is going to come out of this.

I'll grow. Someone else will be helped. God will be glorified, surely.

And if you can keep that in mind, ladies, that something good can come out of it because God promises that he'll work all things together for good. We just need to believe him. Another seed, before we get into just some practical helps, and that is perseverance.

And that's the last one over here. Give up is not an option. Galatians 6 says, be not weary in well-doing, for you shall reap in due season if you faint not.

And that is so true. I know the temptation to give up. One day I was talking to my daddy on the telephone, and I said, Daddy, I just give up.

I'm just going to give up. And bless his heart, he was so wise. He said to me, Okay, Ann, give up.

Now what are you going to do? And that's so wise. So wise. You know, if we slide down oiled walls, when we get to the bottom, there's nothing to do but climb back up the same oiled walls.

There's just not a point in giving up. So, believing God, choosing forgiveness, choosing love, choosing to persevere, if we can get those things settled in our hearts in the middle of these hard years, they will bear fruit, and it will give you hope to go on in the middle of your circumstances. I'd like to look at some practical helps for sowing these seeds.

Number one, you need to lay aside your expectations and live in reality. I'm assuming this evening that there really is no hope for you. I'm going to assume that for the most of you here, there's not any more opportunity for you to be that loving, perfect little wife you always dreamed of.

Or to have that sturdy, solid, godly husband that you dreamed of. To have that home, that godly home. I'm assuming that there's just not any hope for most of you.

And if there is, a lot of what I want to say can really be a blessing to you. But if there is not, then there's something you need to do. And that is to lay aside that vision and get a new vision.

Take on eyes for a new vision. By God's grace, because today you're a single mother. Tomorrow, you're going to be a single mother.

And probably, for a long time, you'll be a single mother. So to live in some kind of a false expectation of something that cannot be, is going to hinder you. To live in a false hope, you're going to miss what God could do in you.

Or what He could do through you for the kingdom. Or what He could do in your children. You hinder your productivity for Christ.

And you might ask, Well, how can I have hope in the middle of a life that is so full of pain, and betrayal, and disappointment? Let's look at contentment a little bit. You know, in Philippians 4, Paul says, I have learned whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content. And if I remember right, Paul is in chains.

In a dungeon. Probably not exactly the fulfillment of his expectations for life. And he says, I have learned whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content.

Content? You think, how can I be content in this mess that my life is? Let me suggest two ways. One, accept, believe, and choose that God is your all in all. And two, remind yourself often that happiness is not in circumstances.

Now those sound like real pat statements, I know. But may I testify to you that it's possible? You know, I know how it is to wake up and face a day and just say, What's the point in getting up? The evening looks so far away. But I also know that with some effort, I know what it takes to choose a better way.

And that is to say, God, this bed is so empty, and my pain is so deep, but I am going to choose to believe your promises today. Just for one day at a time. I'm going to choose to believe that when you say that you'll not give me more than I can bear, but will with it make a way of escape, I'm going to believe, Lord, that you're going to help me bear it today.

That's the way I'm going to go through today. I'm going to believe you when you say your grace is sufficient. I need a lot of sufficiency today, but I believe you, your grace is sufficient.

I believe you when you say that when you're weak, I'll be your strength. Lord, you be my strength today. I'm going to believe you that when the waters are deep, you said you'll be with me.

Analyze yourself. How are you doing with your deep waters? Are you just barely treading water with your nose barely out, you know, and almost drowning? Or are you standing on the promises, living a life of victory, walking in hope? You know, Jesus will love you either way. He will.

But can I plead with you to choose the better? Choose to walk a life of victory in the middle of your circumstances. Look around you. There are lots of women right here who understand your heart, who need your ministry.

They need to know how you've gotten victory in your particular circumstance. They need to know how you prayed. Pray with them.

If you will focus on others and not on yourself and your hurts and your children, you really can live a life full of hope with a vision like that. You will have hope, I promise you. It's possible.

There's a second way to get a hold of hope in these circumstances, and I just love this one. Remember that you are one part in a two-part relationship. And I'm not talking about a husband.

I'm talking about God. Some of us here know, maybe better than some others, how important it is for love to flow both ways. Well, God is one part of your relationship, and He's done His part.

He loves you. Now, are you willing to do your part to make that a loving, strong, growing, flowing relationship? You know, I can relate with the sense of failure. I mean, when a woman can't even keep her husband faithful to her, that pretty well shoots your confidence.

But we have to get a hold of this love relationship and see ourselves as our lover sees us. We have to agree with God. You know, when you were in your mother's womb, God looked down and He said, My perfect creation, I love her.

It's good. It's good. It's very good.

She's beautiful. Now, I don't know if very many of you can stand in front of the mirror and say, Good morning, beautiful. You know, maybe that doesn't come real easy for you.

And I don't mean it in a silly, prideful way, but I mean, you need to accept yourself. You are beautiful. You're beautiful to God.

He believes it. Can you believe it? Accept yourself the way He is. Now, look at yourself.

Two eyes, pretty normal nose, you know, decent complexion. Accept yourself. He does.

Can you? In this love relationship, it must flow both ways. So instead of looking at yourself and figuring, what's the use? To that feeling, you need to say, Get thee behind me, Satan. You're an offense to me.

And rather, look at yourself and say, God loves me. And I love Him. So today, I'm going to walk for my lover.

So I'm going to comb my hair. I'm going to use a little hairspray, so I don't get all spraggly till evening. I'm going to use a clean smelling soap, so I'm nice.

I'm going to dress modestly, but in an attractive and a quiet way, because I'm beautiful. I'm the Lord's, and He's with me today. And what's more, this evening, when I get to the end of my day, I'm going to go to bed, and I'm going to say, God, my heavenly lover, did I please you today? I wanted to.

Did I honor your name? Did I glorify you at all today? It's my desire. And I know, you don't have a warm body there. You don't have arms around you to affirm you that yes, you pleased Him.

But I promise you, you can feel a sweet flow of fellowship. You can feel the blessing of having walked with God. And it's so much better than that defeated, hopeless feeling at the end of the day, and starting the next one that way.

This is reality. I'm just encouraging you that since your life is not measuring up to your expectations, live in the reality that you have. And this is reality.

God is doing His part. Are you? You can. There's a third reason why you need to live a life full of hope, and that's for your children.

This is a very real and weighty one. That is for your children. If you have girls, they need to learn how to walk with joy, with hope, vital, so that someday they can be the wife you always dreamed to be.

They can fulfill a man and be fulfilled. If you have boys, you need to set before them a vision, so that they have something to work for, something to fill. Mamas, you stand between your children and success or failure.

You're the link between your children and their future. I know what it's like to feel like, why bother with the cleaning? Why bother with the cooking? Well, if you don't teach your children, who's going to? Can you get a vision of setting them on a course that will take them where you had hopes of going, not down the same road where life has taken you? You know, I remember. I mean, children like boxed mac and cheese, right? And hot dogs? They just kind of come to the table and eat and leave.

No, let me rob you of that. The scripture tells us, whatsoever we do, we do heartily as unto a husband. Right? No, heartily as unto the Lord.

So, if you just throw boxed mac and cheese on the table, you just threw boxed mac and cheese on the table for the Lord. You know, if you feed your children hot dogs five nights a week, you just fed them hot dogs, or fed the Lord hot dogs five nights a week, we dare not just slop and slough through life, regardless what our circumstances is. There's reason to live with a purpose.

There is reason to have hope. If you have, and you do, you're here as single mothers, you have children. There's much to hope for.

Train them up in the way that you want them to go. It's up to you, mothers. You don't have to have devastated children.

You just don't have to. Our son, Mickey, is 21 now. When he was about 18 months old, Mark started taking her out with him on the farm.

He was with his daddy all the time. He took his naps in the tractor, you know, with his head bonking around all over the place. At five, he was driving skid steer and pulling levers on the grain grinder.

He was with his daddy all the time. They were best friends. When Mark went to work and Mick came in the house, I hardly knew the boy.

Through those hard years, I would not know where Mickey was, and I'd go looking for him, and maybe I'd find him laying behind the couch or on his top bunk just staring at the ceiling. So hurt, so rejected, so lonely. You know, kind of just left by his best friend.

And we've done enough counseling to know that this kind of thing can leave young men and young women devastated. Mickey's not a devastated young man. He's a very godly young man, and I know that I probably am a bit prejudiced, but he's very normal.

He's very secure in his father's love for him. He has no problem giving and receiving love. And one day he and I were sitting talking before he left for Africa for six months a few weeks ago, and I guess we were probably talking about tonight, and I was asking him to try to remember to pray for me.

And I said, Mick, tell me why, after the way you and Daddy were so close and all that happened, why didn't you get bitter? Why did you never hate your daddy? Why are you so normal? Do you know? Do you know why you're not a troubled young man? And he said, I do know, Mother. And he said, I'll tell you, and you need to tell the ladies. You're not going to want to.

Mother, it was you. And I said, oh no, Mick, it was God. And he said, I know it was God, Mother, but you let God.

Sisters, don't miss that one. You must let God love through you. Believe God for your children.

Forgive. Love. Persevere.

Be content in the circumstances you're in. Your children don't have to be devastated, because life hasn't turned out for you the way you wanted it to. Our three oldest children, they would have been the only ones, responded to God's call in their lives in the middle of this mess.

You know, whether your children's daddy is your husband or not, whether he's close and you have a lot of contact with him or not, whether you see nothing of him, perhaps death has taken him, all of these things are very important for you to continue pouring into your children's lives so that they can grow up normally. And this next point I want to make is very, very critical. You may never say a negative word about their daddy.

No fault-finding, no finger-pointing, no blame, no criticism. See, the Bible says that children should honor their parents, honor their father, and that is for your children. They need to learn how to honor through you.

You must be an example of honor. If you don't honor him, probably they're not going to, and what's more, they're probably not going to honor you either. You know, the children knew that I went to the door with Mark every morning and I met them there at night.

Every night, there was no kiss. There was no glad to be home in those times that I was able to do that. But they knew it.

They knew that I stayed up if there was any chance, it didn't matter what hour of the morning, that he would come home. They knew when he was gone that if he was maybe going to be home. We changed our plans.

This is honor, sisters. And if you can't honor your children's daddy this way, in a touchable way, then it's even more important that you do it in word and in attitude. Reverence and honor are a way of life.

You know, there was something I did through those years that I didn't think was very out of the ordinary at the time. I think about it now and it's a little strange. But the children believed me.

The three oldest remember this clearly. And they believed me. I told them that we don't blame daddy.

We blame Satan. Oh, we hate Satan. We hate the sin that Satan is bringing and what it's doing to our life.

But we love daddy. We hate the devil. But we just love daddy.

We always love daddy. And I guess they thought he couldn't help it. I don't know.

They just believed me. You know, I don't think that's even theologically sound. But it was a love saver in our home.

You can do this. It's possible to honor your children's daddy so that they do and so that they honor you. To those of us who are married, to those of you who are married, I trust that you're committed to singlehood as there is not any other God honoring option.

Remember that you made vows and they're on record in heaven. This is something that so propelled me on through those years was the vision of the fact that someday I was going to stand before God. And Mark was not going to be there for me to point fingers at.

I would stand there alone. And God was going to get his record. Okay, Ann, I see here that on August 14, 1976, you made vows before me and witnesses to love Mark, to honor him, respect him, reverence him, for better or for worse until you're parted by death.

And it was worse, wasn't it? Much worse than you thought. But well done, my good and faithful daughter. You kept your vows.

Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord. See, those vows are on record in heaven. And just because he broke his didn't give me any reason to break mine.

Use that to propel you on to continue loving and honoring and reverencing if that is your place. Maybe you failed. Maybe your children have heard you curse their daddy.

Maybe they have heard you blame him. You know, you can fix that. You can remedy that tonight.

You can repent. And you can go home and you can talk to your children and confess and share and bare your heart and weep and then you can start over and honor your children or your children's daddy or your husband. There's a fourth reason why you need to walk through life with purpose.

You know, this thing of walking with purpose, you didn't wake up this morning because you chose to. God looked down and he looked at me and he said, I believe there's a work that Ann can do yet today. I'll give her life.

And he did the same for you. Find that purpose and fulfill it. There is purpose for God, for your children.

And there's a fourth reason to walk with purpose and with hope and that is this. It may be that you are one of a chain of generation after generation after generation of broken homes, of pain like this. Or it may be that you're the first one.

Whichever it is, it needs to stop now. And it can stop now. In the name of Jesus, you can break this chain and you can begin a new generation.

You can make wise choices and change that and your children can go on. I have a few more practical lessons I'd like to, or things I'd like to mention here. Do you know how to pray the scriptures? Does anybody know what I mean when I say pray the scriptures? You know, when you're praying the scriptures

for someone, you can know you're praying God's will.

And what's more, it's pretty hard to be bitter at someone when you're praying the scriptures. I have a sheet of paper here that has some scriptures on it that I like to use. You can put your husband's name, your children's daddy's name, your name, your children's name.

Put it in the blank. And let me just give you an example here. I might pray, I cease not to give thanks for Mark, making mention of him in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give to Mark the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, that the eyes of Mark's understanding would be enlightened that he may know him.

Take the scriptures and put a name in there. You'll find a real blessing as you pray the scriptures. You can know you're praying God's will that way.

Another thing that you need to do is spend time in the Word. Spend a lot of time in the Word. You see this orange paper? It's kind of faded on the creases and falling apart, and it's written all over.

This paper is a treasure to me. It used to be a plain, nice, new sheet of orange paper. Aunt Jane, she wasn't my aunt.

She was Mark's brother's wife's aunt or something, but we called her Aunt Jane. She said to me one day, very soon after Mark told me, I don't love you anymore, she said, Ann, I have a couple scriptures for you. Write them down.

Jeremiah 33, 3. She says it says, Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and I will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. And Nehemiah 8, 10, For the joy of the Lord is your strength. You know what Aunt Jane was saying to me? She was saying, You can believe God.

You can believe God. You can forgive. You can love.

You can persevere. You can be content in the situation you're in, right in the middle of it. Because God says that if you call unto me, I will do great and mighty things.

You can believe him. Spend a lot of time in the word. Night after night, I would sit at the island, one, two o'clock in the morning, just poring over the word, and when I'd find a gem, I'd write it down.

And then you've got this whole collection of jewels here, and when you're really struggling, you can just read them one by one. Therefore I say unto you, Whatsoever things you desire, when you ask in prayer, believing you'll receive them, delight thyself in the Lord, and he'll give you the desires of your heart. The effectual prayer of a righteous man, availeth much.

It's here, one right after the other, and you can just be washed in encouragement that way. This paper has been a blessing to me. Another thing I encourage you to do is keep a journal.

Keep a journal of the ways in which God gives you hope through these hard times. You know, often we cry out to God, and He answers. One time I was sitting at the island, and I said, Lord, if You're still aware of what's going on in my life, could You just let me know You're still there? And it wasn't very many minutes, and there was a knock at the door, and I went to the door, and there stood my daddy.

He had his hat in his hands, and tears running down his cheek, and he said, Ann, I was just going past the lane, and I thought maybe you needed something. And I wrote that down. And you know, the times when you cry out to the Lord like that, and He chooses to be silent, then you can go back to these things that you have in your journal, and let them wash you again.

In fact, I know that among you, you all have gems like that, and I would like to ask you, before I get finished here too, begin preparing your heart to share if there's something God has done for you that really, really boosted your hope for life as you've gone through your trials. Maybe you could share it with us tonight. So be thinking about that.

Another thing God did for me, and I have to share this one. It was such a blessing. One Saturday morning, it was at a time Mark was home, and he was building his business.

He was sitting down at the desk. He had gone early. Saturday mornings used to be so much fun at our house.

We'd get the babies in bed with us, and all the children would climb in bed, and we'd romp. Well, of course that came to a screeching halt, and I was just laying there alone, dealing with my pain and my disappointment, and trying to pray, and falling asleep, and waking up, and, you know, it's hard to pray very peacefully when you're not very yielded. Finally, I came to a point where I said, Okay, God, I give up again.

I will trust you. I will yield my will to yours. I will believe that you're with me.

I will just trust in you and let you lead me. I fell back asleep and slept soundly, and it couldn't have been very long until I heard a voice that said, Be still and know that I am God. And it woke me, and I sat straight up in bed, and I looked around the room, and there was nobody there.

And I sat there and pondered, and I knew that I had just heard God speak this to me. And I ran over to Rebecca and Jenny's room, and I shared it with them, and that was such a blessing. I could have gone on that for a long time, as if that wasn't enough.

A couple days later, I was talking to my friend Denise, and she said, Ann, I owe you an apology. She said, You don't even know it yet. But she said, About two weeks ago, I was in a Christian bookstore standing in front of a display, and it was just like the Lord said to me, Buy that for Ann.

So she said, I did. I brought it home, and it's wrapped, and it's been sitting on the top of my refrigerator for two weeks. And I'm so sorry.

I just feel like I've been negligent, but she said, I want to get it to you. So she brought it over, and I unwrapped that box, and I pulled out this mug, and on it, it says, Be still and know that I am God. And I said, Denise, you weren't negligent.

You were just inside God's frame, time frame. You know, two weeks before my struggling Saturday morning, God told her to buy that for me. I still stand in awe of that.

This sits on my windowsill as a reminder of God's faithfulness. Two weeks, ladies, before what's going to happen to you, He knows now. Can you believe Him? Can you choose love? Can you choose forgiveness? Can you choose contentment with a God like that taking care of you? Another thing, let your

children forget.

You know, I was talking to Rebecca, that's our oldest, the other day, and I asked her to pray for me this evening, and she said, Mother, what are you doing talking to single mothers? See, she's forgotten. Let them forget. Don't remind them of traumatic times.

Don't dramatize what's happened to you. Don't share those hurtful things. Remember, we're going to honor their daddy.

Just let them forget. Children are amazingly forgetful. They just are flexible.

No, they're going to know their life, their home is not quite like most people's, but that's their normal. And if it's happy, and if they're securing your love, and you're honoring their daddy, and you're hoping in life, and you're joyful, they can live normal lives. They'll grow up fine.

Find them a father figure. I would encourage that. Someone you respect.

Someone that they can turn to. And your relationship with them needs to be very, very close. In fact, I found that when Mark and I began to come back, it was a tearing from my children to give my heart back to him again.

But if he's not there for you, you need to be there for them. Reverence and honor their daddy. They'll forget much.

I have a bonus. Mark loves me more than he would love me if we had not gone through what we did. And I realize you may not get that bonus.

You may not be able to have that bonus. But I promise you, upon the promises of God, you will get a bonus. Because he says, that if you call unto me, I will give you great and mighty things that you don't know anything about.

It's God's promise to you. He says, I'll do exceeding abundantly above all that you're going to dare even think to ask me for. He promises.

Just believe him for it. You can. You must do your part in this love relationship.

But God will do his part. Maybe there's some extreme cases here, and your life is so deeply injured that you feel like I really haven't even given you anything to go on or to hope for. Did you ever hear the story of the toad and the pail of cream? You know, a toad fell in a pail of cream one time, and he had two choices.

And he had to make a decision quick. He could either drown, or he could do what he did. He kicked.

And he kicked, and he kicked, and he kicked, until he had turned his cream into butter. And then he crawled up on top of his butter. Now let me ask you something.

Are you drowning in your circumstances? Or are you letting your circumstances be the very thing that helps you to victory? You can. God promises that he will work all things together for good to those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. Let me give you one more hope from an eternal point of view.

From Jesus' own words, and I'm going to paraphrase a bit. In Revelations, it says something like this to you. Listen.

Jesus is saying this to you. Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to every woman according as her work shall be. And she that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be her God, and she shall be my daughter, and I will wipe all tears from her eyes.

There will be no more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain, for all the former things are going to pass away, and all things are going to become new. Hallelujah! If nothing else that I've said tonight spurs you on to make a choice to live life full of hope, surely that will. Father God, if there has been anything said here tonight that doesn't glorify you, I pray you'll let these women all just forget.

And Father, otherwise, just take these words that have come from the fullness of my own heart and our experiences, and use what you've taught me, Father, and break these words to these ladies that it would be bread for them to grow on. Would you stir tonight, Lord, in some heart, perhaps to bring repentance, but to give hope in every heart. Send us home tonight with new visions, with new purpose, with new hope in Jesus Christ.

For indeed, Father, you are our hope. And I pray it all in the precious name of our healer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

God bless you all. Thank you so much, Anne. I know that I'm not a single mom, but I did receive hope and encouragement.

Anyone have something to share? I'll bring the mic to you so you don't have to come up. Do you have a time when the Lord just encouraged your heart, a little nugget, something you'd like to share that might bless someone else? A time maybe when you were at the very bottom and you just didn't see how you were going to go on and God brought you one of those gems. Do you have one? Just raise your hand.

Anybody? God has blessed me in many, many ways and many times with miracles. Some people might not see it, but one sticks out, and it's last year. I developed much pain in my shoulder and it got so severe that I couldn't sleep, and I sure don't like to go to the doctor, and I thought I should have faith for it.

But I remember I was sitting at a table and was so discouraged, and I thought, why can't you heal me? God, you know how my struggles are. I'm living alone with four children, even though my life is very blessed, but every mother knows all the things we have, and I was very discouraged sitting there, and I thought it reminded me of my childhood. I was very sick as a four-year-old.

I couldn't walk for six months, and I believe that God performed a miracle to heal me because unless I'm absolutely mistaken, I felt hands touch me while my mother was out of the room, and I do believe God heard me, and I asked Him, can't you do this again? Please, I'm begging you. Since months I'm going through this. I can't do the garden work.

I can't do the housework. So much pain. And I said then, I thought about suddenly my middle name, and I thought, and you don't need to remember it, my middle name is Rafaela, and I thought, well, that does sound Hebrew, and out of, I don't know why, I got up, walked to the throne of concordance, and I looked it up, and the male form of Rafaela means God has healed.

I was so, I never ever knew that it was a Hebrew word. I never knew, and I was so touched, and I wrote it down, and I went to my children, and I thought, there she has one of these moments again. I praised God for it, and I thanked Him, and I knew it didn't matter to me whether I had healing at that moment.

It didn't matter. It took another few months. I have hardly any pain anymore, and I praised Him for it in so many little situations.

Just one more thing, where we all know we hit the moments where, as she said also, there is just such a loneliness. I can't wait for my husband back because I was in a remarriage situation. I have no right to feel that way.

Despite 16 years, and no matter what, I don't even allow myself to go there. And I live on the farm where the couple that owns the farm has an office not far away, and I don't always want to burden them. I have done so very many times.

They are around 15 years older than me. So I felt I really longed to talk to the woman, but I thought I really can't bombard her, but I miss her. So I went into my daughter's room and sat there, and I saw her coming with a car, and I really felt I miss her.

And I told my daughter, I should go there tomorrow and tell her I miss her. So we are sitting there listening to music, and she said, I think I heard something. I got up, and she stands in the kitchen.

She never visited me out of the blue in the evening, but her husband, God, that is so good, left her for three nights in a row for work alone, and she was just tired of that. And she thought we didn't talk for quite a while. So she came and visited.

I told her later on. And I could fill a book with these stories, and that encourages me because I so often think, God, I know you are there, but I can't hear you. I can't feel you right now.

I need more than that. There is nobody that says I love you. My children do, but they say the next moment also something else.

So I praise God for His goodness and love. Thank you for sharing that. What about a financial blessing? Would there be someone who would say a time when you were in straits and you just didn't know how you were going to make it because you didn't have the provision that others did and the Lord provided through someone? Would that be something someone would want to share? Just some special little sweet something that the Lord did for you? One Mother's Day when my children were very young, they wanted to go out and buy a gift for me.

I really didn't have any money to go give them something, and they were way too young to leave in a store by themselves. I didn't know what to do. They said they wanted to buy flowers, and they insisted that they buy them themselves.

They were only four or five, just way, way too young to go let in a store by themselves. Then I saw this little flower shop in New Holland, and it was a very little store. I said to them, Okay, I'll give you some money.

I didn't have much. I walked in with them. They didn't even know.

They couldn't read numbers yet because they weren't in school, but I showed them which flower arrangements they would be able to buy. Then I told them if they would pick out the one they wanted and take their money up to the counter, I would go outside. That was the best I could do.

I went out, and I waited, and I waited. I knew they couldn't have gone somewhere else because the store was so small. They came back out with this huge, huge flower arrangement that I had seen in there.

It was pretty, but it was like four times the amount of money I had given them. It was wrapped. I didn't see what it was, but I could see by the size of it that it was not what I could afford.

They also had a balloon with it. The helium balloons are, I don't know, \$4 or \$5 also. They very happily giggled and put it in the back seat and didn't let me open it until Mother's Day.

It was a huge arrangement. It was worth much more than the money I had given them. It made me cry.

I realized that God was in the heart of that lady behind the counter, a total stranger that I didn't even know had blessed me more than she would ever know to have given these children, who so desperately wanted to give their mother something, their father would never, never get them something to give to me on Mother's Day, and they had no one else to take them. And the stranger in that store had no idea how richly she blessed me and how God had used her. And your children learned something that lots of children have not learned because of not being in the same straight.

That's a beautiful story. Someone else, anything, a gem for somebody else to encourage, doesn't faith build faith? It does. I just wanted to say for those of you that were here last year, I don't know if you remember Pam Pritt.

She was the one that was crying and encouraging the single mothers to believe God for bringing their husbands back. Well, thank God she's not here this year because her husband is back. And it's because of her believing prayers and her faith in God.

He's still not a Christian, but we are amazed at what God has been doing in his life. Back then he fell into an adulterous relationship also. But now that when he came back like a year and a half ago, he still didn't want her to quit her job.

He didn't want her to homeschool or anything. But now he has said that she could leave that job, and now she's at home even homeschooling. He's allowed that and everything.

He drives a truck and he calls her. Like the other night she said he called her and was saying, Hey, get some people together and pray that God will get me a run because he didn't have no run that evening. And he'll lead out in family prayer now at night when they eat.

She's just amazed. She is seeing how he's starting to rely on God now. And I've always said since I've met her, it is because of her believing prayers and just the faith that she has in God that he was going to bring her husband back to her.

So I hope that was an encouragement. It is an encouragement. Do you remember last year? I was here last year, and when she shared it, it broke my heart.

Do you remember? And I felt I want to remember what she said because she was talking to those of us who did have husbands. She was saying how she'd sit in the nursery and she'd hear this woman and that

woman complaining about her husband's dirty socks and this. And here she was just longing to have her husband.

And it was very piercing. And that's why God's wisdom is applicable to all of us no matter what situation we're in. I just wanted to say that with Pam, her husband needed to go to the hospital and had surgery and there was no one to care for him.

So he came home to her house and then he decided to not leave again. Anyone else? I don't want to cut you short. Neither do I want to keep you long.

Anybody? Ann mentioned at the close there that she would encourage ladies to keep a journal. And I know from everyone I've ever met who has journaled and the journaling that I've done myself, the tremendous treasure of keeping track of pain and blessings to look back on. So some of the ladies did purchase some journals out here as you go out the door.

We'd love for you to take one if you would like to have that. You can start from today. And just pour out, just gush out your heart feelings and you will see growth as you claim promises and write them down.

The Lord will bless you with that. Christine, do we have anything else here? All right, then why don't we close in prayer. Oh God, you are our God and you are so good.

Your promises are true. Father, we thank you for your presence this evening. We thank you for ministering to us through one of your servants, through your word, through your truth.

And Father, I pray that you have just planted all sorts of seeds around this room and in hearts. And Father, I don't know how many children are represented in this room. Father, I pray that we will see much fruit come in their lives because of the wisdom that we've leaned tonight.

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