

# Creating a Culture of Hope: How to Turn Your Trials into Triumphs

(STUDY GUIDE)

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*“Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.  
Even today I declare [that] I will restore double to you.”  
Zechariah 9:12 (NKJV)*

## I. Have Trials Ever Struck Your House?

*Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted [accordingly] is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.” Luke 6:47-49 (NASB)*

### A. From Both Sides Now

I have gone through deep sorrow and trauma in this life. I had to learn how to keep on walking through the valley of the shadow of death (see Psalm 23). Sometimes we are tempted to sit right down in the middle of the valley, but the Psalmist tell us to “Walk through the valley.” In fact, in the natural there are no mountains without a valley on both sides.

“Both Sides Now” is the name of a folk song from the ‘60s, and it captures a truth. I can look at life from both sides, which I previously could not do. I have experienced both heaven-sent highs and the bleakest lows, and firsthand I have learned some things about God that I did not know before. I have experientially learned that God is the author of hope. God abounds in hope, and He wants to teach you how to build a culture of hope and you can turn your trials into triumphs in Christ Jesus.

### B. When the bottom falls out

The following is a thumbnail sketch of what the narrative of my own life looked like for a protracted period of time.

1. Who turned out the lights?
2. The battle of the big "C"
3. The loss of my companion
4. The public goldfish bowl
5. I have what again?
6. A mountain of debt
7. Hope deferred

### **C. It's a battle for the heart**

The whole thing is a heart battle. The following is a proverb which addresses this very issue, "*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the springs of life.*" Proverbs 4:23 (NASB)

There are three typical reactions one may entertain, or full-blown go through, when dealing with pain, rejection, disappointment or various aspects of trials and traumas.

1. We move away from people and God into isolationism.
2. We move toward some other unhealthy source for relief or acceptance.
3. We move against God and others, becoming adversarial.

We must get real and acknowledge any wrong path we have chosen even in the midst of temporarily losing your bearings or compass in life.

## **II. Is God Really Good All the Time?**

*"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28 (NASB)

### **A. Does God cause everything?**

No matter what comes, God is good. He doesn't stop being good when my life falls apart, even when I happen to be at fault for some of my troubles. He doesn't stop being good when I forget He is good or if I never understand in the first place that He is good. God is good, period.

1. **Not everything that happens in life is good.**
2. **We have a real enemy.**
3. **All things work together for good.**
4. **Do you love God and are called to His purpose?**

## **B. Worship God with Your questions**

Worship God with your questions? You would want your questions answered, wouldn't you? Yes, but I have discovered that true worship involves trusting Him with your biggest, messiest questions. Tell Him you do not know the answers, but you know He does. He wants you to do this, whether you bring Him some big philosophical or religious question or, more than likely, some emotion-laden practical thing. Open your heart and surrender your mind and worship Him for who He is—not just what you want Him to do.

## **C. A key to stability—establishing your core values**

1. Going back to the basics

In order to learn to hope again, I had to go back to my ABCs, to my foundations. What did it matter that I was a professional minister who had traveled the globe and ministered in over 50 nations and had written over 30 books? I had to start back at the beginning. I had to go back to basics.

2. Figuring out my core values

I figured out three core values:

- a. God is good, all the time
- b. “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28 (NKJV), and
- c. Something good is just about to happen.

3. What are yours?

We each need a compass to guide us in life. We each need a navigation system to help us locate or relocate our “True north.” Do you know your “Core values”? You must ask yourself, others and God, some bottom-line questions. This is a major part of creating a culture where you thrive, and not only survive.

### III. Discovering the Door of Hope

I had a dream one time in which I went through a single door, and it led into a place like a hospital or hotel—a long hallway with doors on both sides as far as I could see. The Holy Spirit spoke to me in the dream and said, “I have now brought you through a door.” So as a result of this dream, I studied about doors for a solid year. I ended up with a very simple conclusion: Doors keep things out and doors let things in.

#### A. Hope defined

Hope is the positive expectation of good. Are you keeping your appointment with hope? Hope is waiting right in front of you!

#### B. Hope is a door—Hosea 2:15

*“I will give her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the days when she came up from the land of Egypt.”*

#### C. Hope is Anchor—Hebrews 6:18

*“Therefore, we who have fled to Him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us.”*

#### D. Hope is a Helmet—1 Thessalonians 5:8

*“But since we are of [the] day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”*

#### E. Hope is a person—Colossians 1:27

*“Therefore, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

### IV. He Gives Us Beauty for Ashes

*“To appoint unto those that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”* Isaiah 61:3 (KJV)

## **A. What are ashes, anyway?**

I believe there are four things about ashes that are important for us to remember:

1. Ashes are evidence of a previous fire.
2. Ashes are evidence of a sacrifice.
3. Ashes are fertile fields for growth.
4. Ashes carry an aroma that ascends.

## **B. An encounter with the beauty realm of God**

*“One thing I have asked the Lord, that shall I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple. For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.”* Psalm 27:4-5 (NASB)

## **C. The Divine Exchange**

This historic exchange happened on the cross of Calvary where Jesus bore our sin and gave us His provision and promise of beauty for ashes. According to Isaiah 53:2-5, Jesus took our sin upon Himself in order that we could come into right relationship with our Father. This is called the Divine Exchange.

- Jesus took my sorrow, pain, and shame.
- Jesus, on the cross of Calvary, took the sin of all mankind—generations past, generations present, and generations future.
- It pleased the Father to fling, to put upon Him—the spotless Lamb of God—the sin of all mankind.
- Jesus was crushed. He was bruised. He was beaten. He was pierced. He was scourged.
- He did all of this for my wellbeing, and by His stripes I am healed.

## **D. Time to change your garments**

According to Isaiah 61:3, God’s divine exchange gives us beauty for ashes, joy for our mourning, and a new garment of praise for that which causes us to be heavy. If we are going to receive this exchange, then we also have to make this exchange. We have to cast something off before we can put something new on.

## **V. Needed: Ambassadors of Hope!**

Out of the ash heap of my own life experience, my Creator is fashioning something beautiful. God is using all of my trials and turning them into triumphs. And guess what? He is an equal opportunity God waiting to do something for you beyond your imagination.

### **A. God's redemptive nature**

God is in the middle of redeeming you. His whole nature is to be a redeemer. Because of His faithfulness, His patience, His lovingkindness, His mercy, and His grace, He is bringing you through that doorway labeled "Hope." God has a good future, a plan, and a hope designed for you. Oh, and yes, our mess is an opportunity for His next miracle!

### **B. You can be the next Hope Ambassador**

An ambassador goes to his or her appointed place, having been vested with authority to represent one nation to another. In this case, you will be representing the Kingdom of God to the world at large. The world needs you. Hope solutions are in short supply. The world needs vibrant believers who have won their way through monumental obstacles and who can show the way of hope. Hope ambassadors know hope inside out. They breathe hope, live hope, exhibit hope, and light up their sphere of influence with hope. Yes, you can be the next Hope Ambassador!

### **C. Let's make a declaration together!**

*Father God, by Your grace I choose to take my place in the theater of life. I am grateful and delighted to be given another opportunity to learn from You and to sit at Your feet. I believe and declare that You are good all the time and Your mercies endure forever. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and with Your heavenly perspective so I too may demonstrate that these temporary trials may become the next place of triumph. I receive Your commissioning to be an Ambassador of Hope. Through Jesus, Your only Son and our Lord, amen and amen!*