

Kimberly Jones Verneti

| Pursue Hope | Find Freedom | Live Loved |

Fighting Back with Faith, Hope and Love

A 5 DAY BIBLE STUDY

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*But since we belong to the day, let us be sober,
putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a
helmet. 1 Thessalonians 5:8*

HEY THERE SWEET SISTER,

The struggle is definitely real. Daily little annoyances, great big catastrophic struggles, and every struggle in between. I believe the moment we walk into a struggle, brokenness or illness we become survivors.



We are survivors of hurt feelings.

We are survivors of broken relationships.

We are survivors of falling short.

We are survivors of comparisons.

We are survivors of loss

We are survivors of many things.

I remember a cross stitch my parents once had. A little mouse clung to a frazzled rope and beside him it read, "When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on!"

Does surviving look more like, "barely hanging on" for you? For a long time, I felt just like that little mouse. Clinging to the frazzled shreds of whatever rope I could find. Just barely hanging on. But, that's not God's plan for us.

As I battled the biggest struggle of all, the Lord transformed me, my heart and my life with just three words: Faith, Hope and Love.

By faith; we can step into a struggle and allow it to make us stronger.

Because of Hope we can carry a whisper of praise on our hearts and a shout of thanksgiving on our lips.

In love; we find rest from our weariness and release our worries to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the days that follow, I invite you to welcome that same transformation into your heart. As you experience each devotion, prayer and scripture, I pray that the Holy Spirit will do an unexplainable work in your life leaving you strengthened in faith, in hope and in love.

DAY ONE

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"She is clothed in strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come."

Proverbs 31:25

HEY THERE SWEET SISTER,

"She can laugh at the days to come." Oh, that Proverbs 31 woman! It's not enough that she gets up before dark to cook, works all night, and has a family who adores her. She laughs without fear of the future too? Doesn't she have any worries or dread?

I know I do! Even though I knew going into the surgeon's office what the diagnosis would be, I walked out with fear streaming down my face. Before I could close the truck door, I found myself wrapped in my sister's arms. She appeared out of nowhere giving me permission to finally speak the words, "I'm so scared." Just as quickly as the cry escaped my lips she breathed life back into me saying "God doesn't want us to be afraid." Was I ready to face my upcoming tomorrows with a smile? No. But the truths behind these words would pave the way to the faith I needed to make it through cancer.

So, how do we get to that point where we can join hands with the Proverbs 31 woman standing firm and secure while looking towards the future?

Faith.

The bible defines faith as the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen Hebrews 11:1). When we put our trust in Jesus, relying on His word as truth and believing His promises we can face any circumstance with joy, contentment, courage and strength.



Once upon a time I thought the only way to walk through a struggle was by constant scheming and fretting. Now I know that just like the Proverbs 31 woman, we can face any circumstance with hope and rejoicing by being firmly attached to our faith in Jesus Christ.

DAY TWO

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"For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

HEY THERE SWEET SISTER,

"Hope whispers "You are not alone!"

I love this quote. As I battled cancer, my loved ones were a life line of support. Some were all hugs and comfort while others encouraged with tough love. It was always what I needed, even when it wasn't what I wanted. No matter what, I was never alone.



Whenever I was feeling down I would turn to my support team and be reminded of Jeremiah 29:11. The Babylonian exiles were facing 70 years away from home when they received this message and I imagine they needed encouraging in their chaos. Encouragement to make the best of it. Encouragement against false expectations. Encouragement to trust God, even in these difficult circumstances. The Lord used the prophet Jeremiah to deliver just that in the same way that he used my family.

Our God cares deeply about his people. He knows human nature will cause us to look at our hard places and become bitter. He knows our fight or flight reactions to chaos. He knows everything that we don't. And because he loves us he sends whispers of hope and encouragement. Encouragement to make the best of a bad situation. Encouragement to tell us that despite what it looks like; God is still in control. Encouragement that says His good and perfect plan will prevail and he is working everything out. Even if it doesn't look like you expected. Even if the suffering lasts too long.

When all seems lost, we can find our hope in knowing God loves us and even that which seems like a disaster, will be used for good.

DAY THREE

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*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27*

HEY THERE SWEET SISTER,

As silly as it may sound, the thing I feared most about chemotherapy wasn't the needles, I was getting use to those. It wasn't getting sick to my stomach, I had 4 prescriptions for that. The thing I feared most was losing my hair. It sounds so shallow to me now, but it's true! The doctor told me that it would start coming out two weeks after my first treatment and he didn't lie!

I had fearfully imagined that my hair would fall out all at once at the worst possible time and that there would be puddles of tears and loud wailing. So, imagine my surprise when the morning came that I found the first clump in a heap on my brush, sighed heavily and hurried off to work with dry cheeks. Where did that calm come from?

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27

The strands kept falling down but my peace remained steady. Instead of crying, my family laughed our way through shaving my head and crowning my baldness with it's new wig. Instead of writhing in self-pity I found confidence to use this experience as an opportunity to look outward to love and encourage the people around me.



Did you know that the antidote for fear is peace and the opposite of fear is confidence? Because of God's great love for us, we can be confident of His sovereign hand of faithfulness, comfort and peace. We know that love casts out all fear and in the absence of fear we are free to rest in love and peace. God will provide, His will will prevail, and it is good.

DAY FOUR

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See what great love the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. 1 John 3:1

HEY THERE SWEET SISTER,

Once upon a time lived a young girl who longed to meet new people and feel comfortable in a crowd. She was shy and timid even though her deepest desire was to be brave enough to walk up to a stranger and walk away with a new friend. Instead she was a worry wart who hid behind her mother in public and avoided eye contact at all cost. I barely recognize that girl anymore even though I see her face in the mirror each day.

See, I am what I
like to call an
extroverted introvert.
That shy anxious girl
has now become a
girl bursting with
confidence and joy.
This is what God's love
does for us. He
changes our identity.



I once was lost but now I am found. I once was shy but now I am confident. I once was a worrier but now I am a prayer warrior. When you choose to accept the love God lavishes on you it changes everything.

We all have things in our lives that we could allow to define us. Our struggles, our weaknesses, our perceived inadequacies. But instead of finding our identity in the light of how others might see us, what if we saw ourselves through God's eyes. Valued. Righteous. Holy. Victorious. Chosen. Forgiven.

Sisters, God loves each of us so much that he sent his only son to die for us so that we could be called daughters of the one true King. He has made us co-heirs with Jesus. So whatever lie or label you are holding onto and allowing to define you, release it to God today and start living loved in your new identity. Because, when we walk in faith and pursue hope, we can live loved. Scripture says "the greatest of these is love." And it's God's great love that makes us who we are today and into eternity.

DAY FIVE

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putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a
helmet. 1 Thessalonians 5:8*

FIND AND SEEK...

What struggle are you walking into, standing in or stepping on the other side of?

What does your rope look like? What is that you are using to help you to barely hang on?

**What does our key verse show us to use as a life line instead?
How would that look in your life?**

*Thank you, Lord for your goodness. You are an awesome and mighty God, yet you care so very much about every little detail of our lives.
Help us to depend on you, Lord Jesus. With everything that life throws at us, we find peace in knowing you are in control. In Jesus name, Amen.*

DAY ONE

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*"She is clothed in strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come."
Proverbs 31:25*

FIND AND SEEK...

The Proverbs 31 Woman laughs at the days to come. What is keeping you from facing the future with a smile?

The Lord sent my sister to grab my hand and remind me that fear is not from God. Who or what has God sent to remind you of something? How did that help you?

How can you allow your faith to help you through this struggle? What are the benefits of choosing to trust God?

Father God, you alone are our strength and your strength brings us joy. Help us to persevere and to see the good in the struggles abounding around us. May we cling tight to our faith and wait peacefully and patiently for your will to be done. We love you and give you all praise and honor and glory. In Jesus name, Amen.

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"For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

FIND AND SEEK...

What is your definition of Hope? Do you think worldly hope differs from Christian hope? How so?

Do you ever feel lost or alone when walking through a struggle? What can you do to remind yourself that God is with you and you are not alone?

How does knowing that God is in control and has a plan for you help you to cope with difficult seasons?

Dear Lord, thank you for whispers of encouragement to get us through each day. Your plan, though we may not always be able to understand it, is good and perfect. Help us to keep our eyes on you and hold onto the hope of Jesus Christ our Savior. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27*

FIND AND SEEK...

**Jesus said he does not give as the world gives. How does the world give?
Considering your answer, how does Jesus give?**

**When have you been pleasantly surprised by your unmet expectations? How
did it help you to see God in your situation?**

**How do we know that God loves us? List as many ways as you can think of.
Remember these things!**

*Dear God, we love you and we thank you for loving us first. We choose you
and we thank you for choosing us first. Help us to walk in your love and
share it with the others around us. In Jesus name, Amen.*

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"See what great love the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. 1 John 3:1

FIND AND SEEK...

What will walking in faith look like in your life?

How can you live every day in the pursuit of hope?

What will it take for you to live loved?

Father God, thank you for giving us the courage to follow hard after you. You are a good, good Father and we love you and know that you love us more. Help us each day to pursue hope, find freedom and live loved. In Jesus name, Amen.