

# The God Of All Hope



Climbing the two steps toward the horse, I made my first attempt to sit in the saddle. With the desire to learn to ride a horse as a target on my bucket list, I was nonetheless terrified of this huge beast after hearing the trainer warn me of all the possible, frightening choices this horse could make. Yet yearning to proudly say I was able to cross this item off my list, I was determined. Once sitting high astride this big monster, I began to wonder if I had bitten off more than I could chew. With the feeling of sitting atop a mountain that could throw me at any time, I knew it was too late to change my mind and decided to make the best of it. My greatest hope was to make it through the experience without having a major catastrophe. As my horse trainer gently led me – and the horse – through the steps of using the reins and my legs to nudge and guide her through our one-hour experience, I still felt insecure, yet proud of myself for the attempt.

It wasn't until it was time to dismount that I realized my most challenging obstacle lay ahead. Needing to hoist my right leg over the back of the horse, I soon discovered that this 73-year-old lady's leg simply couldn't stretch far enough to lift that leg, and being a tall person, there was a lot of leg to lift. Fortunately, after numerous tries, my attempts proved successful and I thought, "Maybe next time my hope of easily riding this horse will come to fruition." Although I knew I hadn't truly learned to

guide the horse around the arena on my own, my hope of doing so did not fade. However, I was painfully aware that some personal stretching and additional trust in the trainer would be absolutely necessary.

My experience on the horse reminded me of the words in Psalm 147:10–11:

***“His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.”***

Yes, the horse was strong and beautiful, and yes, the legs of this woman were not. But I realized my greatest accomplishment was not in the completion of something I did on my bucket list. While it was truly an experience I will never forget, yet even more amazing is my relationship with my best friend, Jesus Christ. His ultimate presence far surpasses anything I could accomplish on my bucket

list. The training I would have encountered on the horse will never come close to the successful training I receive in Christ through the study of His Word. Because of that, the Living Word adventure will remain the number one item on my bucket list. All else is temporary and will fade when this life ends.

**Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, the need for hope is crucial, as many people die emotionally or give up on life without it. Scripture tells us that if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (Romans 8:25). Give us that patience as we learn more of the hope that can only come through You. In Jesus' name and for His sake we ask this. Amen.**

## MY HOPE RESTS IN YOU, LORD

The task filled life often overwhelms us. Though technology has greatly simplified how we do things, the extra freedom we have may cause many to fill the time with even more activity. Before we know it, a mountain of responsibility looms large and we wonder if we will ever be able to cross over to the other side where rest and relaxation are possible. With brains focused on work, business obligations, the children's activities, and our own personal agendas, we decrease the time in the Lord's house or in His Word. It is only when a crisis occurs or exhaustion takes over that we realize we need strength to dismount, or cross over from, the temporary to the eternal.

**God's solution for all circumstances is possible — a solution that includes a Rock of safety, a Rock that equips us to reach the heights and beyond.**

How can knowing of God's security give us hope during those times when the tasks to be done in this life seem insurmountable? Although we may not be learning to ride a horse or physically climbing

a mountain, be assured that hope in the renewing and reviving love of Jesus is always ours.

## HOPE MAY REQUIRE STRETCHING

When there is a mountain of responsibility or challenges looming before us, blocking our way forward, we have four choices. We can:

Pray that God moves the mountain, which takes faith. Maybe it isn't a physical mountain that needs to be moved but rather confidence in what He can do as we face the challenges. **See Matthew 17:20.**

Take the cumbersome, tedious trek up the mountain to get to the top or other side. Perhaps we are already moving forward in faith and we simply need strength to take one step at a time. No matter our circumstances, we can pray for a new perspective. **Read Habakkuk 3:17–19** to discover an attitude that is possible to attain.

Remain where you are, while waiting for God's wisdom and guidance in taking another step or finding a way through. Sometimes the wait is excruciating, but it may be the vessel that God chooses to strengthen us and embolden us to perceive Christ's sacrifice and His own grace in the process. It is one of the best ways to learn trust, no matter how painful the wait. **See Psalm 27:14 and James 1:5–6** to learn of encouragement during this difficult time.

**Make the choice of so many others to sit and whine about the challenge and do nothing.**

The first three require a trust in God. The fourth admits defeat and relies on self. Any option is possible. Our prayer is that the fourth option may be overcome, for when we choose this option we begin to lose hope. Remember that true hope rests in the person of Jesus Christ, not in what we do or the selection we make. It is in the process of climbing the mountain or dismounting the horse that we



stretch and grow. It is viewing Christ as the true Rock on which our hope remains. It is there that we can shout, “My hope rests in You, Lord,” and it is through the stretching process that we have learned to view His glory in the climb.

**Find encouragement in the following words as your group reads these words together:**

*For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother’s womb. My praise is continually of you... O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come. Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?...My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed. And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long (Psalm 71:5–6, 17–19, 23–24a).*

**Read Romans 5:1–5, 8.** Note how many times the word “hope” is used. Also record the progression of how hope is acquired. Verse 5 in the ESV states: *God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

**Share** what the significance of that verse means in your personal lives. Conclude with verse 8, which grants us the confirmation of where our true source of hope rests.

Other verses that may strengthen our hope in the Rock, Jesus Christ, are:

- **Ephesians 1:17–18**
- **Colossians 1:27**
- **Hebrews 10:23**

The power and love of Jesus Christ is beyond our comprehension. The sacrifice He made for us far exceeds any pain or emotional turmoil we are required to endure. Like mounting a horse for the first time at the age of 73, we may be filled with fear because of viewing the heights below, yet Christ is our example of courage and strength. He never faltered to give His very life for us. It is His very own hope for us that He wishes to share with us. He is the Living Rock on whom we stand, even when crushed under the weight of our task-filled lives. When answers are long in coming and there appear to be no answers, Christ Jesus is the answer. When all seems hopeless, it is then that we can shout,

***“My praise is continually of you...I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge” (Psalm 17:6b, 13–15).***

## STUDY TIME FOR THIS WEEK

In our daily studies for the week, we will use **Psalm 71** to focus on how hope plays a part in our entire lives, from before conception to the time we

reach our heavenly home. As you walk through this journey in life, remember the following:

*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 NIV).*

**Prayer:** Thank you, Jesus, that You are my hope and my solid rock on which to stand, even when climbing the most difficult mountain experiences of my life. May Your strength be mine in the journey. Amen.

