

**GET YOUR  
HOPES UP!**



# GET YOUR HOPES UP!

*Expect Something Good to  
Happen to You Every Day*

....

JOYCE MEYER



NEW YORK BOSTON NASHVILLE

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*And now, Lord, what do I wait for and expect? My hope and expectation are in You.*

Psalm 39:7



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## INTRODUCTION

Without faith, it is impossible to please God, and those who come to Him must believe that He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (see Hebrews 11:6). Faith is the title deed of the things we *hope* for (see Hebrews 11:1). We are promised in God's Word that faith the size of a mustard seed can move a mountain (see Matthew 17:20). Abraham *hoped* in faith that he would receive the promise of God (see Romans 4:18). Some people try to have faith, but they have no hope. They don't have a positive expectation that something good is going to happen to them because of God's great goodness. I believe hope precedes and is connected with faith. We cannot have one without the other. How could a negative, hopeless person be walking and living by faith? The person may believe in God, but a man or woman of faith does more than trust that God is alive; they also believe that He is good, and that He rewards those who seek Him. They wait for and expect the goodness of God, not because they deserve it, but because God promises to give it.

I've spent the last 38 years of my life traveling the world, preaching and teaching the Word of God. Over that time, I've met so many incredible people—people just like you. Business owners, housewives, working moms, artists, ministers, entrepreneurs, politicians, volunteers, single moms, single dads. I've had the privilege of meeting men and women from nearly every walk of life.

Some are doing great, seemingly on top of the world. Others have confided to me that they're barely getting by, living day to day, trying to make ends meet. And many others are dealing with

circumstances so difficult that, quite frankly, they feel defeated and overwhelmed by life.

But no matter the person, and no matter the situation, I've discovered there is one thing they all desperately need—one thing we *all* desperately need: hope.

Hope is the happy and confident anticipation of good. It's a powerful and universal inspiration, a rising tide that lifts all boats. Whether we are limping into port, stuck at the dock, or sailing boldly out to sea, hope buoys our spirits, daring us to believe *You know what? Things might just work out after all.* It's the sometimes unexplainable, but always undeniable, feeling that today would be a bad day to give up. Hope is a belief that something good is about to happen at any moment!

This is why I believe a book on hope is necessary and that it will help you see hope's amazing possibilities. In fact, the Bible tells us it is one of the three things that remain when all else fails (see 1 Corinthians 13:13). Regardless of who you are or what condition your life is in right now, you can't function successfully in life without hope. If circumstances are bad, you surely need hope, and if they are good, you need hope that they will stay that way. When you live in the garden of hope, something is always blooming!

But as great as hope is, it can easily be misplaced. If your hope clings to a person, it's an unreliable source of strength. If your hope is in your place of employment, your ability to make money, or your retirement fund, it may disappoint you. If your hope rests in your own ability, it will fade when your confidence is shaken.

It's pretty simple, really: Hope is only as strong as its source. That's why the foundation of our hope must be God and the promises found in His Word. If God is not the source, hope is just a wishful thought, a momentary respite. As a matter of fact, the hope I am urging you to have is very different from what the world might call hope. The believer's hope is in the unshakable,

all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present one true God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

You could say it this way: Without hope in God, there isn't much you can do, but *with* hope in God, there isn't much you *can't* do.

Dedicated reading and study of the Word shows us what happens when God's children dared to live with hope. Throughout the Old and New Testament, we see regular people—people with flaws and failures just like us—overcome impossible odds because they chose to hope that God had something incredible on the horizon... they put their faith in Him.

- Though the Hebrew children had been slaves in Egypt for many generations, the hope of freedom compelled Moses to dream of deliverance from their cruel oppressors.

- While the Israelite army hid in the trenches in fear of Goliath, the hope for victory caused David to ask “What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel?” (1 Samuel 17:26).

- In the face of Haman's evil plot to destroy her people, the hope that she could make a difference gave Esther the courage to break convention and request an audience with the king.

- Leaving jobs, friends, and even family behind, the hope that Jesus could be the promised Messiah caused ordinary men to drop everything and follow Him all the way to the cross.

Do you see the wide-ranging, barrier-shattering nature of hope? In each of these biblical examples, hope was more than a motivational thought or a fading daydream; hope was a *nothing-is-impossible-with-God* firestorm refusing to be quenched.

- For Moses, hope broke chains.
- For David, hope asked the question no one else had the courage to ask.

- For Esther, hope believed against all odds that God could use her to save her people from destruction.
- For the disciples, hope gave them courage to embark on a new life and become world changers.

I believe hope can do those same things in your life. That's why I'm excited you're reading this book. And that's why I'm excited to use the stories, biblical principles, and practical life lessons you'll find on each page to encourage you to go ahead and *get your hopes up!* Do it on purpose...grab hold passionately and refuse to live without hope!

You see, your whole life, whether you realize it or not, the world has been telling you *Don't get your hopes up*. Past hurts, present disappointments, and future uncertainties all teach you to temper your expectations—*Be rational, stay calm, don't expect too much because you may get disappointed*.

The pregnancy test comes back positive... *don't get your hopes up; you remember what happened last time*. The person who hurt you apologizes and wants to make things right... *don't get your hopes up; he might hurt you again*. An exciting opportunity opens up at work... *don't get your hopes up; it probably won't pan out*.

But a life with no hope isn't much of a life at all. You may say you're just being careful—*Better safe than sorry, Joyce*—but you're really just afraid. Afraid of getting hurt, afraid of being disappointed, afraid of taking a chance. The fear may exist for good reason. Perhaps you have been severely hurt in life and experienced many discouraging and disappointing things. Experience tells you that nothing is ever going to change, but God's Word tells us something better. It says that all things are possible with God!

It is time for a change in your life! Trust God enough to hope for the best: the best relationship, the best opportunity, the best marriage, the best news, the best outcome, the best life. Expect something good to happen to you today!

God wants you to have the best life possible. If you ever doubt that's true, just remember that He gave His best when He sent Jesus. Jesus died so that, if you accept His gift of salvation, you could enjoy eternity in Heaven; but He also died so you could enjoy a good life here on Earth.

In John 10:10, Jesus said, "I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows)."

As you go through this book, I hope you'll see that God wants you to "have and enjoy life." He wants the best for you spiritually, mentally, emotionally, relationally, and physically—every year, every day, every moment. And when you know that God wants the best for you, you can't help but be filled with hope. God wants to meet all your needs and enable you to help other people.

So, if you're hurting today, doubting if things will ever get better . . . *get your hopes up.*

If you're just getting by in life, going through the motions but asking if there is anything more . . . *get your hopes up.*

If you're raising children, wondering what life has in store for them . . . *get your hopes up.*

If you're starting out on an exciting new adventure, risking more than you've ever risked before . . . *get your hopes up.*

When you dare to get your hopes up, things will begin to change in your life. Faith increases, joy returns, and peace reigns. So if you're satisfied to settle for *barely getting by, this is as good as it gets, or better luck next time*, you should probably put this book down now.

But if you're ready for a change—if you're ready for something better—keep reading. Hope has a way of beautifully transforming the lives of all who embrace it. It's the catalyst that sparks ideas

and imagination (see Proverbs 24:14), the anchor that steadies us when the storms of life rage (see Hebrews 6:19), the confidence that dares us to build a better life (see Proverbs 23:18), and the comfort of knowing we're never alone (see Romans 5:5).

If that sounds good to you, be brave enough to do something you may not have done in a long time: Get your hopes up. You're going to be glad you did, because God is waiting to be gracious to you.

## SECTION I

# HOPE TO GO HIGHER

• • • •

*... But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles...*

Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

Quite often people feel that it would be greedy or wrong to hope for more than they have. While it is true that we should always be content and satisfied with what we have, that certainly doesn't mean that desiring more of the right things is wrong as long as we desire them for the right reasons. How can we be content and yet want more at the same time? I am very content right now with everything in my life because I believe God's timing in my life is perfect. I could be quite happy and never have more of anything because my joy and contentment are in Christ. Yet, at the same time, I want more of everything because I want to go as far in life as God allows and do as much for Him and others as humanly possible. I want no more and no less than the best life God wants to give me!

I want more of God in my life, a closer, more intimate walk with Him (see Philippians 3:10). I want more wisdom, more stability, and more good friends. I want more for my children, and I want more people to accept Christ as their Savior. I want to see more miracles, healing, breakthroughs, and power.

I sincerely believe that we can be satisfied to the point where we

are not disturbed or disquieted with what we have, while at the same time desiring more for the right reasons and at the right time (see Philippians 4:11, 19).

I actually believe those who are content with anything less than all God can do for them are hindering God's greatness. He wants to show Himself strong in each of our lives. He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond all that we could ever dare to ask or think, infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams (see Ephesians 3:20).

## CHAPTER 1

# *Raise Your Level of Expectation*

*Wait and hope for and expect the Lord; be brave and of good courage and let your heart be stout and enduring. Yes, wait for and hope for and expect the Lord.*

Psalm 27:14

“High expectations are the key to everything.”

—Sam Walton

Let me tell you a story about a woman named Betty. Betty is a believer. She reads her Bible on a regular basis. And she volunteers by passing out blankets to the homeless once a month. Betty sounds beautiful, doesn't she?

Well, there is something else about Betty you should know: Her friends call her “Bad-News Betty” when she's not around. They feel terrible about the nickname, but in all fairness, Betty has earned it; she has a way of expecting, predicting, and finding the worst in almost every situation. I'll give you an example.

Last summer, Betty and her husband (Failure Phil) went on a family vacation with their two children (Won't-Amount-to-Much Will and Middle-of-the-Pack Megan). Now, I should tell you that Phil is a loving husband and Will and Megan are great kids, but Betty doesn't have high hopes for them. She doesn't expect much for them either. As a matter of fact, she kind of assumes the worst, hence their nicknames.

Months earlier, Phil and Betty had planned a summer week at a popular vacation destination, but as the trip grew closer, Betty just knew it was going to be a disaster. As they drove the 300 miles to their vacation spot, Betty kept complaining, “This was a bad idea. The lines to do anything in the park are going to be a mile long. I doubt the hotel will be as good as advertised. I bet it’s going to rain the whole week.” Phil and the kids tried to assure Betty it would be fine—they could make the best of any situation—but Betty’s sour mood was unfazed. Poor Phil, Will, and Megan... the 300-mile drive felt like 1,000 miles of drudgery.

It’s safe to say the vacation lived down to Betty’s expectations. The lines at the water park were a little longer than usual. Phil, Will, and Megan didn’t mind—this gave them a few extra minutes to laugh together and plan what ride to go on next—but Betty was terribly upset. “I knew this was going to happen,” she muttered.

The restaurant they chose to dine at the first night wasn’t perfect either. The waitress informed Phil and Betty they were out of the soft drink the couple ordered. Phil chose a different drink; Betty chose a depressing attitude. “Unbelievable!” she sighed.

But the straw that broke the camel’s back was the hotel room. When the family settled into their room for the night, they discovered the TV wasn’t working properly. “I knew it! I knew it! I knew it!” an exasperated Betty griped. “I knew this hotel wasn’t going to be any good.” Phil called the front desk, and maintenance quickly brought a new television up, but the damage was already done.

Bad-News Betty had her bad-news vacation... this was exactly what she expected.

## **An Issue of the Heart**

The story of Betty is a fictitious account of someone who looks an awful lot like you and me at times. We’ve all found ourselves dealing with pessimistic attitudes and low expectations—describing

the weather as “partly cloudy” rather than “partly sunny,” seeing the glass as “half empty” instead of “half full.”

For Betty, her low expectations kept her from enjoying a summer vacation, but for many people, low expectations keep them from enjoying their lives. They go through each day with negative, faultfinding, critical attitudes, rarely hoping for the best because they’re too busy expecting the worst. When things are going poorly they think *I had a feeling today was going to be a bad day*, and when things are going well they think *This probably won’t last long*. Good days or bad, on the mountaintop or in the valley, they’re not enjoying their lives...because they’ve never expected they could. Perhaps you and I are not as bad as Betty, but to be honest, any degree of hopelessness has a devastating effect on our lives. Why not believe the best and open the door to see what God will do?

Low expectations are more than a few grumpy complaints on a longer-than-usual Monday or a feeling that maybe you woke up on the wrong side of the bed. Low expectations are symptoms of a deeper problem, a *spiritual* problem. A person may have a history of disappointments that caused him to form a habit of expecting more of the same. Some people have such low self-esteem that they assume they are not worth anything nice, so they never expect it. And then there are those who don’t know that God is good and wants to do good things for His children. The risks these symptoms pose are significant. If we were to describe what’s happening in our souls the same way we would describe a physical ailment, it might sound something like this:

**Doctor:** So, you say you’re spiritually and emotionally under the weather. Please tell me your symptoms.

**Patient:** Well, Doctor, I’ve got a bad feeling about the future. I have had a lot of disappointments in my life, and I rarely expect things to work out for me or for my family.

**Doctor:** Your symptoms tell me everything I need to know. You've got a bad case of hopelessness.

Betty's symptoms were negativity, worry, and complaining. These symptoms were caused by a condition of her heart: hopelessness. Instead of hoping for a great family vacation, Betty assumed the worst. *The lines are going to be long. We'll never find a good restaurant. The hotel will be terrible.* There is no hope in any of those thoughts. However, Phil, Will, and Megan had different symptoms. They were positive, upbeat, cheerful, and ready to make the most of any situation. They were full of hope, and their expectations were sky high.

It's important to realize that the circumstances were the same for Betty and her family, but the ways they reacted to those circumstances were different. They all stood in long lines; they all ate at the same restaurant; they all sat down in front of the broken television. When these things happened, Betty's low expectations were confirmed, causing her to want to give up. For the rest of the family, their high expectations were challenged, but they chose to remain hopeful and joyful, which enabled them to find ways to deal with the circumstances and move on, enjoying every step of the way.

With that picture in mind, let me ask you an important question: What are your symptoms? If you were to conduct an honest evaluation of your heart, what would you find there?

Are you like Phil, Will, and Megan? Excited about the future, expecting today to be better than yesterday and tomorrow to be even better than today? Do you wake up each morning with a happy anticipation that God is going to do something amazing in your life?

*Do you wake up each morning with a happy anticipation that God is going to do something amazing in your life?*

Or are you more like Bad-News Betty? Do you find yourself bracing for the worst? Do you worry about bad things happening before they actually happen? Do you use phrases like *here*

*we go again, this will never work out, I should've known things would go sour, and I've got a bad feeling about this?*

## The Faith Connection

Evaluating our hearts is an important exercise as we begin this journey of hope together, because hope in God and positive *expectation* are very closely related to faith. For the sake of discussion, we can easily say that the level of your expectation is the level of your faith. Show me a person with low expectations, and I'll show you a person using very little faith. But show me a person with big expectations, and I'll show you a person acting with bold faith. Just remember that we are talking about having our expectation in God. It is more than a mere positive attitude; it is trusting God to take care of you and everything that concerns you.

*Show me a person with big expectations, and I'll show you a person acting with bold faith.*

The Word of God tells us that our faith—our positive, hopeful expectation—pleases God (see Hebrews 11:6), and several times in the Gospels, we see that Jesus was moved to act because of the faith—the expectations—of those He encountered (see Matthew 9:29, Mark 5:34, Luke 7:50, and Luke 17:19). One such miracle is found in Mark chapter 10. I love this story, and I think it has great relevance for you and me today because it's all about the importance of expectation.

Mark 10:46–47 says:

*...As [Jesus] was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, a son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, saying, Jesus, Son of David, have pity and mercy on me [now]!*

If you think about it, Bartimaeus had every reason to expect the worst. He was a blind beggar who sat by the roadside every day, trying to survive on spare change. He was living a very difficult life, and if anybody was going to tone down his level of expectation, you would think it would be Bartimaeus. He could have thought *This is useless. It won't work. Nothing's going to change. Jesus probably won't even notice me. Why get my hopes up?* No one would have blamed him.

But Bartimaeus dared to hope for something greater in life. He started to think about what might happen instead of what might not happen. There was nothing “toned down” about his level of expectation as he began to shout with all of his might, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity and mercy on me [now]!” Can you hear the insistence in his voice? It’s as if Bartimaeus had decided there was absolutely no way he was going to miss this chance. Even though many in the crowd “censured and reprovved him, telling him to keep still” (see Mark 10:48), Bartimaeus would not be quieted. He shouted louder and louder until Jesus stopped and called for him.

Here is one of the most amazing parts of this story: When Bartimaeus was brought to Jesus, the Lord asked him an almost unthinkable question. In verse 51, Jesus said to this blind beggar, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

That seems like a strange question, doesn't it? The disciples may have been thinking “*What do you want me to do for you?*” Lord, isn't it obvious? *The man is blind. How can You ask him that?* But Jesus was asking something deeper—He was asking Bartimaeus: *What are you expecting? Are you only expecting a meal? Are you wanting someone to lead you around by the hand? Are you merely expecting a handout?* All of those things were certainly things Bartimaeus needed, and if he was living with little faith, he may have settled for one of those things.

But Bartimaeus had a greater level of expectation. When Jesus asked, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Bartimaeus didn't

hesitate, he didn't have to think about it, he didn't wonder if he was asking for too much. Bartimaeus boldly said, "Master, let me receive my sight." You probably know the rest of the story. Jesus was greatly moved by Bartimaeus' faith. Verse 52 says: "And Jesus said to him, Go your way; your faith has healed you. And at once he received his sight and accompanied Jesus on the road."

Because Bartimaeus was bold enough to believe for God's best, that is exactly what he received from the Lord. The same is true in your life, and this is why the level of your expectation is so important to the kind of life you're going to live. If you don't expect God to do anything great in your life, He won't. But if you dare to raise your level of expectation and begin anticipating that God wants to do something great in your life, you'll begin to dream, believe, ask, and act with a confident boldness, knowing God is for you and has a great plan for your life.

*God is for you and has a great plan for your life.*

Just in case you are questioning if it is acceptable for you to expect good things from God, please slowly read and meditate on this Scripture in Isaiah.

*And therefore the Lord [earnestly] waits [expecting, looking, and longing] to be gracious to you; and therefore He lifts Himself up, that He may have mercy on you and show loving-kindness to you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are all those who [earnestly] wait for Him, who expect and look and long for Him [for His victory, His favor, His love, His peace, His joy, and His matchless, unbroken companionship]!*

Isaiah 30:18

God is looking for those He can be good to, and if you are looking for (expecting) God to be good to you, then you qualify. Expect God

to give you Himself because He is more important than anything else, but remember that with Him comes all the other things we will ever need.

### Three Steps to Raise the Level of Your Expectation

You may be reading this chapter and thinking *Joyce, that sounds great, but how am I supposed to expect more? I'm running from one appointment to another, barely paying my bills, just trying to keep the kids fed or the company afloat. And I've spent my whole life working as hard as I can to get to this point. How in the world do I raise my level of expectation?*

There is so much I could say about faith—thousands upon thousands of books have been written on the topic—but I want to give you three simple steps that can get you started today. These three steps will help you raise your level of expectation:

1. Believe.

Children of God are called “believers” for a reason. When you’re tempted to doubt, tempted to give up, tempted to call it quits, choose to believe instead.

*When you're tempted to doubt, tempted to give up, tempted to call it quits, choose to believe instead.*

Belief is the basis of your faith. Believe God’s Word. Believe His promises are true. Believe He loves you, and believe He has something beautiful in store for your life. Jesus said that if we would only believe, then we would see God’s

glory (see John 11:40). Glory is the manifestation of all of the excellence of God.

2. Ask.

James 4:2 says: “You do not have, because you do not ask.” Once you have chosen to believe God can meet every need in

your life, go ahead and ask God to meet those needs. Share your dreams with Him. Just as Jesus asked Bartimaeus, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He is asking you the same question. Be bold enough to ask the Lord to do something only He can do. Obviously, we should all want God’s will and trust that if what we are asking for isn’t right for us, God won’t give it to us but instead He will give us something better.

3. Look.

As you go through each day, expect that God is answering your prayer, meeting your need, and fulfilling your God-given dream. Even if you haven’t seen the manifestation of what you desire yet, or if it has not happened in the way you hoped it would, that doesn’t mean God isn’t working. Continue to have an expectant attitude, and be sure to notice everything God is doing. Be thankful for those things while you are waiting for the thing you desire or need now.

Whatever you’re hoping for today—a deeper walk with God, a better understanding of God’s Word, a stronger marriage, a financial breakthrough, a chance to go back to school, a ministry opportunity, a fresh start—if it’s in your heart (and if it lines up with the Word of God), believe, ask, expect, and look.

## **The Real Change that Comes with Higher Expectations**

Your life will go only as high as the level of your expectations. It’s not that your expectations immediately change the environment or the circumstances around you, but your expectations change the way you react to that environment and those circumstances.

*Your life will go only as high as the level of your expectations.*

Your expectations change *you*. They cause you to be able to wait for a change in your circumstances with a happy attitude. They cause you to be a bold, confident, joy-filled believer who trusts that God has a great plan for your life.

Here's a simple story I came across that demonstrates the joy that comes with great expectations:

There were once identical twins. They were alike in every way but one. One was a hope-filled optimist who only saw the bright side of life in every situation. The other was a dark pessimist who only saw the downside of every situation.

The parents were so worried about the extremes of optimism and pessimism in their boys that they took them to the doctor. The doctor suggested a plan. "On their next birthday," he said, "give the pessimist a shiny new bike, but give the optimist only a pile of manure."

It seemed a fairly extreme thing to do. After all, the parents had always treated their boys equally. But in this instance they decided to try the doctor's advice. So when the twins' birthday came around, the parents gave the pessimist the most expensive, top-of-the-line racing bike a child has ever owned. When he saw the bike, his first words were "I'll probably crash and break my leg."

To the optimist, they gave a carefully wrapped box of manure. He opened it, looked puzzled for a moment, then ran outside screaming "You can't fool me! Where there's this much manure, there's gotta be a pony around here somewhere!"<sup>1</sup>

## Get Your Hopes Up!

I want to encourage you to raise your level of expectation today. It doesn't matter what the situation looks like around you; God is greater than any obstacle you may be facing. Don't assume that where you've been, or where you are, is as good as it gets. Don't believe that your history is your destiny. Choose, instead, to believe God is going to do something even better in your life. Jesus is asking "What do you want Me to do for you?" That's a pretty powerful question, so go ahead and get your hopes up. There must be a pony around here somewhere!

*Don't assume that  
where you've been,  
or where you are, is as  
good as it gets.*