

FINDING HOPE

a journey of faith through uncertain times

Lynelle Watford

Rising Higher Series

This collection of thoughts and selected Scriptures is best read with contemplation. Let the words, like a slow rain, soak deep into your soul.

You may not have rheumatoid arthritis, serious eyesight challenges, or the grief of losing a son to suicide as I do, but these Scriptures can minister to your heart as they do mine.

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Vistas

I was mesmerized. Narrow gauge train tracks rolled out beneath my feet as I stood on the train's observation platform.

Mile after mile, sometimes curving around a mountain, sometimes straight across a meadow. A picture of life.

Sometimes we think we know what lies ahead.

But at times we can't imagine the future—or don't want to. Clues—a cancer diagnosis, a spouse's suspected unfaithfulness, an employer's tightening budget—warn us we may be headed to the dark side of a mountain. Or over its edge.

Join me as we ponder a collection of assorted truths that sustain me in uncertain times.

Together, we'll find hope.



Calamities & Confessions

Are you in unwanted circumstances? I am.

I can't see far down the 'train tracks' of life, but I know enough. Diminishing vision with no clear diagnosis and no treatment. The trends in our culture for dim lighting push my fear and discomfort buttons.

I can't change the dim lighting in public places, but I can allow change in my life. It's more than today's struggles though, it's ...

In the unknown. How will I cook when I can't measure ingredients?

In the losses. How will I read to my grandchildren when I can't make out the words on the page?

In the fears. How will I survive if something happens to my husband?

It's the thousand points of frustration every day.

This could get ugly. Unless. Unless, God does a work in me.

First, I need to see my need and tell God about it. Would you join me?

Prayer

God, I am needy.

*I can't see my way
through this mess.*

*I feel like falling apart.
So, I lay it all before You—
the unknown, the losses,
the fears, the frustrations.*

*I know
You are enough.*



Goodness on Display

God is good. Like a traveler to a compass, I cling to this truth.

But sometimes I have doubts. After all, what is good about suffering, loss, and all the broken things in a fallen world?

Apart from God—nothing.

In Psalm 31, David rehearses his anguish over his troubles while affirming his trust in a good God. As he concludes his complaints, verse 19 erupts like sunshine through clouds, expressing overwhelming amazement in God's goodness:

Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!

After 18 verses of pouring out his deep brokenness while imploring God's help, how could the psalmist break out in praise?

As he ends the psalm, he confesses that it is in times of great need that the Lord hears and protects. The psalmist realizes it is the trials that highlight God's goodness, love, and power.



*Our trials
highlight
God's
goodness,
love,
and
power.*



*Oh, how abundant is your goodness,
... for those who take refuge in you!*

*In the cover of your presence
you hide them ...
you store them in your shelter ...*

Psalm 31:19-20

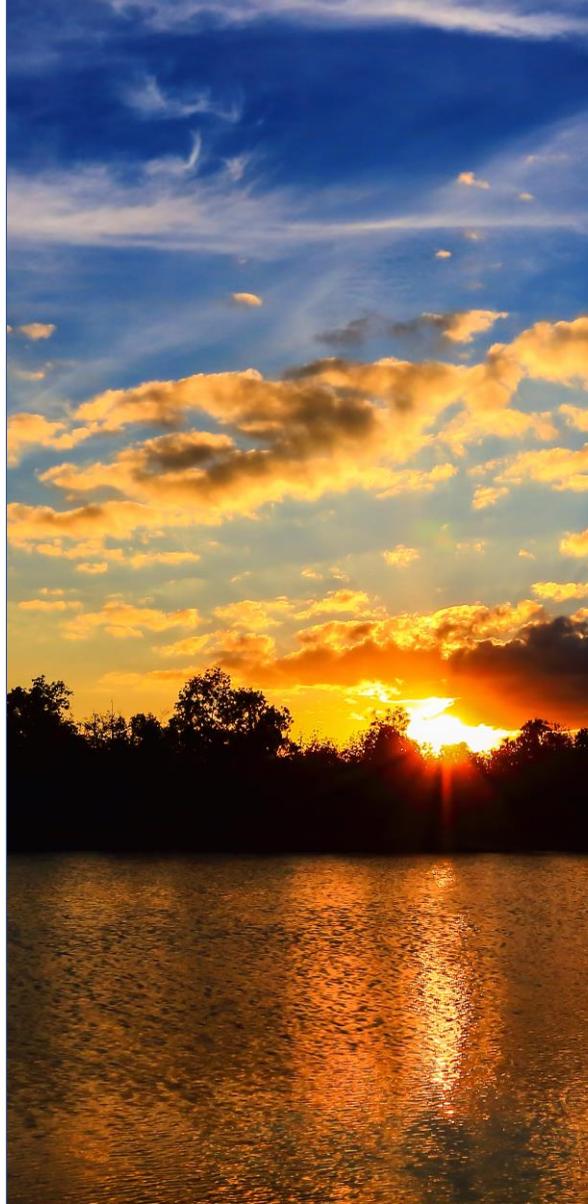
God Is Holding Me

Joy can grow
in the deepest valley,
praise can rise
in the darkest night.

Peace can reign
in the wildest tempest,
for God
is holding me tight.

Hope can bloom
in the driest desert,
faith can soar
in the dreariest day.

Grace can rule
when strength has languished,
for God
keeps all of my ways.



Unexpected Faces of Love

Have you ever sensed God whispering, “Let me love you?”

In our rushed, distracted lives, it’s easy to overlook God’s love.

Several years ago, I noticed His love in an unexpected way and wrote about it in my journal:

Today it rained. I hadn’t felt well for days, and I got behind a slow car. Earlier, the words God might say to me, “Let Me love you,” had been on my mind.

Could the plodding of the car in front of me that caused me to slow down be an evidence of God’s love? For by forcing me to slow down, I was made more aware of my desperate need for God and how unfulfilling lesser things are.



Might the pains,
complications,
frustrations,
and grief of life
that slow you down
become an expression
of God’s love?



*Be intentional about noticing
the many tiny evidences
of God's love
strewn throughout your days.*





Let Me Love You

Let Me love you.
Open your eyes
to see it raining down.

Let Me love you.
Inside, outside, and all around.

When you walk
through times of darkness
My love is slowing you down,
gently pulling you into My arms
right where My love
can be found.

When life's strains
and stresses tire you
My love beckons you come,
into My refreshing presence
right where love
can be found.

Let Me love you.
Open your eyes
to see it raining down.

Let Me love you.
Inside, outside, and all around.

*"I have
loved you
with an
everlasting love!*

*With
loving-kindness
I have drawn you.*

Jeremiah 31:3 LITV



Perspective Walk

Some enjoy combing Lake Michigan's shore for beach glass. One woman calls her return trip her 'perspective walk.' As she sees the shoreline with the sunlight shining from a different angle, she often finds bits of beach glass she missed earlier.

She finds treasure where once she saw only sand.

Perspective is essential.

When I imagine the challenges that I may face with continuing loss of vision, I shudder.

But if I consider my loss in relation to eternity, the dark, looming mountain shrinks to a grain of golden sand. Ten to twenty years of challenges will be nothing compared to eternity, when my eyes will be healed.

In the end, our earthly perspective results in disappointment and despair, fear and frustration. Looking from God's perspective—an eternal perspective—through His Word, results in joy and hope, trust and tranquility. Even when life is falling apart.

Let the light of God's Word reveal the treasure in your path.



We look not
to the things
that are *seen*
but to the things
that are *unseen*.

For the things that
are seen
are *transient*,
but the things that
are unseen
are *eternal*.

2 Corinthians 4:18

A serene sunset scene over a calm lake. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, golden glow that reflects on the water's surface. The sky is filled with soft, white and yellow clouds, transitioning to a deep blue at the top. The silhouettes of trees and a small boat are visible on the horizon line.

*Come to me,
all you who are
troubled and
weighted down with care,
and I will give you
rest.*

Matthew 11:28 BBE

Take a Break

Life is hard. Especially in uncertain times. Sometimes we need a break from our burdens.

God understands. (*Blessed be the God and Father ... of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction ...*
2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

He longs for us to find moments of relief and comfort, not in things that harm us, but in His healing presence.

What better way of entering His presence than through praise? Praising God and focusing on truth puts everything in perspective. Our troubles shrink. God's goodness and sufficiency are magnified.

*When we praise God,
our troubles shrink.*

*God's goodness
and sufficiency
are magnified.*



Rising Higher: Praise Song

On the wings of the wind, on the very breath of God
we rise ever higher to You.

Leaving our cares behind, we're uplifted by Your rest
we give all praise to You, we give all praise to You.

As my flesh begins to fade like the beauty of the flower
I rise ever higher to You.

As my weakness falls away and I trust in Your power
I give all praise to You, I give all praise to You.

And each voice shall cry out and every eye shall behold
the glory of the Lord, the glory of the Lord.

(Listen to this song at ForeverWaters.com/gift-books)





*All flesh is grass, and all its beauty
is like the flower of the field.*

*The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will
stand forever.*

Isaiah 40:6, 8



Value Weakness

We are weak. Always have been. Even when we think we have the world by the tail. Any strength we think we have, apart from God, is an illusion.

When circumstances convince our souls of our weakness, they are a gift. Our sense of fragility helps us appreciate God's power and sufficiency.

*The Lord is my light
and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold
of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?*

Psalm 27:1





*But I trust in
you,
O LORD;
I say,
“You are
my God.”*

Psalm 31:14