

Life-Sustaining Hope

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Dedication

This eBook is dedicated to those who have lost a loved one to a senseless death, suffer from a debilitating accident or handicap, or suffer from the scars of war.

Introduction

This book is meant to provide hope -- not just temporary hope. It is intended to provide a lifesustaining hope. This is desperately needed for our time. It is required because the great tragedy in our time is that countless people are taking their lives and/or others' lives. While many lives are lost because of mental illness, alarming numbers perish because they simply lost hope. This hopelessness, particularly in the young, may come from factors such as bullying, abuse, violent rage, loneliness, emptiness, hedonism, drugs, family neglect, disease, economic difficulties, or unfulfilled expectations.

Obtaining Hope

Against this dark background, there is great news: Help Can Be Obtained And Hope Can Be Restored. While there is no perfect way, there is perfect love. It is communicated in the living words of the Bible. It is described in song by Charles Wesley as *Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down*. This perfect love removes fear and restores hope. Moreover, it provides a Life-Sustaining Hope. Both this love and hope are communicated in countless Christian songs. One such song is the beautiful *Whispering Hope* written by Jim Reeves. Its comforting lyrics contain the following verse: *Hope with a gentle persuasion whispers a comforting word*. The most comforting words are that we are everlastingly loved by Jesus Christ, the Redeemer; He died to redeem us. Moreover, He arose from the dead and conquered sin and death. In knowing Him, millions have been transformed from hopelessness to live wonderful and fulfilled lives. This God-given transformation allowed Max Lucado to write his book *Unshakable Hope*. This transformation also inspired John Newton to write the powerful song *Amazing Grace*.

Great People Who Grasped Hope

Let us consider three people whose lives were saved by the power of life-sustaining hope and trust in God.

First, let us consider Dr. Viktor Frankl, who was delivered from Hitler's Holocaust prisons. Even though he suffered extreme cruelty, deprivation, and the loss of his entire family during the Holocaust; he maintained a life-sustaining hope. He did this by focusing his thoughts on his beloved wife and his God. Moreover, he found that no matter what the circumstances, he could choose what he thought. This allowed him freedom in his mind while his body was in prison and in great pain. After the war, he lived a fulfilled life in which he helped millions find meaning in their lives. He recorded this experience in his book *Man's Search For Meaning*.

For our second person who found life-sustaining hope, we will consider Joseph. His life is recorded in the Biblical book of Genesis. He lived in ancient Egypt and the land of Canaan. As a young boy in Canaan, he was the favored son of his father Jacob and his mother Rachel. At a young age, Joseph had prophetic dreams. His dreams symbolized that his entire family would bow before him. Now, Joseph had older brothers born to his father by his wife Leah and the maidservants of both Leah and Rachel. Because of his dreams and his favored status, he was hated by these brothers. Thus, on an occasion when Joseph was far away from his father, his brothers bound him and sold him into slavery in Egypt. They then told his father that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. Jacob mourned the loss of this son with an everlasting sorrow. His only comfort was that he had Benjamin. He was the only other son of Rachel, and Joseph's younger brother.

Meanwhile, Joseph was alone in Egypt; he had become the slave of Pharaoh's captain of the guard, Potiphar. Even so, God's providential favor

was upon Joseph. The Lord blessed all his endeavors, and he was soon in charge of everything for Potiphar. He was his chief of staff. For a short time, things were looking up for Joseph. However, Joseph was a strikingly handsome young man, and Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, but Joseph wanted nothing to do with her. He honored the kindness that Potiphar had bestowed upon him. Nonetheless, this disgraceful woman was not finished with Joseph, and one day when Joseph rebuffed her advances she decided to scream and accuse him of attacking her. Upon hearing this lie, Potiphar was furious and threw Joseph into jail. So now, Joseph had moved from being a slave to being an imprisoned slave. Nonetheless, God blessed Joseph in jail, and soon he was in charge of the prisoners. Moreover, he was able to interpret prophetic dreams. He even interpreted a dream for Pharaoh's cupbearer. He asked the cupbearer to appeal to Pharaoh on his behalf. The cupbearer assured him that he would make this appeal, but he forgot Joseph.

Two full years after interpreting the cupbearer's dream Joseph was to see God's providential timing when Pharaoh had a most terrible dream. Pharaoh was extremely distressed. Yet, no one in the land could interpret the dream. Then, the cup bearer remembered Joseph, and he told Pharaoh that there was a prisoner who could interpret dreams exactly as they would be fulfilled. Joseph was swiftly brought to Pharaoh. He then revealed the dream's meaning to Pharaoh. He told him that the dream foretold seven years of plentiful production within the land that would be followed by seven years of severe famine. The famine would be so severe that it would consume all the productivity of the bounteous years. Joseph also told Pharaoh that 1) God was firmly warning him and 2) he should store provisions from the plentiful years to sustain the land of Egypt during the famine. Pharaoh believed the interpretation, and he favored Joseph's plan. He then put Joseph in charge of everything in Egypt. Thus, Joseph was Lord of Egypt -- second only to Pharaoh. Everyone bowed before him. During the good years, Joseph built storage facilities and stored enormous quantities of grain. Then the good years were gone like the wind, and the full force of the famine descended on Egypt and the surrounding countries including Canaan.

In Canaan, Jacob had learned that there was food in Egypt. He instructed his sons to go and buy food so that the entire family would not starve. Accordingly, the brothers that sold Joseph into slavery traveled and arrived in Egypt. There they bowed before Joseph – just as foretold in Joseph’s boyhood dream. They did not recognize Joseph, but he recognized them immediately. Joseph agreed to sell them grain, but he set up a test to see if they were still dishonorable before his father and his younger brother, Benjamin. At the end of the test, he presented them with the claim that Benjamin had been found to be a thief. Moreover, he would be imprisoned in Egypt while the other brothers could return home to their father. However, the brothers had changed, and they pleaded for Benjamin’s release. Judah even offered to exchange himself as the slave for Benjamin so that his father would not lose his only son born to his beloved wife Rachel.

At this time, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and said to them: *you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. He sent me ahead to prepare for you so that you would not perish during the famine.* He then told them to bring his father and the entire family to him quickly and that he would care for them in Egypt. The family did come to him, and they all prospered during Joseph’s entire life. Moreover, Joseph was forever remembered and honored. Thus, in the account of Joseph we see an example of the providential hand of God working out the affairs of men.

This truth of God’s providential sovereignty is presented by the apostle Paul in the book of Romans. It is powerfully stated in Romans 8:28. *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* This is a bedrock truth upon which countless men and women have withstood the storms of life.

A modern-day version of this story was when the proud and guilty Chuck Colson (President Nixon’s Watergate crew) was placed in prison. Colson detailed this experience in his book, *Born Again*. Even though he was guilty, God was providentially working in his life. Colson was a new, born-again believer when he entered prison, but he emerged from prison with a profound desire to help prisoners by communicating the good news of the Christian gospel. Colson spent his entire life communicating the gospel to the world

with his ever-present special emphasis on his global Prison Fellowship ministry. He understood that God had put him through trials to prepare him for a noble work that would define his life. We can all reach out from our conditions of despair and trust in God's providential hand. We can also look for what noble endeavors that He may have planned for our future. Examples of fourteen noble lives are presented in two books: *Seven Men and the secret of their Greatness* along with *Seven Women and the secret of their Greatness* both by Eric Metaxas.

A fourth, inspiring story of restored hope is that of Joni Eareckson Tada. At the age of 18, she had a diving accident that left her a quadriplegic. While she initially struggled with depression and suicidal thoughts, she found hope, strength, and purpose in Christ. For decades she has had a global Christian ministry called Joni and Friends. She is married, writes books, does artwork, sings beautifully, and prays fervently. Accordingly, she is a global ambassador for life-sustaining hope and the value of each life. Let us all be such noble ambassadors. Let us all trust in God, fortify hope, and cherish life.

Conclusion

If you, a loved one, or a friend is struggling with hopelessness, know that perfect love and hope are there for every living person. Christ left us with these comforting words – *I came that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

Trust Christ and wait on his providential care; He will provide life-sustaining hope, a song for your heart, and the abundant life.

Supporting Scripture

1 John 4:18 -- There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.

Psalm 139:14 – I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Jeremiah 29:11 -- 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.

Proverbs 24:11 – Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering towards slaughter.

John 14:19 – because I live you also will live.

John 10:10 – I came that they may have life, and have it to the full.

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7. All scripture citations are from the NIV 11 translation and are used under the Gratis Use Guidelines of Zondervan. Grand Rapids, MI.

About Dr. Patrick Hunt



Dr. Patrick Hunt grew up in North Carolina where his mother's family had lived for over 250 years. In contrast, his father was second-generation Irish from New York. He was a purple-heart veteran of World War II. His family owned a farm which was only 2 miles from his grandparents' farm. The farms had animals, fields, and woodlands along with springs, streams, and ponds. It was there that he, his sisters, and many relatives played and worked. It was from his family and their Presbyterian Church that his character, imagination, and dreams were formed. The community of his childhood was also the community of his wife. They have been soulmates on this journey of life for over 50 years.

Dr. Hunt started his education with a bachelor's degree from Clemson University. He then received his PhD from the University of Florida. After receiving his PhD, he served a tour in the U.S. Army. At the time of his discharge, he was a captain. He holds in highest regard the men and women with whom he served.

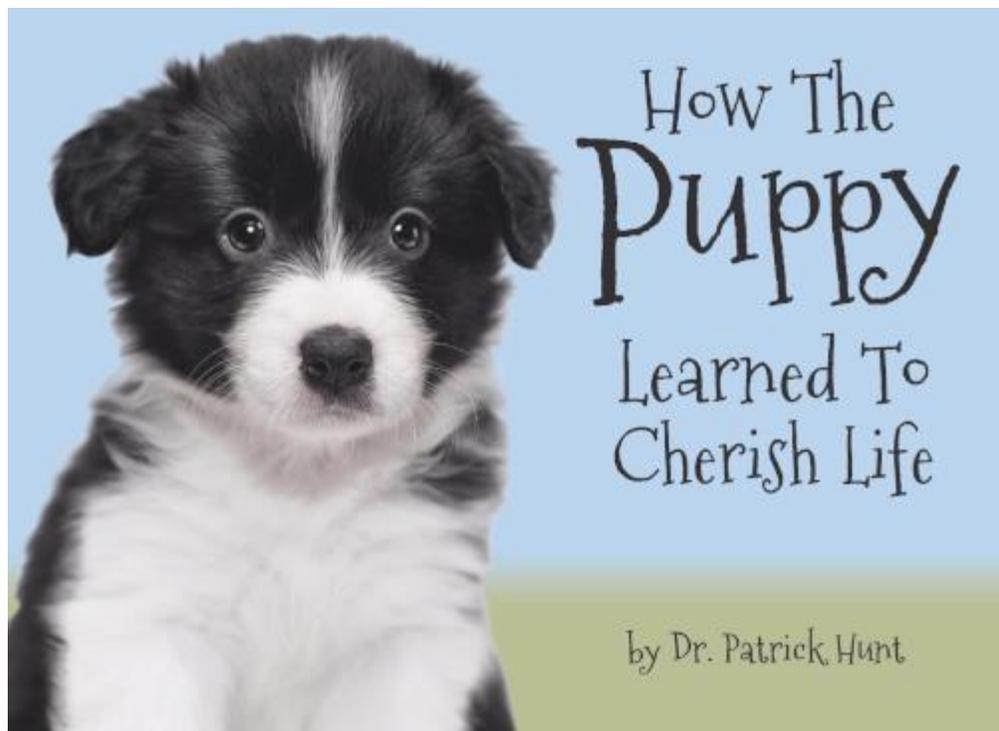
He has a great love for research and development. He retired after a distinguished forty-year career as an agricultural scientist. There he published more than 150 peer-reviewed scientific papers. He is a Fellow of four scientific societies.

Throughout his career his wife and family were always a priority. He and his wife were involved in their children's activities, dreams, and character development. They are similarly involved in the lives of their grandchildren.

Dr. Hunt is now involved in the exhortation and encouragement of both children and adults. He writes and speaks to encourage everyone to cherish life and live nobly. He is hopeful that the materials on his website (drpatrickhunt.com) along with his books will be both comforting and inspirational.

For more information, you can connect with Dr. Hunt Patrick.Hunt@higherplace.net

Other books published by Dr. Patrick Hunt



THE PATHWAY OF HAPPINESS

CHERISH LIFE AND LIVE NOBLY



DR. PATRICK HUNT