

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

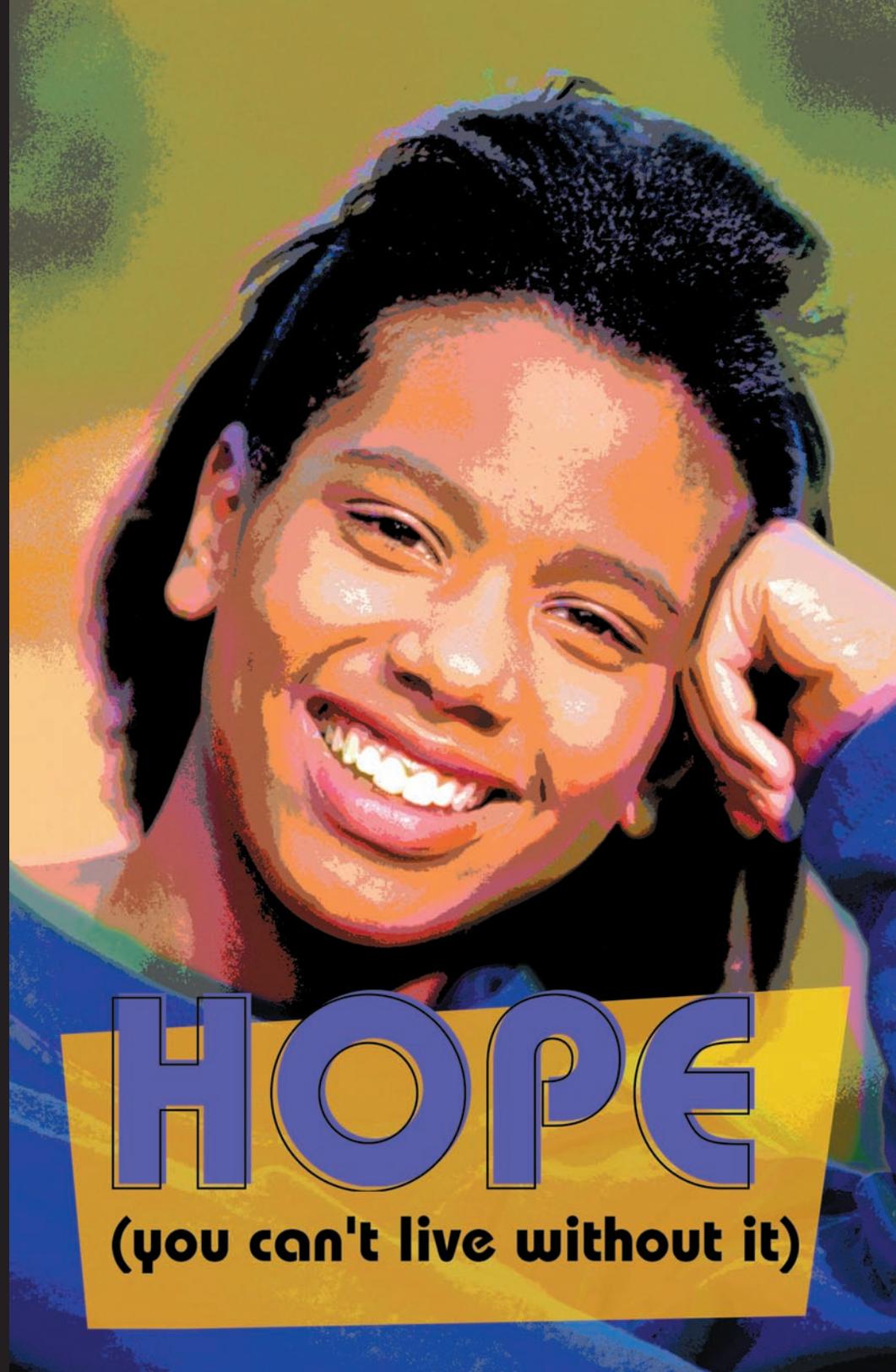
Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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HOPE
(you can't live without it)



Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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HOPE (you can't live without it)

Have you noticed that the world today seems to be permeated with a sense of hopelessness? You can see it in the eyes of people everywhere. They have no reason to believe that relief will come, or that things will ever be any different. We know that the Bible plainly says that those who are without Christ have no hope. But it is easy for Christians to feel hopeless, too, when we forget or don't know what God's says.

Maybe you are a hurting person who needs to be reminded that God offers hope to His kids. He says to you in Jeremiah 29:11, “I say this because I know what I am planning for you,” says the Lord. “I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you a HOPE and a future.”

When the world uses the word “hope” it means to express a wish, a desire, or a dream. But, when the Bible uses the word “hope,” it means a “confident expectation,” an assurance of something future and unseen. God wants to assure you today that with Him you have the ASSURANCE of a FUTURE, and that as He said in Jeremiah, it is a GOOD FUTURE, not a harmful one.

All of us love stories that end, “and they lived happily ever after.” Unfortunately, “happily ever after” is for fantasies only, not for real life. “Happily ever after” may not be possible in this life, but to live “hopefully ever after,” is an achievable reality.

The Word of God confirms your hope and your future if you are a Christian no matter what your past, no matter how bad your present. There is HOPE and a FUTURE even if you have experienced or are experiencing:

Failure
Read Philippians 3: 12-14

Suffering
Read I Peter 1:6-7

Temptation
Read II Peter 2:9

Guilt
Read Romans 8:1

Unfairness
Read I Peter 2:18-21a

Habitual Sin
Read Colossians 1:13-14

Rejection
Read Proverbs 18:24; Psalm 27:10

Bitterness
Read Colossians 3:12-14

Trials
Read James 1:2-4

Fear
Read Hebrews 13:6

Anxiety
Read Philippians 4:6-7

Unpleasant Thoughts
Read Phillipians 4:8-9

Depression
Read Psalm 28:7

Grief
Read Revelation 21:3-4

In Romans 15:4 Paul writes, "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have HOPE." When you are feeling hopeless, you need to go to the scriptures to get a word from God for your life because that is where you will find hope.

There is a wonderful story told in Matthew 14:22-23 that is an example of a situation that looked hopeless before the disciples got a word from the Lord for their lives. Do you remember the story? Jesus has just finished feeding the 5,000 with the five loaves and two fishes. He sends the crowd away, so that He can spend some quiet time alone with God.

Jesus tells the disciples to get in their boat and go on to the next destination, while He goes up on a mountain to pray. So the disciples are out on the Sea of Galilee. Storms come up very quickly around there and the Bible says that they got caught in a big one.



In fact, it says that they were being "battered by the waves, for the wind was against them."

These guys have some major problems!

- It is nighttime and they are out there alone in the dark.
- It is cloudy because the storm is brewing. They can't see the stars, so they have no sense of direction.
- The wind is against them, so the sails on their boat were useless.
- Not only do they have to row the boat, they have to row against the wind!

So there they are, scared, tired, confused, drained, and probably a little angry at Jesus for sending them out there and leaving them alone. Can you identify with what they were going through? Does this sound like your life — the fear, the exhaustion, the feelings of abandonment, and the hopelessness?

Then Jesus comes to them walking on the water. He comes to them on top of the waves, the very things that were causing their problem! Through the winds, waves, danger, dark, and the chaos, He came to help them and to save them.

1 CORINTHIANS 1

22 I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.

23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

What this story is saying to you is that the things in your life that cause you pain are the very things that Jesus wants to use to help you. Whenever you are feeling hopeless because of the storms of life you need to remember several things:

1. You may lose sight of Jesus in the dark of a storm, but He never loses sight of you.
2. You will never welcome the presence of Jesus more in your life than when you are in the middle of a storm.
3. He is always closer than your heartbeat, ready and willing to help. It only takes your crying out to Him to make you aware of His presence.
4. When you become aware of His presence, the undoable becomes doable, the unbearable becomes bearable, and even though you think you are past the breaking point, you don't break.

You may be feeling hopeless today because of depression, fear, anxiety, financial problems, grief, stress, relationship or family problems.

You may be tired and burdened down. Just like the disciples, you're feeling like you are all alone and rowing against the wind. If you are feeling hopeless, then go to the written Word, and get a personal Word from God. Jesus said to the disciples that day, "Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid." He offers the same word of hope to you today.

A story is told about a little girl who was excited because her father was going to take her to see the movie, Snow White. Someone said to the child, "But won't you be scared of the wicked witch?" "No," she said. "When the witch comes on, I won't look at her. I'll just look at my father!" That is exactly what you have to do as well. When things in your life get hopeless and scary, you need to take your eyes off of your problems and put them on your Father. That is where you will find hope.

If you are feeling hopeless, then go to the written Word

Do you realize that humans can go through illness, financial problems, unemployment, death of a loved one, divorce, and calamity of every kind if they have hope. But if they lose their hope they lose their ability to cope, their determination, their will to go on. God calls hope the anchor of the soul, and for good reason. Hope is the one thing that will keep you alive when the storms of life threaten your very existence.

The greatest enemy to hope is doubt. Do you remember that Adam and Eve's troubles started in the garden of Eden when Satan got them to doubt God? He got them to doubt God's wisdom, goodness and love by convincing them that God did not have their best interest at heart, that He was holding out on them, and that He couldn't be trusted. Satan is the father of doubt and if doubt is overtaking you, you need to recognize where it is coming from.

Chuck Swindoll says that doubts sneak into our lives like termites sneak into houses. Unknowingly, these termite-like thoughts eat away at our faith. We won't even notice the damage until a storm comes along and we discover that we can't cope. Some of our houses will begin to lean, others will collapse. Then and only then will we begin to feel the destructive effects of our doubts.

He goes on to say that there are three times when doubt is its greatest:

- **When things you believe should never happen, happen.** You know, when bad things happen to good people, and when good things happen to bad people. When you expect God to say "no" but He says "yes." When God doesn't seem wise.
- **When things you believe should happen, never happen.** When you expect God to say "yes" but He says "no." When God doesn't seem good.
- **When things you believe should happen now, happen much, much later.** When God doesn't seem loving.

All three of these times cause you to believe that God is not sovereign (not in control), which is the biggest doubt of all. When you don't know, or have forgotten that God is wise, good, loving and sovereign then doubt will eat away your hope until there is nothing left of your souls.

Many people today are like "dead men walking." Their souls have been eaten away and they are hopeless. Their bodies still walk around, but their eyes are empty. The light is on, but no one is home. For a lot of those folks, the hopelessness will grow until it snuffs out the very light of their life.

Hopelessness is the number one cause of depression. It is true that depression can be strictly physical in nature, caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain that is treatable. But most of the time depression occurs when you believe that you have no hope of ever feeling better or getting well, when you believe that your financial situation never will change, that your grades will not go up, or that your appearance will never improve, that your family or relationship problems will never be resolved. You can usually deal with pain if you know that it is going to be short-lived, or at least have an end. But when life hurts so bad and you feel hopeless that it will never be any different, depression sets in like a fog on the ocean.

Hebrews 6:13-20 is a great set of verses that give us the solution to hopelessness.

"When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for Him to swear by, He swore by himself, saying, 'I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.' And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all arguments.

Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, He confirmed it

with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this HOPE FOR AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus who went before us, has entered on our behalf."

When life hurts so bad and we feel hopeless that it will never be any different, depression sets in like a fog on the ocean.

Make a CHOICE with your will to believe,

Remember the story of Abraham in the Old Testament? Abraham and his wife Sarah had been married for many years. They desperately wanted a baby. When he was 75 and she was 65 God promised them that not only would they have a child, but that Abraham's descendants would be too many to number.

God pledged on His own character and integrity that he would keep His promise and that Sarah would have a son. Well, they waited, and waited, and waited some more. As it says in Hebrews 6, Abraham did receive what God had promised him. 25 years after God made his promise to them, when Sarah was 90 and Abraham was 100, they had a son.

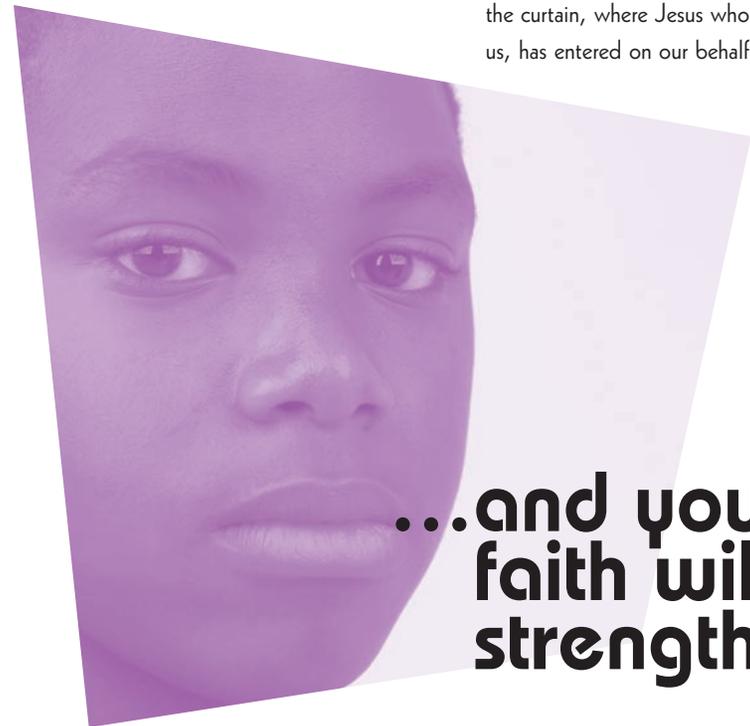
Now you don't need to be a biology major to figure out that took a miracle! Here's something that you need to know about God. He never performs a miracle without a specific purpose. Yes, of course God's purpose was to prove His faithfulness to Abraham and Sarah, but He also had a purpose in this miracle for us today. As this passage tells us, it is to give us hope

- by reminding us that God cannot lie, and
- by reminding us that He always keeps His Word.

In Romans 4:18 it speaks about Abraham again when it says, "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed." Abraham made a CHOICE to believe when it didn't make sense. When physically he and Sarah couldn't pull it off. When things looked impossible. Abraham is listed in the "Faith Hall of Fame," in Hebrews 11. This is the reason. Faith is simply choosing to believe even when doubts attack — choosing to believe that God is in control and no matter how long the wait, God knows what He is doing. Choosing to believe that God is wise, good, and loving, that He cannot lie, and that He always keeps His Word.

The Bible goes on to say in Romans 4:20-21, "...but (Abraham) was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God had the power to do what he had promised." Abraham had his faith strengthened and was able to give glory to God as he waited because he chose to believe that God would do what He had promised. So many times we say, "God, strengthen my faith and I will believe." God says, "Make a CHOICE with your will to believe, and your faith will be strengthened."

This is a lesson on how to deal with doubt and how to have hope. When life falls apart and you begin to lose hope, you need to go back and reread Hebrews 6:17-20. It says, "Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this HOPE AS AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus who went before us, has entered on our behalf."



...and your
faith will be
strengthened

There are three last things that you must know if you are running short on hope:

- If you are a Christian, then you are the “heir to what was promised.” You need to read Genesis 12:2-3 and see exactly what God did promise Abraham and what belongs to you now as an “heir.” Remember, God cannot lie, and He will keep His promises.
- Choosing to believe this is like fleeing from our doubt and that when you do you will be encouraged, you will have a refuge of hope, and you will have an anchor of hope for your souls.

- Within the Tabernacle where the Jews worshiped there was a place called the “Holy of Holies.” This was where the very presence of God dwelt. It was separated from the other rooms by a veil. Once a year the high priest of the Jews would enter this room to make atonement with blood for the sins of the people.

Your high priest, Jesus Christ, with His own blood, has made atonement for your sins and has ripped down the veil that separated you from God. In Hebrews 4:16 the Bible tells you that Jesus has given you a VIP pass into the very presence of God. Because of what He did you are now never alone, and you have access to the presence and power of God, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, no matter what doubt may try to say to you.

Christians have a solid reason for hope and it is the Person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is “...a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). He is your hope and that hope will get you through. Remember, the story of the disciples caught in the storm and Jesus walking on the water to get to them? Well, there is something else that you need to know about miracles. Every miracle in the Bible was always preceded by an impossible situation. How about you? Got an impossibility in your life that you are feeling hopeless about? Need a miracle of your own?

You can make a CHOICE to take your eyes off of the wind and the waves in your life and put them on Jesus. To take your eyes off of all “the scary witches” and put them on your Father. You can CHOOSE to believe God’s Word and not the lying, doubting words of the enemy. When you do, hope will follow.

Someone has said, “Sometimes God calms the storm, and sometimes he calms His child and lets the storm rage.” Your circumstances may not change overnight, but you can. God can replace your hopelessness and despair with hope and courage. Now that’s a miracle!

Sometimes God calms the storm, and sometimes he calms His child and lets the storm rage.