



## **The Battle for Hope**

*“Life is Difficult. This is a great truth, one of the greatest.”*

These thought-provoking words open “The Road Less Traveled” by psychiatrist Scott Peck. His book has gone on to become the second best-selling nonfiction book of all time after The Bible. The words also bring to mind that fulfilling one’s call to ministry is difficult and leading a ministry is also difficult. Contrary to popular belief, ministry leaders do not lead uncontested lives of great joy, contentment and peace. They not only suffer from the unwanted storms that batter all our lives, but also those unique to ministry. This is one reason the burn-out and drop-out rates for pastors are so high. Researcher Barna says that 80 % of Seminary and Bible School graduates who enter the ministry will leave within the first 5 years.

### **What can make the difference?**

Even though life is difficult and unexpected crises, conflicts and pain can afflict us, some individuals are able to rise above the adversity and make lemonade out of lemons. We’ve all witnessed friends, neighbors or even family members face horrible tragedy and loss and yet not only find a place of peace and resolution, but help others in the process. I’ve also seen leaders take over troubled, hostile churches with failed staff and wounded congregants and yet bring vision, order and changed lives. This phenomena has challenged researchers for years. What makes the difference between those who seem to have thrived after adversity and those who don’t? Why do some people get better and others worse? One of the answers --- finding hope in the middle of the storm.

When everything around us is being tested and life looks bleak, can we still have hope for a bright future? Can we believe that this tribulation will come to an end and that we will not be the worse for it? Possibly even better for having endured? This is the battle for hope. It must be

won if we are to overcome the difficulties of life and thrive anew. Hope is the salve that calms the pain and promotes new growth.

*HOPE: To look forward to with positive anticipation.*

*The feeling that events will turn out for the best.*

*Knowing the best in Christ is yet to come.*

### **Some tips for finding hope when the winds of adversity blow.**

- 1. Remember – hope comes from God** (Lamentations 3:18-25). We can easily become so preoccupied with the crisis that we forget that God is with us. He is our partner in life who will do for us what we can't do for ourselves. It can help to take 10 minutes and make a list of Biblical beliefs you have about who God is and what He believes about you. These can become daily affirmations that build hope for the future.
- 2. Don't forget in the 'dark times' what you learned in the daylight.** When in crisis we easily lose perspective and dwell on the negative. We often forget what God has shown us about life, himself and our future. We doubt his promises. Again, call to mind what he has done for you in the past and what the truth really is. Fight the doubt and fear.
- 3. When help is needed and your pain is great – cry out to God.** Just as King David, a man after God's own heart, cried out to God with tears and groaning, we also should desperately share our pain and needs with Him. The Bible offers us many examples of God's people crying out to Him in desperation and Him responding to their cries and giving them hope and a future.
- 4. Hope often comes from reading the Bible.** The word of God can speak hope to our hearts in a way that nothing else can. I can recall being in a difficult season and while reading a certain passage of the Bible it would leap off of the page and strike my heart with comfort, wisdom and hope. Old timers in the faith often called this the 'quicken'd' or 'rhema' word of God that was inspired at the moment for the reader by the Holy Spirit.
- 5. Hope comes from others** (Philippians 4:13-14). Acts of kindness and demonstrated empathy and concern from others often brings hope. In a particularly dark time of my life, my friend Rick treated me to a golf game. Unexpectedly, on the 13<sup>th</sup> hole he brought out a piece of carrot cake and spent a few minutes praying for me. It was my birthday. His thoughtfulness deeply touched my heart and brought hope and a feeling that God

cared. Laying hands on a troubled friend and earnestly praying for them can bring great hope and God's blessing. Sometimes it the small acts of care that bring the needed hope.

*“For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not calamity, to give you a future and a hope.’” (Jer. 29:11)*