



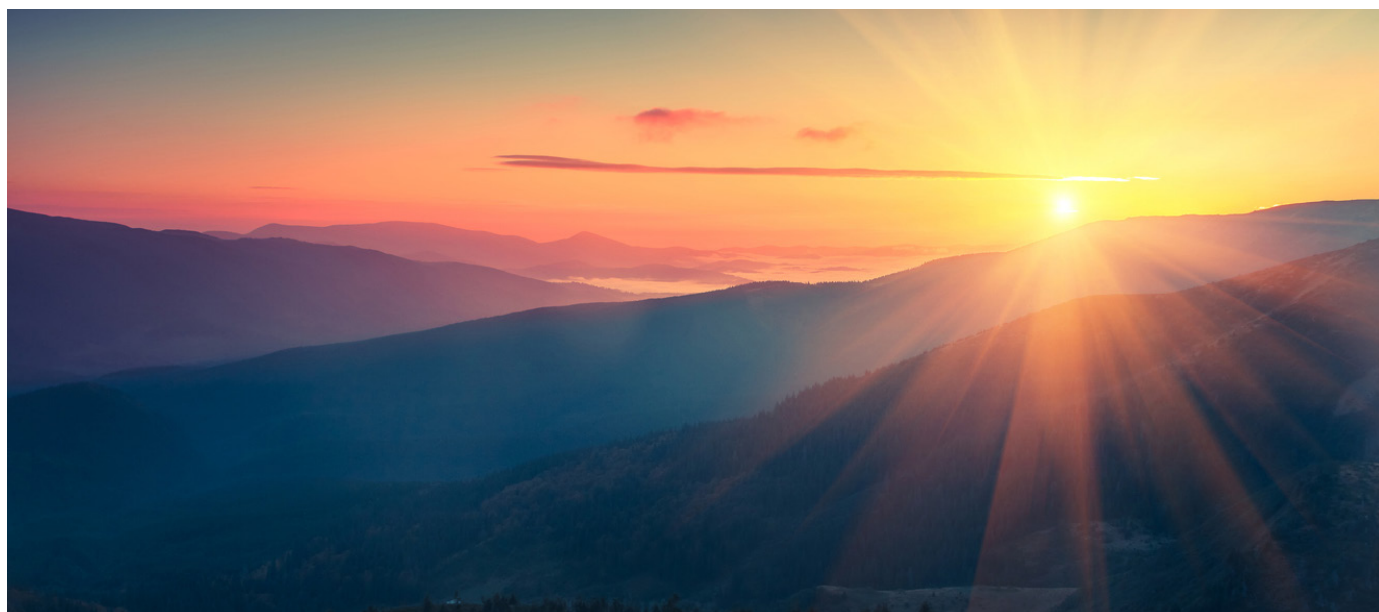
PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTER

A place to find help and hope, care and compassion

Devotional Series:

Let Hope Rise

- Summer 2023 -



Hope on the Horizon *By Leanna Simpson*

HEBREWS 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hope is confidence with expectation. We live in a world that doesn't know Jesus or the hope that He can bring. We know that God is in the business of changing identities and changing lives, as evidenced by every single person that He has saved. We know Hope, and we can live in confidence with expectation!

Let me share with you the testimony of Sasha, an Agape client, and how *HOPE* changed her life:

In 2014, my parents got divorced. That seems like a simple thing, but I knew what it meant. I knew that my dad would feel lost and become self-destructive. I knew that my family would be broken forever. I knew that my "stability" was gone. I was right.

I began to drink to escape the grief over "losing" my family. I quickly spiraled out of control. By 2016, I was homeless, on drugs, and living in my car. I wanted to take my own life. I had made my family situation worse, and I had become a burden on each of them.

I didn't know how to change my life. I was in a cycle of bouncing between jail and treatment. I was sent

to prison from 2016-2017. Within a month of getting out, I began the same cycle of addiction, treatment, being clean, and arrests. In 2019, I found myself back in prison until November of 2020.

When I got out, I went into treatment for 8 months and then into a sober home for 4 months. I was surrounded by other people who were "broken." I watched them "making it" and knew there was hope for me, too.

Once I got my own apartment, I soon found out I was pregnant. I was really scared. I paid for an abortion because I didn't know what else to do. After I saw my baby on the ultrasound, I knew that I couldn't go through with it. After a week of thinking about my options, I drove over to the abortion clinic and asked for my money back. I decided that I was going to be a mom!

*I started to immediately talk with other single moms. I began to make a list of all the places that had helped them. **"Go to Agape," they told me.***

I began my first visit at Agape by sharing my story with the staff. The whole, messy story. No filter,



no edits, just the truth. I was so surprised – they welcomed me with open arms and no judgment. They listened to me and encouraged me. They saw that I was vulnerable, and I needed help. They helped me express some goals and helped me reach the goals that I didn't even believe, in the beginning, that I could

reach. But you know what? They believed in me, and I started to believe in myself.

When I first came to Agape, I had a blow-up mattress on the floor. Now, I have a fully furnished apartment with a bedroom for my son Easton. I have a full-time job, I'm enrolled in college, starting an internship, and I have reached my first savings goal of \$5,000. So much has changed, and Agape has been beside me the entire time cheering me on!

Because of my experiences at Agape, I want to become a social worker. I want to be the person who meets people like they met me. I want to offer others help and hope.

I can honestly say that I never knew a place like this existed. A place that meets people the way they are... broken and lost, alone and sad, overwhelmed and afraid. They are truly inspiring. I will never be the same.

Sasha knew she wanted something different, and she is not alone. This world knows they are missing something. **Different is possible.** Different starts with us. We must focus on an internal strengthening and effort in knowing our God and His Word. We must quiet ourselves, read our Bibles, live "salty" lives, throw off complacent worship, love and meet people where they are, and follow Christ with total abandon. This is what draws people like moths to a flame. This is what causes people to change.

Jesus. Changes. Everything.

1 Peter 3:15 says: *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the **hope** that you have.*

May the *Hope* that we have continue to draw the hungry, the thirsty, and the broken to the Well that never runs dry, Jesus Christ.

Scripture Readings:

Hebrews 11
1 Peter 3:8-22

Worship Song:

"Hope Has a Name" by River Valley Worship
<https://bit.ly/HopeName>



Hope from Despair By Leanna Simpson

I CORINTHIANS 15:55-58

O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

She walks into the waiting room with her head hung low. Her friend, nudging her along, speaks softly: "It's OK. They will help you. Believe me... they know what to do."

We sit. We listen as she talks. Fleeing domestic abuse, living in her car, addicted to drugs, and now pregnant. We listen and we cry. We know there is better for her and her baby. We make some calls. We find her shelter in a safe place. We got her some food to eat. We pray with her. We watch her drive away. We are left staring at the horizon, wondering what came of her story and her life.

When we meet *her*, I am reminded of Luke 24:14-31. This passage takes place right after the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of our Lord

Jesus Christ. The passage reads as follows:

As they walked along, they were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?"

They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days."

"What things?" Jesus asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

"Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said."

Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

By this time, they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were

*going on, but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them. As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. **Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.** And at that moment he disappeared!*

Two thousand years ago, Jesus was buried in a tomb. His followers believed there was no hope. All was lost, and only despair remained. This, my friends, is the despair that this world feels. **This world believes there is no Jesus, no hope, and no empty tomb. EVERY DAY is Friday for them.** Every day there is no redeemer, restorer, or divine answer to this ugly world and their hopeless situations. Just another day where Jesus has no meaning, and they are left confused, questioning, and desperate for a life of *more*.

We meet them on the *Road to Emmaus* and pray that their eyes will be opened to see Jesus through our words and actions. **The truth has been revealed to us – Jesus is Who He said He is. He will do what He says He will do. Jesus could not be contained in the grave... neither should our testimony of what He has done!** The only hope for a broken world is the cross. May we continue to make Jesus famous, as we lift up the cross for all to see!

Scripture Readings:

Luke 24:14-31

1 Corinthians 15

Worship Song:

"I'll Show You the Cross" by Matty Mullins

<https://bit.ly/ShowCross>



A Mother's Journey of Hope *By Leanna Simpson*

PROVERBS 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

In life, the right thing to do is often the hardest. Quite often, our anxieties and fears tell us to take control of a situation because we think we can handle it better than our God. Join me now in listening to a mother's heart of love and sacrifice under the most difficult of obstacles... **this is Alesia's story.**

Alesia and her husband walked into Agape overwhelmed. With five children to feed including a newborn baby, they could not believe that they might be pregnant once again. In shock, they found themselves leaving Agape with an ultrasound picture, some baby items, and new comfort. They were adding to their family once again. They weren't sure how they were going to do it, but they knew that, somehow, things would be all right.

Little did they know that their unexpected journey would bring more twists, turns, and surprises than they ever could have imagined.

The pregnancy appeared to be going normally. When Alesia and her husband went to the doctor for their week 20 ultrasound, the clinician informed them that there was something very wrong with baby Hollie. They saw three masses on the baby's right lung, placing pressure on her heart, left lung, and more. The masses were making it difficult to breathe and for her organs to develop appropriately. They couldn't believe it! How could this be happening?

They were sent to a specialist. The specialist's demeanor was grave, informing them that their unborn child had three fluid-filled cysts on her lungs. **"They could rupture at any time; most people would terminate," he said.** Even though they knew abortion was never an option, the thought of delivering a stillborn was heartbreaking. *What should we do?* After a few moments of deliberation, they knew: **we will choose the *hard* road.**

Around 25 weeks, the doctors began to fear for both the life of the baby *and* Alesia. Signs of preeclampsia were beginning to manifest. What had begun as an unexpected pregnancy was now a medical crisis with two lives on the line. **We will choose the *hard* road.**

At 34 weeks, Alesia's preeclampsia could not be ignored, and she was induced to deliver. Her health began to stabilize after delivery and baby Hollie seemed to be doing fine in the NICU with oxygen support. Two days after Hollie was born, one of the cysts on her lungs ruptured. Her lung collapsed and air leaked out into her chest cavity. Hollie's life was in the balance. She was rushed into surgery. **We will choose the *hard* road... no matter what comes.**

Hollie, by God's divine choosing, was spared. Her life was preserved. The doctors were baffled. If Alesia had not had pre-eclampsia and needed an emergency induction, she would have delivered a stillborn baby Hollie.

Man could not see what was to come... but God could, and He chose to save two lives. He chose to heal two people. He chose to show a family and a team of doctors, nurses, and hospitalists that God is still the Great Physician – the giver and preserver of *ALL* life.

Baby Hollie was in the hospital for four weeks to stabilize and heal. She went home with oxygen for breathing support. The doctors encouraged Alesia to breastfeed baby Hollie, as this was the best thing for her continued healing. The doctors were unaware that Alesia had never



been able to produce milk to nurse any of her children. **God, we trust you... and we will choose the *hard* road.**

God, once again, made a way. What had been impossible before became possible for the first time.



About a month ago, baby Hollie was taken off oxygen. She is doing well and growing big! She still has 2 cysts on her lung. We continue to pray that God will preserve, protect, and heal baby Hollie!

This story testifies to the fact that every day we walk an uncertain road. We do not know what tomorrow will bring, but we know Who holds tomorrow. In all things, every crossroad and valley, every mountaintop and winding road, we know that no matter what may come, God is on His throne, and He is so, so good!

Scripture Readings:

Psalms 62
1 John 5:1-12

Worship Song:

"Waymaker" by The Christ Church Choir
<https://bit.ly/WaymakerTCCC>



Hope for our Tomorrow *By Leanna Simpson*

DEUTERONOMY 28:1-6

And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

This world can often distract and discourage. We often find ourselves fixated on the news because of the violence ripping across our headlines. Fear grips and paralyzes our hearts and actions. We are encouraged to hold our loved ones close and our children even closer. Our knees quiver as we lift ourselves from our bedsides each day, where we pray for our country and our families.

Dear friends, today I would petition you to let go of your children and lift up your heads. Release the white-knuckled grasp that we have upon them. Pray on our knees, but then get up and brush them off. Look up... because hope is rising.

Not only do I feel it in my heart, I see it every day. Out of this broken, desperate, and sad world, I see leaders coming. I see the youth rising up and "taking the baton." If you are looking for hope, look in the eyes of your children.

I am reminded of Exodus 34:5-11, where it says:

Then the Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him (Moses); and he called out his own name, Yahweh. The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out,

"Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy!"

I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.

But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations."

*Moses immediately threw himself to the ground and worshiped. And he said, "**O Lord, if it is true that I have found favor with you, then please travel with us. Yes, this is a stubborn and rebellious people, but please forgive our iniquity and our sins. Claim us as your own special possession.**"*

The Lord replied, "Listen, I am making a covenant with you in the presence of all your people. I will perform miracles that have never been performed anywhere in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people around you will see the power of the Lord—the awesome power I will display for you.

God, Yahweh, has redeemed us and purchased our debt with the blood sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are redeemed, restored, claimed, and forgiven. **He is enough for us, and He is enough for our children.** We must believe this! He who began a good work in us is able to do this same work in those who come behind us!

I am here to testify to what I have seen and witnessed:

I have looked into the eyes of your son as he said *thank you* for saving babies in Jesus' name.

I have read your daughter's note as she said "I love Jesus, and I love babies. Thank you for protecting babies and loving Jesus, too!"

I have watched as the young men from your church youth group knelt in front of Agape with heads bowed low and praying for all to see.

I have stood holding your daughter's hand as the young women from her local school prayed the Spirit of the Living God down upon this place.

I have watched your church's youth group pull weeds, chop wood, wipe windows, talk to the neighbors, and offer food and drink to the hungry.

I have read your granddaughter's words: "My grandmother's love for babies and passion for the prolife cause did not die with her. As her granddaughter, I have begun to realize the calling God has for ALL His people to stand up and fight for the justice of those who cannot fight for themselves. Children are precious to God, and it is EVIDENT that Agape not only recognized this but acts upon it to save the babies and provide stability and care for the mothers."

These young people have shown with their *actions* what total abandon for Christ looks like! May we look at their examples and be bold, unashamed, and driven to action every single day for the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Lift up your heads. **Hope *IS* rising!**

Scripture Readings:

Deuteronomy 6:1-25
Deuteronomy 28:1-14

Worship Song:

"The Blessing" by Kari Jobe & Cody Carnes
<https://bit.ly/TheBlessingLive>



Hope Means Trusting Him By Leanna Simpson

ROMANS 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

As we begin our 38th year of operation, everyone at Agape continues to marvel at the supernatural provision, protection, and endurance God has given this ministry.

Many, many victories have been won by the power of our God. In the Old Testament, the Israelites would pay tribute after a victory by building an altar for all to see. Everyone who passed by would marvel and **know**. They would know that the Israelites were there. They would know the battle was won. They would know that the God of the Israelites had, once again, done the impossible.

Two and a half years ago, God began pressing heavily on our hearts and minds to prepare to build an altar. You see, the Agape property has had many obstacles over the years. The task and cost to mitigate these obstacles seemed beyond reason and possibility; they felt like a battle of heavenly proportions. Every step forward

toward a reasonable resolution was distracted and disarmed with physical, financial, and emotional roadblocks.

Over these last few years, God began moving His people to go above and beyond in giving generously toward the \$774,500 financial need of the project. However, on the evening of April 25th, we knew that the opportunity to move forward with the project this year was closing. The status of the funding was simple: **there was a financial shortfall of \$110,000.**

I was discouraged. I found myself asking God: "Why?" I lay my head down to sleep.

My eyes flew open. I immediately looked at my clock in anticipation of what was to come... 2:15 a.m. ***I knew God had called me to a meeting.***

In the darkness... a quiet came upon me and a still, small voice whispered: ***Trust Me.***

I cannot describe the sensation that came over

me. I knew His voice, like a familiar parent calling my name. I lay awake all night waiting for Him to speak again. Another message never came. **His message was clear and singular.**

The next day, I walked into the board room. The board president began his devotional. He said that over the past week, he could not shake the message of Psalms 20. Specifically, the verses that he felt called to share were these:

Psalms 20:7-9

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but ***we trust in the name of the Lord our God.*** They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. *O Lord, may He answer us when we call.*

He then went on to say: The Lord has pressed upon my heart to ***Trust Him...*** we need to simply ***Trust Him.***

This story shows the character of our God. A God who continually shows up. A God who is willing to come to us in the night to confirm His goodness, cast off our doubts, and show the mighty power of His strength. He is so very patient, merciful,

and kind. **This, my friends, is our God. This is who He is. He loves us and *answers us* when we call.**

Knowing this to be true, I am honored to share that **by God's *provision through each one of you* AND through the supernatural leading of a living and present God, the Agape board of directors unanimously decided to *Trust Him* and move forward with the Agape Campus Expansion this June of 2023!**

The physical campus expansion will represent our most recent altar. We will continue to build altars, seen and unseen, every single day. We will never stop... until we breathe our last. ***All who stand witness will see that, once again, something BIG has happened.*** As the flames begin to rise from the altars, may our lives, our work, and this ministry be a fragrant aroma to the One we worship with the works of our hands.

So, let us daily offers up the aroma of Hope and remember that Hope has a name... its name is ***Jesus!***



Scripture Reading:

Romans 15:4-13

1 Timothy 4:8-16

Worship Song:

"Goodness of Our God" by Bethel Music

<https://bit.ly/GoodofGod>