

Principle 1

HOPE

“For there is hope for a tree, when it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and its shoots will not fail. Though its roots grow old in the ground and its stump dies in the dry soil, at the scent of water it will flourish and put forth sprigs like a plant.” Job 14:7-9

I have never known what it is like to be raised by both a mother and a father under the same roof. My dad left our family when I was only eighteen months old. All I remember from that time is when I was four years old we moved out of our really nice house and neighborhood into an apartment. I had to switch schools several times for we moved again when my mom remarried a guy that I could not stand. Fortunately that marriage only lasted a year, and we moved yet again when my mom and dad tried to get back together. That turned out to be a complete disaster for both me and my mom, and we soon moved again into a town house and another school for me.

My life seemed like a yo-yo at the time, bouncing from houses and schools, and back and forth to my dad’s house. Thankfully we are well settled now and I would like to start my book out with a little background on my mom and me, and how God has brought us through this extremely difficult time in an amazing way.

Although I don’t remember seeing it at a young age, my mom tells me she was an absolute wreck at the time; for she was a stay at home mom who was left penniless and homeless when he left. She said it was on a cold, terrible, lonely night in October, when I was at my dad’s house for the weekend she gave up hope in being a single mom. If there were wrong roads to go down she traveled them, and if there were mistakes to be made she made them. She looked everywhere for hope and peace in her single mom life; everywhere except to God. It was on this dark October night that she finally fell to her knees and cried out to God for help, for she was ready to check out of life if he did not show up.

I love hearing her tell the story of how the moment she called Gods name, the God of the universe paused just for her and said to her in her spirit, “Here I am Lori; I have been with you all along and I was just waiting to hear from you.” She felt God’s presence in our house like never before, and could actually feel the arms of God around her. The Lord continued to speak to her spirit saying, “Don’t you give up Lori and don’t you quit! You have a son that needs you and I have great plans for your life.” My mom jokes now that she could not tell at the time if she was just so messed up that she heard voices, or did she really hear from God?

As the story turns out it really was God, for my mom suddenly recalled the verse from Jeremiah 29:11 that a client of hers had on their desk. The verse says, ***“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you, not to harm you; plans to give you a hope and a future.”*** My mom was delighted that verse was somehow tucked away in her memory, but unfortunately that was the extent of her bible knowledge.

The good news is she knew with all her heart she had something real to put her hope in now as a single mom. God was a much better choice for her than men, money, other people and even leaning on me. She had an enormous sense of peace within her now for she knew that God was real, and if she put all her hope and trust in Him, everything was going to be okay for both her and me.

The next day she went and bought a Bible and dove into it every moment she could. She also read it to me every moment possible, even though I was still very young at the time. Over the course of time the Lord gave my mom twenty one verses to follow as a single mom. He told her if she followed them that everything was going to turn out just fine for both her and me.

This just might be the point where I might lose you and find you saying, “Yea! Yea! Yea! Another God story and the mom and kid live happily ever after. I so wish that was the case. We struggled and fought our way through this season of life, and only because of God in our life we are here today talking with you. Please keep reading for I shared the end of the story here at the beginning to give you hope that everything is going to be ok for you now, and in the future. It is a good ending and a must read for you.

God was right in saying that everything was going to be ok, and my mom is doing great. She actually ended up taking those verses and authored the, “21 Principles of a Healthy Single Mom” book and DVD Bible Study that churches and single moms are using all over the world now. Only God can take up a messed up single mom and turn things around for her like that when you put your hope in Him.

The story ends in after eighteen years of being a single mom, and doing everything she possibly could to follow these twenty-one verses, being almost penniless at times, raising me and being there for me every moment, along with writing this series and getting it out to churches everywhere; God brought my mom the most genuine, amazing man she could ever ask for. He is the absolute perfect mate for her, and God could not have brought a more awesome man into my life for me personally.

On August 9th of 2014 I had the honor and privilege to walk my mom down the aisle; well actually it was really her dock in new home in Montana on the Flat Head Lake surrounded by mountains, which has always been her dream. I have never been so happy for my mom as I was to give her hand in marriage to Rick Truzzolino that day. God was right! Everything turned out great amongst what looked like disaster a long time ago.

You heard a little about my mom and now I will tell you a little bit about me. Remember, I am telling you the end of the story here so stick with me.

I humbly admit that I am doing great, for my mom taught those twenty one verses of scripture to me and helped me apply them to my life starting at a very young age. I am truly blessed and living in victory through Jesus Christ; even though I was raised just by my mom. Only by the grace of God, and by giving my life over to Him, have I been able to be a victor and not a victim from being raised by a single parent.

Even though my mom read the bible to me very early in my life I chose to read it for myself now, and try my best to follow Christ. I also chose to stay plugged into my church, and my

fraternity brothers in college hold us accountable to that every week. I also believe that every word in the Bible is true.

I want to encourage you that it is never too late for you to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior regardless of your age, what your life has been like, or what you have done in the past. It is also never too late to pick up a Bible and start to read it for yourself, and I pray that you do. It will make all the difference in your life to help you down the right path and to make the right choices that God will bless.

All glory goes to God that he has allowed me defeat the statistics of being raised in a single parent home. I am now a sophomore while writing this on an academic and golf scholarship.

My mom and I have tried our best to live out these twenty one Principles, and just as God called her to write them to single mothers, I feel it is now my time to write them to my peers to share hope with teens of single parents. I know that life is not easy being raised by a single parent with all the struggles they go through. Sometimes it feels it may be easier to just quit, or turn to things that will only destroy us like drugs, alcohol or sex to drown the pain.

I want to encourage you to embrace the word hope no matter what the circumstances are you may be facing as a teen today. Hope encourages me to hold on for something better than this life offers today; even though we may not be able to see it clearly now. According to Webster's Dictionary, the word hope means, "To wish for something with the expectation of its fulfillment. To have confidence, or trust. To look forward to with confidence or expectation, one that is a source of or reason for hope."

With all of the choices and temptations I have in this world to put my hope in I still choose Jesus Christ, for I have seen His goodness and His hand upon my mom and me from a very young age. Here is a wonderful verse about hope from Job 14:7-9 that says, ***"For there is hope for a tree when it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and its shoots will not fail. Though its roots grow old in the ground its stump dies in the dry soil, at the scent of water it will flourish and put forth sprigs like a plant."***

Maybe you feel like life has cut you down like that tree with what you are going through, or possibly you feel there is no hope for the future for you because of your circumstances. I am writing to you to say, "Don't give up and don't quit! You have so much to live for. My mom and I are living proof of it. When you choose to put your hope in Jesus, he will help you flourish being raised by a single parent, and he will help you to live a life of purpose and meaning, focus and order, balance and harmony.

My true desire for you in this Principle of Hope is to help you apply the verse of Jeremiah 29:11 to your life, and understand the goodness of God the way I have seen Him in my life as a child, and now a teen being raised by a single mom.

So let's get to work on the first sentence of the verse that says, "For I know the plans I have for you." Who do you think the "I" is in this verse? It is God. The next question to ask you is,

“Who is God to us teenagers being raised by single parents in this crazy mixed up world we live in?”

The answer is He is our Heavenly Father; our Abba, Father and Dad. The Bible shows us this in Matthew 6:9 when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray he started with, **“Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name.”**

In this insane world we live in not having a physical father or mother in our homes, or maybe not even in our life, we still have to know we have two fathers; a Heavenly father as stated in Matthew 6:9, and a human father who did not make you. Yes, your earthly parents conceived you, but they are not who made you. God made you as His word says in **Psalm 139:13-14, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made! Your works are wonderful.”**

Can you believe that God made you for His purpose and joy when our own father or mother isn’t with us? I wonder how many of us teens can wake up every morning, look in the mirror as we get ready for school and confidently say to God, “Thank you for making me. I am wonderful and beautiful (or handsome) because you made me for your purpose and pleasure.”

Seeing God as our Father does not sit too well with some of us teens being raised by single parents, for **we perceive what God is like by the way important people in our life have failed us or mistreated us.** This can represent your own father or mother, family members, friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, teachers and coaches, and the important people that are not in your life right now.

Possibly you went through some difficult things when you were a child that hurt you, or you are currently dealing with them right now. Maybe it was a divorce and a parent not being with you, or a controlling parent, a weak father, verbal, emotional or physical abuse, or parental neglect.

Unfortunately so many of us teens being raised by single parents grow up with severe rejection from our parents that leaves us feeling unwanted by them, or by God. Maybe some of the important people in your life nit-picked at you and wanted you to do everything perfect. Possibly they were unforgiving, cold, demanding, insensitive, uncaring, angry or cruel to you.

For example, a weak or absent father figure can cause us to look for love in all the wrong places. We make other people our “Saviors” because we were left unprotected, neglected or uncared for.

You see, the image we have of God is formed at a very young age, and because of the things that have happened in your past or current situations, we may think God is cruel, mean and just plain out to get us. If you feel this way about God, and for whatever reason you are being raised by a single parent, it can be difficult to understand Gods word in Psalm 68:5 that says God is, **“A father to the fatherless,”** or in Exodus 3:14, **“I am who I am,”** which can be taken as a mother to the motherless.

The truth about God I have come to understand and see first- hand is He is never mean, cruel or abusive to us teens; people do those kinds of things to each other. It is critical for you to believe and understand that God made you for His own pleasure, and that real love comes from

the wonderful way that God treats you; not from what other people have done to you even though those things hurt. I could write an entire book on the goodness of God, and the good things we have seen God do and provide for us as a single parent family that are truly amazing things.

It is imperative that we get to know God as a teen right now for we need hope in this single parent family situation. We need to know how to live right today so we grow up to be responsible, productive adults. (Even though our own parents may not be) The Bible is the best tool we have to learn about God. It is life and truth, and if whatever you are thinking or feeling about yourself or your life is not in there; then it is a lie.

Really think about this question. Someday when you have your own kids do you really want them growing up the way that you did? Living in a single parent home, broke all the time, struggling with anger, guilt, hopelessness that there is not anything good for them in this world, doing drugs to drown the pain and other things. God can turn all of the difficult things going on inside of you around and make you a whole, healthy, productive adult who in turn will raise up a whole, healthy new generation. (More about this in Principle three.) You have to get to know God now for your greater future.

Let me give you an example of what I mean by this. Maybe you believe the lie that God does not think that you are someone remarkable because mom, dad, friends, family, boyfriend or girlfriend did not treat you that way. I am here to tell you that God thinks you are absolutely incredible because His word says in **Deuteronomy 32:9-10**, "***I am the apple of His eye.***"

I have discovered from reading my Bible (and my mom making me read) that God is kind, compassionate, accepts me, loves me and longs or yearns to be with me. God is also patient, kind, gentle and full of grace and mercy towards me, and I am the apple of His eye regardless of what I have ever done.

Nowhere in my Bible can I find that God hates me, thinks I am a loser as a teen being raised by a single parent, or that he is out to get me. When you choose to read and pray before school, or turn off the television, computer, video games and Ipod to make time for God you will see that He is a good God, and truly wants nothing but the very best for you.

Here is just some basic information about God that may help you to better understand that God is a good God to teens being raised by single parents.

- 1. God is an Omnipotent God** which means He has absolute power. God can do anything, and He is bigger and than any problem you are facing right now. If you give God control of your life he can, and will bring you through this single parent family time victoriously.
- 2. God is an Omnipresence God** which means that His presence is everywhere. There is no place in this world you can go that God will not be there with you. This should provide safety and comfort to you if you are alone a lot from your parent having to work all the time, or if you feel you don't have anyone to talk with.

- 3. God is an Omniscient God** which means that He has full knowledge of everything. The bible says he knows the numbers of hairs on your head. He knows what you need even before you do or ask for it. He also sees behind your mask you put on to hide the shame, guilt and pain; and he still loves you even though he knows everything about you. Hope in people and things cause death and hopelessness, while hope in God brings life and happiness.

You are a winner with God being raised by a single parent and you *can* get through this time in your life. Remember it is only a season and it will pass. God can make you healthy in every area of your life; spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically, financially and socially. My prayer for you today is that you choose to experience the life that God intended for you regardless of your current circumstances; a life filled with purpose and meaning, focus and order, balance and harmony. This can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through you. I pray that today you put all of your hope in Jesus and let him lift you up on eagle's wings to soar to a new height and life with Him. ***“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*** Isaiah 40:31

Questions:

- 1. We tend to view what God is like based off of the way people have failed us or mistreated us. How has your view of God changed by realizing this?**
- 2. What plan can you implement into your life to learn more about God?**
- 3. What things besides Jesus have you put your hope in?**
- 4. What changes do you have to make to now put all of your hope in Jesus?**

Go through Section One of the downloadable Workbook.

To access the Workbook send an email to:

bookresources@hope4singlemoms.com

PRINCIPLE 2
IDENTITY

“While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to him.” Matthew 17:5

We can be so mean and cruel to each other as teenagers by talking and gossiping about people behind their backs, on Facebook and Twitter, and even worse what we choose to say right to people’s faces. Harsh words or names spoken to you by your friends or family can completely destroy your self- image, and if you are not careful you can let those words define who you are.

One of the greatest questions ever presented to me that changed my life forever when I was in third grade was from my mom. Wrong or harsh words spoken over you at a very young age can affect how we see ourselves as teenagers, and we can even carry them into adulthood. She asked me to tell her about who I was after this happened to me by some friends of mine at that time.

That was a really fascinating question for me then for there were several choices I briefly considered telling her about who I was. I could have said I was a basketball player, my mom’s son, or Eric Little. What would you have said? How would you respond to the question, “Tell me about who you are?”

If I answered a basketball player that would have been telling her what sport I play. If I said my mom’s son, that would have been telling her my earthly status. If I said Eric Little that would have been telling her my given name.

Too many of us teens have falsely labeled ourselves from the situations that have occurred in our lives, or things said to us being raised by a single parent. Perhaps you feel like a loser because you live in a one parent family. Maybe you don’t feel worthy because someone told you that you will never amount to anything, for the statistics are extremely high that children from single parents usually turn out bad or end up in prison. Possibly your economic situation is not as well off as a two parent family, and you are embarrassed that it is a struggle just to survive. Possibly you heard that you were a “Package Deal” if someone wanted to marry one of your parents, for if they want them you come along with the deal. Perhaps you feel rejected in going back and forth from one parent to the other, and you can’t wait for this madness to finally end.

There is a really great verse at the beginning of Genesis that says, ***“They (meaning Adam and Eve) heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord called out to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself. And He (God) said, “Who told you that you were naked?”***

I believe in this verse God is saying to us teens, *“Who told you that you were a loser? Who told you that you will never amount to anything? Who told you that you were responsible for your parents not being together? Who told you that you were rejected or insignificant? That is not the way that I see you! The only person you are is the one I say you are.”*

There comes a point when we have to ask ourselves, “Who did tell us those things?” What we need to realize is that we bring a lot of those things on our self, and accept what other people say about us at truth. We also need to know that Satan whispers a bunch of lies to us that we buy right into as truth.

It is imperative to understand that our *feelings* cause these false labels we wear. Perhaps one of your parents left your family so you *feel* rejected and unloved. Maybe you feel awful from the offensive names you may have been called. My point is if you *feel* like a loser, you will act like a loser. If you *feel* like a piece of trash, you will act like a piece of trash. The false labels we wear, regardless of who gave them to us, cause extreme self hatred that leads us to live beneath the God given privileges that He has for us; especially in the relationships we get involved in.

Our *feelings* can be destructive at times and end up determining what we think about ourselves. The way we *behave* is usually determined by what we believe about our self, and this way of thinking is wrong.

What changed my life forever was to see myself the way that God truly sees me. Nowhere in my Bible can I find that I am a loser, not worthy, a package deal, rejected or insignificant. As I mentioned in the Principle of Hope, I believe that everything in the Bible is true, so if it is not in there then it is a lie.

So how did I answer my mom’s question when she asked me to tell her who I was? I recited the following to her:

I am the apple of God’s eye (Deuteronomy 32:9-10)

I am the salt and light of the earth (Matthew 5:13-14)

I am God’s child (John 1:12)

I am Christ’s friend (John 15:15)

I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life (John 15:1, 5)

I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16)

I am a personal witness of Christ (Acts 1:8)

I have been justified (Romans 3:24)

I am free from condemnation (Romans 8:1, 2)

I am assured that all things work together for my good (Romans 8:28)

I am free from any condemning charges against me (Romans 8:31-34)

I cannot be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39)

I have been sanctified in Christ (1Corninthians 1:2)

I am righteous and holy (1Corninthians 1:30)

I am God’s temple (1 Corinthians 3:16)

I am united with the Lord, I am one spirit with Him (1Corninthians 6:17)

I have been bought with a price. I belong to God (1Corninthians 6:20)

I am a member of Christ’s Body (1 Corinthians 12:27)

I have been established, anointed and sealed by God (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22)

I am a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I have received God's righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21)
I am God's co- worker (2 Corinthians 6:1)
I am one in Christ (Galatians 3:28)
I am a saint (Ephesians 1:1)
I am blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3)
I am holy, blameless and covered with God's love (Ephesians 1:4)
I have been adopted as God's child (Ephesians 1:5-6)
I am forgiven, and my sins have been taken away (Ephesians 1:7)
I am marked as belonging to God (Ephesians 1:13)
I have been raised up to sit with Christ (Ephesians 2:6)
I am God's work of art (Ephesians 2:10)
I have been brought near to God (Ephesians 2:13)
I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18)
I share in the promise of Christ (Ephesians 3:6)
I can come into God's presence with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12)
I am a member of Christ's body (Ephesians 5:29-30)
I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected (Philippians 1:6)
I am a citizen of Heaven (Philippians 3:20)
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:3)
I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins (Colossians 1:14)
I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)
I am set free from my sinful nature (Colossians 2:11)
I am hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3)
I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7)
I have eternal glory (2 Timothy 2:10)
I can find grace and mercy in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)
I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18)

I am thankful to have a mother who taught me these verses, and read them to me for as long as I can remember. By her doing this, I feel loved, accepted and significant in her eyes. However, the greatest impact these verses had on me, and still does, is when I chose to start reading and accepting them for my-self and it is not too late for you to do the same. If you don't have someone to read these verses over you say them out loud, and know that God himself is singing them over you.

I remember thinking one night as I was reading that these verses can't possibly be for me. I thought about some of the things that I did that were not right as I got older, and had trouble accepting the verses as truth about me. It was then I realized that the enemy can truly put lies in our head that God's word is not for us because of the sins we committed. Satan does not want you to understand and trust God's truth about who you are. If you do not believe these verses are

true about you then you can call God a liar. My Bible says that Satan is the father of lies, not God.

I had to read these verses several times a day for quite a while to start believing again they were all true about me, and this is really who I am. I had to allow God's word to remove the lies I started to believe about myself, and reprogram my mind with His truth. It is extremely important to get God's word engrained in our mind. This helps us learn how to win the battle for our mind on our own. The last thing we need as teenagers is to go around wearing the false labels the world has to offer and live a defeated life. In order to be a healthy teenager, we must accept and understand Colossians 2:10 that says, ***"In Christ you have been made whole and complete."***

We must allow the truth of God's word to determine what we believe about our self. Then our belief about our self will determine our behavior, and our behavior will determine how we feel about our self. If you don't believe me take the 10 day challenge. Read these verses out loud to yourself in the morning, at lunch (if you are in school then reading them silent is ok), after dinner and before bed.

If you want to add an extra bonus, ask one of your parents or someone you really love and respect to read them out loud to you. My Bible says that God's word does not come back void so you will see a difference in the way you "feel" about yourself. This is where you will receive all of the self confidence, acceptance and love that you truly need; not in all the wrong places and people that you may be turning to. So read those verses daily and let God's word rebuild and renew your mind. Put your head up high and your shoulders back then walk around and let the world know that you are, "A chosen race; a royal priesthood." (1 Peter 2:9)

You may want to even journal the ten days so you can look back to see how God can change you. This is also good to have and refer back to when the enemy wants to whisper lies to you in the future. He will be back and hopefully you are prepared next time.

There are so many voices shouting at us for our attention, and we have to decide which one we are going to listen to.

Will it be our own voice, what others say, or the enemy whispering lies in our ears? I have found the best choice is to do what Matthew 17:5 says, **"This is my son, listen to him."**

Questions:

- 1. What are the false label's you are wearing?**
- 2. Identify who gave them to you.**
- 3. What will you do with these false labels?**
- 4. What will you say the next time someone asks you about who you are?**
- 5. Read the scriptures out loud to yourself on a daily basis.**

Principle 16 *EXTENSION*

“And if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in the darkness and your gloom will become like the midday.” Isaiah 58:10

The most common drug distributed to teenagers today is for depression and anxiety. If you go back to Principle 3, Victory, you will understand this comes from the root of Rejection, which can clearly be understood if one of your parents or someone important to you has left you. Some of the actions that come from this root of rejection are: addictions, compulsions, seeking acceptance, unworthiness and withdrawal to name a few. If you went through the worksheet for Principle three you will see how Satan uses that rejection to cause you to think that you are not accepted; especially by God, and the importance of replacing that lie with God’s truth from 1 Peter 2:9 that says, **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”**

Life is not meant to be lived in sorrow and isolation, thinking only of ourselves and our problems. I know that some people have real problems with depression from chemical imbalances and other physical issues. For others it is because we are thinking only of ourselves. A great cure from depression is to get out of yourself and get into others as Isaiah 58:10 says, **“And if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in the darkness and your gloom will become like the midday.”** A great translation of this verse from Elizabeth Elliott says, “You yourself will be given light in exchange for pouring yourself out for the hungry; you yourself will get guidance, the satisfaction of your longings, and strength, when you pour yourself out, when you make the satisfaction of somebody else’s desire your own concern; you yourself will be a source of refreshment, a builder, a lender into healing and rest at a time when things around you seem to have crumbled.”

If we want real joy in our lives as teenagers we have to get out of ourselves and into others. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that life is all about me. Satan is the one who wants you in depression, thinking only of yourself and isolated. The Bible says in Philippians 2:3-5, **“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

Our ultimate goal in life should be to become Christ like and conform to his character. I never once read where Jesus sat around depressed with a “woe is me” attitude focusing just on himself. Philippians 2:7 says, **“He emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant.”** Jesus lived to serve others and that is what we should be doing as healthy teenagers. This will get you out of yourself and out of depression.

If you think you have it bad, go to a nursing home and see elderly people who have nothing to live for anymore. Or, go the cancer ward at a hospital and see someone fighting for just one more breath or another day of life. Most people would give everything they have, including the richest people in the world, to just have one more day to live. We are here and alive today and this needs to be celebrated. Our true joy should come from giving God praise and thanksgiving for everything he is, and everything he has done for us.

The Sea of Galilee is a lake full of life because it takes in water but also gives it out. Nothing however lives in the Dead Sea because there is no outflow, so everything in it is stagnated.

It is extremely selfish to continually dwell on our own problems and our self. How can we possibly notice anyone else and what troubles they may be facing that we can help them with if we only think of ourselves? We need to stop asking, “What about me” to “Whose need’s can I meet today?”

God has a plan for your life and it is your “calling” or service” to God in this life as Ephesians 2:10 says, **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we could walk in them.”** One day we will stand before God and he will ask us, “What on earth were you doing for me?” If all you are is caught up in yourself your answer will be, “Absolutely nothing.”

Our schedules as teenagers are really busy but you don’t have to look any further than your own school to find other hurting teens that you can encourage. One of my good friends on my high school basketball team lived with his single mom who had to hold down several jobs just to support them. She was hardly ever home and he was left alone in the house more often than he wanted to be. He also had to fend for himself all the time for meals. I felt my “ministry” to him was to have him over at my house as much as possible for dinners, after the games and on weekends. It was something he appreciated so much, and my mom calls him her second son now. We simply showed him that we cared about what he was going through and offered him companionship, along with opening up our home to him.

Another one of my good friends on the high school football team had the potential to go to a D1 college for football. His grades were not up to par though, and I felt my “calling” to him was to encourage him to focus on his grades, and help him see he already had the natural talent needed to get the scholarship. He was in talks with a D1 college until they saw his grades and revoked their talk. Unfortunately he did not want to listen to, or accept, my encouragement about the grades and he never went to college.

One thing you can do to get out of yourself is simply to ask God each morning to put someone in your path that you can help that day. There is always someone at school that is in worse shape than you are that could use your encouragement.

If you honestly want to flourish as a teenager and in life in general, you have to learn to give instead of receive as Galatians 6:7 says, **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows this he will also reap.”** We have to plant the seed of healing first before we can receive healing for ourselves. There is no such thing as the perfect time to start, or

having the right conditions around you, or the right words to say. All we can do is pray God will send someone your way that needs what you have to offer.

All you can do is start right where you are at even if you are lonely or depressed; or both as Genesis 26:12 says, **“In the middle of a famine, Isaac sowed a seed in the land. And in the same year he received a hundred times what he planted and the Lord rewarded him mightily.”**

In his time of greatest need Isaac did not sit around and wait for someone to do something for him. He rose up in the midst of his circumstances and sowed a seed. God says that he will satisfy your needs when you sow a seed. Maybe you are in that dry, sun scorched desert land as Isaiah 58:11 says as a teenager today with all we face. Whatever your need is as a teenager, the first thing to do is get your mind off of yourself and help meet the needs of someone else today. Do not sit around feeling sorry for yourself and have tea parties with Satan. Go find someone that you can minister to. Just think how many of your school mates are in worse shape than you are. They need you and what you have to offer; even if it is just your shoulder to cry on, or someone to just sit and hang out with them.

God is just waiting to bless you in abundance. The seed that you sow into someone else actually finishes the blessing for you. The size of your harvest depends on the size of your seed.

Make a decision today to turn your attention away from yourself and focus on being a blessing to someone else. A healthy teenager concentrates more on being a blessing than being blessed. Ask God to bring people into your path that you can bless, and be on the lookout for opportunities to share God with others.

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