

SUNDAY LINE AND WORLD MINISTRIES



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Caring for children around the world

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HOUSE OF HOPE *BETHLEHEM, ISRAEL*



"IN THEE MY LORD DO I PUT MY TRUST" is the scripture reference from Psalm 31:1 on which the ministry at House of Hope is based. Founder May Ladah, a blind woman and faithful daughter of the Lord, established House of Hope to serve the blind and children with special needs and to present them with the love of Jesus.

George Awad is a board member of House of Hope and acting as the present administrator as well as serving as the minister of the Presbyterian Church in Bethlehem. "I love this house," comments George, "And enjoy taking care of the neglected people in our society."

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

At the House of Hope School, three teachers spend time with the special needs children giving them art classes and leading them in activities to help them develop better hand-eye coordination and enhance the development of their minds. Miss Violet, a teacher at House of Hope for 27 years, teaches the boys how to read and write brail and to read the Bible. There are no provisions made for children with special needs in the regular school system so these children would be otherwise excluded.

Raghad is a sweet 10 year old who has lived at House of Hope since she was 5. Born with a paralysis of the brain that has caused slow muscle growth, she faces difficulties in speaking and pronunciation – though she understands everything. In class, with her teacher Jackline, she learns to articulate with greater clarity and to coordinate her large muscle movements.

Raghad misses her mother and family and needs the love that House of Hope can give as they care for her and provide the things she needs. Raghad loves guests, and, should you visit, she will likely grab your arm, take you for a walk and give you a hug and a kiss!

At the Day Care, nine house fathers and mothers take care of the children after school. There is also a boarding section where children are cared for throughout the day and night by local staff and international volunteers. They are able to visit their families one weekend each month and during holiday times.

ON-GOING EDUCATION:

Jaafar joined the house when he was 12 years old. Twenty years later and now 33 years old, Jaafar helps in the workshop along with 4 other blind men. They learn to make brushes and brooms. Jaafar loves to worship and sing during their devotional times.

Murad is 'half-sighted'. He first came to the house when he was 13 years old. Now, twenty-six years later, he works in the garden and does the cleaning outside of the buildings. He loves his work and loves to help at the home.



On behalf of everyone at Sunday Line and our team of volunteers, we want to extend our best wishes to you and your loved ones, as we celebrate the advent of Christ's incarnation coming in human flesh to bring us His Peace.

A STRESS-LESS CHRISTMAS

Key Scripture: Psalm 46:1-3

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

Have you ever lost your car in a parking lot? The first thing we do is to panic. Instead of stopping, collecting our senses and regrouping our thoughts, we begin running from one place to another. For many of us, that pretty well describes our lives. There are three words which could describe our culture today: "Hurry ... Worry ... Bury!"

"Hurry and Worry" are best friends. They are in a constant battle against two other best friends called "Time and Money". "Hurry and Worry" talk to "Time and Money" every day, but "Time and Money" say the same thing day after day, and that is "Good-bye"! No matter how hard they try "Hurry and Worry" just can't seem to get enough "Time and Money".

We live in a very stressful world. We all know that stress is a real problem, and that does affect our health...which leads us to another distant cousin known as "Bury".

Stress by itself isn't altogether a bad thing, because we all need a certain amount of stress to motivate us to do things. For some people it is one way they get things done; however, too much stress can also have some bad effects.

Psalm 46 reminds us that God doesn't want us to get stressed out, especially during Christmas.

Many people have built up certain myths about Christians.

One of the myths is that Christians are immune to stress. In fact, as Christians, our lives sometimes get even more stressful. We sometimes wonder why God allows certain stressful things to happen to us, and ask, "Why me?"

Another myth is that bad things will never happen to Christians. As Christians, we expect that everyone will love us, we won't get sick any more, we won't have any more family problems, all of our children will be the best children in the world, and that the devil will leave us alone for the rest of our earthly life. Well, we know that isn't true.

So, why does God allow stressful things to happen to us?

The answer is: God wants us to grow so that we learn to trust Him more.

Growth takes time, it doesn't happen instantly. I remember that I couldn't wait to get older so that I could drive a car. I dreamed about being the only boy in school with a sports car. When I finally got my driver's license the only thing that I could afford was an old 1950 "James" motorcycle which I had to push to get started.

It's easy to measure physical growth. But how about spiritual growth - how do we measure a person's spiritual growth?

Spiritual growth is measured in how well we live our lives and how we respond to life's circumstances such as waiting, failing, losing, being misunderstood, or being mistreated.

In a University of Washington study on stress, they rated how different things affected people's stress. A death in the family rated the highest stress level at 100; this was followed by divorce at 73; pregnancy came next at 40; remodelling a home was measured at 25 and, surprisingly, Christmas was at 12.

That is why Psalm 46 is a great Psalm to remember in times of stress. Martin Luther was under continual stress, and through the words of Psalm 46 wrote His famous hymn: "A Mighty Fortress is Our God". Fortress is a military term; it means a place or source of refuge or support.

When we are cramped, squeezed and pressed so tightly that we cannot see any way out...then Psalm 46 gives us the answer: God is our refuge and strength in times of trouble, building a tent over us...He is there protecting us...He is there surrounding us with His care.

Isaiah 41:10 gives us further assurance: “**Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Be still, and know that I am God.**”

The Hebrew word for “be still” could also be translated “relax”. God says, “Relax.” We are to relax in His almighty power and that He will work out all things for our good.

The point is that we will never discover the truth of God’s promise if we let stress rule our lives. Someone once said: “If I had my life to live over, I would go more places. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and less bran. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary troubles.”

Christmas for many can be a very stressful time. This month I want to give you three reasons why we can rest on God’s strength:

1. God’s strength is available immediately. First of all there is no time in Heaven. God doesn’t slumber or sleep (Psalm 121). He is not a man who needs to rest. He is always ready to answer prayer 24 hours of every day. God’s desire for every Christian is that we fully place our trust in Him always despite the circumstances. When we realize that our spiritual growth happens during times of trials we will change our attitude from “Woe is me” to “All is well”. Remember, “**If God is for us who can be against us.**” (Roman 8:31)

2. God’s strength is overpowering. Psalm 91 tells us that God places His shadow over us like a tent. He shelters us and protects us. His eye is on the sparrow and His eye is on us. There is nothing more powerful than God’s power. He created the heavens and the earth and everything on the earth belongs to Him. Because we have placed our faith in the finished work of His Son Jesus He promises that He will protect us and shelter us from the storms of life and that He will never leave us or forsake us.

3. God’s strength is not dependent on our ability. God never has a bad day regardless how we behave. He never depends on our ability but rather on our availability to allow Him to work in our lives. We must avail ourselves to allow God to work out His plans and His purposes. The apostle Paul tells us how we are to live our lives in Philippians 4:6-7: “**Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,**

present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Sometimes we just do not understand why things happen. Joseph had two dreams where one day his parents and his brothers would bow down to him. In jealousy Joseph’s brothers sold him to be an Egyptian slave. In Egypt He had many stressful things happen to him and eventually ended up in prison. For more than 10 years Joseph spent his life in an Egyptian prison and it looked as if God had forsaken him.

But despite all that happened, Joseph’s faith in God never failed. The Bible says that ‘the Lord was with him’. All throughout Joseph’s darkest times God was working out His plans and purposes for Joseph’s future. God was preparing Joseph for the palace while he was still in the prison.

The lesson for us today is that when life all around us appears to be caving in...when things aren’t working out the way we expect...when things seem impossible, then we are in the perfect position to surrender our problems, our stress, and to place our full trust in God’s ability.

Christmas season is meant to be a stress-less time of year. In His incarnation Jesus came to bring us Peace, and Joy so that we could live life more abundantly. It is ours; it belongs to us, and the prophet Isaiah fore-told of His coming.

Isaiah 9:6: “**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”**

Therefore, let us not let anything, nor anyone rob us of His peace this Christmas Season!

We want to wish you God’s richest blessings for a very stress-less Christmas season.

Blessings in Christ,

*Pastor Roman
& Pat Kozak*

