

# PICTURE THIS

**6**

Steps to  
a Bright  
Future

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# Introduction

**Regardless of how messed up things get, you can always have hope with God's promises.**

Having hope is a crucial part of working towards a bright future, but first you need to answer the question... **what is hope?**

Hope is getting up again after the hundredth fall. It's walking around with a smile because you expect something great to happen to you. Without hope, you'll walk through life with a knot in your stomach, always wondering what will go wrong next. But **if you have hope, you expect good things.**

Contrary to popular belief, hope and faith are not the same, but **hope is the mother of faith.** Hope is how faith starts. It rises as you begin to gather evidence from God's Word, and it turns into faith when you become fully persuaded.

*"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."*  
**John 16:33 (NLT)**

Regardless of how messed up things get, you can always have hope with God's promises. Remember Jesus' words. He said that this world would have trouble, but not to worry because He overcame the world. When Jesus said that, He wasn't talking about external problems such as wars or world hunger. Where does Jesus give us the power to overcome? In our hearts!

You can build hope in your heart. **You've been promised so much and you are empowered to live a life of joy, peace and fulfillment.** No one can steal this from you. No person in your world, no demon from hell and no situation can take away what God has promised you.

**You have many reasons to hope!** Now let's get into six ways to keep this hope alive on the inside as you move toward the bright future God has for you.

# Keep Believing!

**Keep God's promises in the forefront of your mind so you hang onto hope.**

Instead of focusing on all that's going wrong, stay focused on all that you've been promised and on the love God has for you.

What Jesus has made possible for you is beyond what you can imagine. So many incredible promises are yours in Him! As you study God's Word and begin to realize what you've inherited through Christ, hope will rise in you. But if you want to hang onto that hope, you need to **continually look to His Word**.

**This hope is the key to developing faith.**

As you choose to believe that what you're hoping for is yours, hope builds into an expectation. You then hang onto that hope, building on it every day until you become fully persuaded. At that point, you have faith in that area.

You may have moments of doubt and uncertainty, and that's okay. Just keep building hope. Keep your eye on the prize—God's promises. Don't worry about having enough faith, as though it's something you have to build up to a certain level. It's not a matter of working yourself up to a certain level of emotion or excitement.

*So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."*

**Matthew 17:20 (NKJV)**

**Jesus said that faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains!** As you build hope, you will naturally get to the point where you are fully persuaded and are confident that what God says you can have is yours.

**Remind yourself daily of how much God loves you.** Keep His promises in the forefront of your mind so you hang onto hope as you take action and walk out those promises.

# Get a Vision for Where You're Headed

**God wants to paint a picture for you of what your future can be.**

God wants you to envision a great future. He taught Abraham to see his future, saying: "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!" (See Genesis 15:5, NLT)

He gave Joshua a visual image of what he would have: "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses" (Joshua 1:3, NKJV).

God interrupted the way they pictured their future and gave them a new vision. **God showed them who He thought they were and where He knew they could go.**

*'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.'*

**Acts 2:17 (NLT)**

According to Acts 2:17, God gives us visions—but He's not talking about the weird dreams you have from eating too much before bed. He's also not referring to self-centred, unrealistic visions of grandeur where everything in life is about you. **A vision is simply a picture of where you are headed.**

Are you too busy getting things done to think about where you are heading? Do you forget to let Holy Spirit speak to you? He wants to paint a picture for you of what your future can be.

**As you read God's Word, ask Holy Spirit to show you a new picture.** He says:

- you are the head and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:13),
- whatever you put your hand to will prosper (Deuteronomy 28:8) and
- you soar high on wings like eagles (Isaiah 40:31).

**Let Him paint a new picture in you.**

# Take the First Step

## **Your vision will move you towards what you desire.**

Sometimes, God may show you a vision by dropping a picture into your spirit—but more often it is something you need to intentionally seek out.

Reading God's Word will help you find out what it looks like to have an amazing circle of friends, fulfilling career and a close family unit. And then you can ask Holy Spirit to show you how to get there in your life.

*Write down this vision. Write it clearly on tablets, so that anyone who reads it may run. For the vision points ahead to a time I have appointed; it testifies regarding the end, and it will not lie. Even if there is a delay, wait for it. It is coming and will come without delay.*

**Habakkuk 2:2-3 (VOICE)**

**Your vision will move you towards what you desire.** Many people have this principle backwards. They think that they need to come up with the plans and strategies first. Actually, the opposite is true.

**When you develop a vision first, you will automatically attract the strategies, goals, plans and people needed to help you carry out that vision.**

A vision will also energize you when the going gets tough. Think about it. If you are completely exhausted but a friend calls you up and tells you that the TV you've been wanting to buy is half price tonight only, suddenly you get a burst of energy! When you have a new vision, you become motivated to carry it out.

Before you start making plans, get into God's Word and discover His vision for your life—a vision so incredible that it will fuel you every step along the way.

# Believe What You Envision Will Happen

## Develop strategies, but envision the end result first.

When you discover something in the Bible that God says you can have, imagine it is already yours until the picture becomes clear.

Don't be concerned if you don't have a plan for how to get there yet. It's your faith that overcomes the world, not your strategies (1 John 5:4). **Develop strategies, but envision the end result first.**

You may know the story of Jacob, who was in love with Rachel. He worked a total of 14 years for her father Laban to earn her hand in marriage. When the 14 years were up, Laban wanted him to stay so they struck up a deal. Jacob agreed to look after all of Laban's animals in exchange for ownership of all the spotted and speckled animals.

*Then Jacob took some fresh branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled off strips of bark, making white streaks on them. Then he placed these peeled branches in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, for that was where they mated. And when they mated in front of the white-streaked branches, they gave birth to young that were streaked, speckled, and spotted.*

**Genesis 30:37-39 (NLT)**

Jacob engraved spots onto sticks and stuck them in the mud by Laban's watering troughs when Laban's strong animals mated. When sick or weakly animals mated, he pulled up the sticks. Although physically impossible, all of the strong, solid-coloured animals began to have spotted and speckled offspring, which Jacob took as his own. This made Jacob very prosperous as his flocks increased.

What Jacob envisioned happened. **What are you envisioning in your life?**

# Incubate a Bright Future

**When you meditate on what God's Word says you can have, you get a new God-breathed vision.**

When you read Luke 6:38 (NKJV) which says, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom," do you envision it?

How about Romans 8:11? Can you picture what it promises?

*"The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you... he will give life to your mortal bodies."*

**Romans 8:11, NLT**

Your heart is like an incubator. What you allow into your heart generates the life you have. In fact, **your future is being incubated in your heart right now.**

The picture you have in your heart of what family looks like is creating your family dynamics. The relationships you have right now may not necessarily be what you want; they reflect what you have been incubating. The level of success you achieve in your career is directly related to the beliefs you hold in your heart about yourself, your potential and success in general.

**If you are struggling in an area of your life, you need to ask yourself:**  
***"What am I incubating?"***

You can decide what you incubate in your heart. When you meditate on what God's Word says you can have, you get a new, God-breathed vision—which always brings fantastic results. His Word contains thousands of promises that detail what healthy relationships, great family, successful business and an exciting marriage look like.

**You can change your life by incubating a new picture.** Your health, level of prosperity and everything else in your life can change by incubating the pictures you find in the Word of God.

**Make sure you create "incubation time" with the Word of God.** When you are doing devotions, stop and picture your future. Imagine it until the vision becomes clear. Your heart will go to work to make it happen.

# Cling to Your Dreams

**It's much better to pursue a dream and fall short than to expect nothing and get nothing!**

Having a vision is only step one. Hanging on to the vision is just as crucial. King Solomon knew that the picture you hold in your heart needs to be protected.

*Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.*

**Proverbs 4:23 (NLT)**

Few people keep a vision long enough to see it come to pass. Their vision becomes dimmed by impatience, discouragement and negative people who say it can't be done. To avoid disappointment, many stop expecting good things to happen and they resort to complaining— which is only an outward expression of a negative vision.

For example, many couples grow distant when they lose the positive vision for their marriage. Without realizing it, they have stopped expecting anything to change between them. **Expectation is a vital part of faith.**

**You cannot have a great, inspiring vision without expectation.**

Do not let go of your positive expectation. **Be willing to take the risk involved with putting yourself out there.** You can be the type of dreamer who never lets go of the vision. After all, it's much better to pursue a dream and fall short than to expect nothing and get nothing!

If you have lost your positive vision for the future, dare to dream again. God wants to give you the desires of your heart. He wants your plans to succeed, providing they fall in line with His Word! Remember that what you currently see is only temporary. **What you envision can change your future.**

# Conclusion

## Grab hold of what God has promised you.

**You don't have to aim low or settle for less than God's best—shoot for the stars!**

If you do not guard and tend to the vision you are incubating in your heart, you will tend to settle for another dream—a second-best dream.

If you find yourself saying things like, "I could never see myself in a great job," start imagining it. If you think, "I could never dream of owning my own business," why not? You have one life to live. Are you going to let yourself be limited by what others think of you?

## Refuse to be controlled by defeating thoughts and judgmental people.

God's vision for you is never second-best. Psalm 84:11 says He will not withhold any good thing from you. **So grab hold of what God has promised you.** As you spend time picturing and imagining His promises coming true, your heart will go to work to make it happen.

*For the Eternal God is a sun and a shield. The Eternal grants favor and glory; He doesn't deny any good thing to those who live with integrity.*

### **Psalm 84:11 (VOICE)**

For example, if you read "The Lord will give you prosperity" (Deuteronomy 28:11, NLT), close your eyes until you see yourself prospering, enjoying the fruit of your hard work and able to be a blessing to others financially. Then, ensure that what you say lines up with your new vision. Don't allow yourself to say things like, "I'll never get ahead." Instead, **speak God's promises over your life!**

What do you imagine for your future? Health or sickness? Great or only average goals? **Get a true picture of the future God wants for you by reading His promises.**