**Holding on to Hope**

**(Post is 571 Words)**

“I wonder where heaven *is*,” Dad sighed. Then after a brief pause, “What do you think it’s like?”

Dad and I sat on his patio in the cool of the morning, watching the birds as we sipped our coffee. My Bible lay in my lap. I had just read to Dad about the eternal life we have in Jesus (1 John 5:12-13).

My father loves Jesus and has faithfully served Him and others all his adult life. But these last years of life are not what he expected, not what he hoped they would be. He feels trapped in a body that has betrayed him. He can’t participate in the activities he enjoys. And daily he patiently endures the consequences of my mother’s dementia. He feels there is nothing to look forward to. In this life, anyway.

For a while longer, we sat, contemplating heaven, eternal life, and earthly suffering. And we turned from one place to another in God’s Word. Reading, talking, reading some more. I wanted to give Dad something to hang on to. Something solid to stand on. I silently asked for God’s guidance on what to say and what to read.

From 1 Thessalonians chapter four, we read about the hope we have even in grief because of Jesus’ sure return for those who belong to Him. From 1 Corinthians 15, we read about the resurrection body that believers will receive. From Hebrews chapter eleven, we read about the great men and women of faith who stood firm on God in spite of their physical circumstances. And from 2 Corinthians chapter four, we read how God worked through Paul’s sufferings to display His grace, strength, and glory.

Dad’s weakness can magnify God’s strength. Dad’s struggles can point others to God’s glory. And one day, Dad’s “perishable” body will be raised “imperishable.” His earthly body ravaged by disease will be perfected and glorified. The sting of death will be swallowed up in victory. Jesus Christ, our Savior, has won it for us (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

That time with Dad on the patio was precious. A holy time, reading God’s Word and basking in His glorious wonders. That morning was also an answer to prayer. I knew Dad was discouraged. He well knew God’s truth, but the sufferings of life can cast long shadows. God ordained our time together as a gentle remember. A sweet moment to see God’s promises for him in light of eternity. To be encouraged by God’s Word.

For a believer, death is but a gateway to eternity, the fulfillment of God’s promises to us. But the sometimes physically grueling process of dying can easily pull our eyes off the greater, spiritual goal. Pain, grief, and discouragement vie for our attention. We – our parents and ourselves – need a firm grip on the One who keeps His promises.

God’s Word gives us a fresh infusion of hope. His promises are recorded there so we can remind ourselves and our parents of everything God has waiting for those who love Him. Think about these truths as you rise. Talk about them as you go through your day. Hold them to your heart and impress them on your parents. Remember His promises. And hold on to hope.

*Perhaps you need to remember God’s promises as much as your parent. Which promises have you forgotten? Which ones do you need to hear the most today?*

*Kathy Howard calls herself a “confused southerner.” Raised in Louisiana, she moved with her engineer husband around the U.S. and Canada. She says “pop” instead of “Coke” and “you guys” as often as “y’all.” But she’s still a southern girl at heart! Kathy encourages women to live an unshakeable faith by standing firm on our rock-solid God no matter life’s circumstances. Kathy, the author of eight books, including the new daily devotional* [*“30 Days of Hope When Caring for Aging Parents,*](http://www.kathyhoward.org/books/30-days-of-hope-when-caring-for-aging-parents/)*” has a Master’s in Christian Education. She is passionate about Bible study and discipleship and loves sharing at women’s events and retreats. Kathy is also a regular contributor to Crosswalk.com, Hello Mornings, Arise Daily, and more. Kathy and her “mostly retired” husband live in the Dallas/Ft Worth area near family. They have three married children, four grandsons, and three dogs – one of them on purpose. She provides free discipleship resources and blogs regularly at* [*www.KathyHoward.org*](http://www.KathyHoward.org)*. Kathy also connects with women at* [*Facebook*](https://www.facebook.com/KathyHowardUnshakeableFaith/)*,* [*Pinterest*](https://www.pinterest.com/kathyhhoward/)*, and* [*Instagram*](https://www.instagram.com/mkathoward/)*.*

***30 Days of Hope When Caring for Aging Parents***

Struggling to navigate the parent/child role reversal? Kathy Howard’s new book, *30 Days of Hope When Caring for Aging Parents*,explores God’s Word to find hope and encouragement for the wide range of physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual challenges the adult child caregiver may experience. Each of the 30 devotions – which can also serve as a guide for a daily quiet time – includes a Scripture passage, a real-life illustration, biblical commentary/application, and questions for reflection.

**(Alternate bio)**

*A former “cultural Christian,” Bible teacher Kathy Howard now lives an unshakeable faith for life and encourages other women to embrace real, authentic faith. Kathy is the author of 8 books, including* [*“30 Days of Hope When Caring for Aging Parents”*](http://www.kathyhoward.org/books/30-days-of-hope-when-caring-for-aging-parents/)*. Find spiritual encouragement and free discipleship helps on* [*her website*](http://www.kathyhoward.org/)*.*