

HOPE REIMAGINED/PASTOR'S BLOG – NOVEMBER 2016

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD.~

Psalms 31:24

Several years ago, researchers performed an experiment to see the effect *hope* had on those undergoing hardship. Two sets of laboratory animals were placed in separate tubs of water. The researchers left one set of animals in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. Within that same hour, a second set of animals were periodically lifted up out of the water and then returned. The second set of laboratory animals swam for more than 24 hours. *Why?* Not because they were given a *rest*, but because they had been given *hope* that they would be rescued.

We are not laboratory animals, but too often we give up and lose hope. We resign ourselves to the fact that things will never get better, that there is nothing that we can do, or that it's simply too late. All hope is lost and we can't imagine our lives any differently.

But, here's the good news: those of us who *have hope* are similar to the second set of laboratory animals. We've been through trials and tribulations and survived them, and we know that when we came out on the other side we were better and stronger. We've been rescued before. We've been set apart, redeemed, delivered and we are overcomers. We have ***hope reimagined!***

Let's be real. Most of us want the stars, but we don't want the scars. We want the glory (*or blessings*) but we can't handle the story. There's a *process* that we must go through to get to the *product or achieve the prize*, but some of us don't want to put in the time, effort, blood, sweat and tears to get there; we just want the end result. Too many people have resigned themselves to the fact that '*these are the cards*' they've been dealt, and there is nothing that can be done to change the ending of the story!

Wrong! God wants to develop us, deliver us, draw us, disclose some things to us and, yes, sometimes, He even wants to discipline us.

It's unfortunate that some individuals who live in what they consider to be hopeless situations, eventually end up lowering their expectations to meet their reality. Just as the laboratory animals gave up after an hour, we sometimes give up on our circumstances or give up on people. **Hope reimagined** requires us to press onward in faith, despite what we see.

We have choices in life. We can settle for anything and live a partial life where our expectations are lower, or we can work harder and pray longer to achieve the greatness God has promised. And, let's be clear: Greatness does NOT necessarily mean stardom or wealth. Greatness can be as simple and satisfying as a life of peace and blessings that come in the form of a promotion, a loving and God-fearing spouse, witnessing an unsaved family member give his or her life to Christ, or leaving a legacy of faith to our loved ones.

Real faith requires us to live a life that is frequently referred to as "**FAT—Faithful, Available (to God and others) and Teachable.**" Living a **FAT** life requires us to change and, for many, change conflicts with our comfort. It requires us to keep our focus on what God has said and not on what we see. We must envision ourselves getting past the pain or disappointment so that we can pursue our purpose with power and authority.

Sometimes—*when we give up hope*—we begin to look like our condition; hopeless, helpless and downtrodden. With **hope reimagined**, we can transform our lives by:

Changing our hopes

Understand that God has given each of us unique gifts and talents, and His desire is not for us to 'blend in', but to walk in our purpose with confidence. We all experience rejection in life, but we must find ways to overcome or deal with rejection, failures, criticisms and losses.

Changing our habits

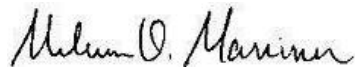
When we continue to do the same thing and it hasn't been working for us, we cannot expect different outcomes. Something has to change and sometimes several things may need to change including our lifestyle, outlook or attitude, our response to situations and our faith.

Changing our helpers

To *reimagine hope*, we may need to change our 'squad' or our helpers—those individuals who surround us and are content to wallow with us. Remember that misery does love company. We must seek out individuals who encourage us, support us and pray for us.

Make the change and know that God has more for you than you have experienced. Persevere. Endure. Stay in the water just a little bit longer. God will not only rescue you, but He will deliver you, elevate you and give you a hope that you never imagined!

Peace and power,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melvin O. Marriner".

Pastor Marriner

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