

## SUNDAY: HOPE FOR OUR FUTURE

*“Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.*

*Thus says the Lord: Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for there is a reward for your work, says the Lord: they shall come back from the land of the enemy; there is hope for your future, says the Lord: your children shall come back to their own country.” (Jeremiah 31:15-17)*

**O**n this day, as every day, there are hearts that weep for children, that refuse to be comforted because of children who are lost to violence or lack of health care, incarcerated, exiled by injustice, dislocated because of poverty or disaster.

Even as we weep, we hear this word: there is a reward for our work. With work and God’s help, we can restore and reclaim millions of children who are facing countless enemies and forces working against their well-being, safety, and security. We can bring children and youths who feel pushed out, pushed away, unwanted back to a sense of welcome and homecoming. We can work to end poverty, dismantle the pipeline to prison, defeat racism, halt violence, and more to protect and return our children to safety. There is hope for our future: it is when all of our children will be well. Let us work and pray and speak out and reach out to make it so.

**Today**, decide what work you will do to help create the future of hope in which all of our children are safe. Share that commitment with a family member or friend. Connect with an organization, congregation, or other source of information and support to fulfill your commitment.

**Prayer:** God of hope, you hear my weeping. Help me to hear your call to work. Guide me as I seek to restore children to safety.

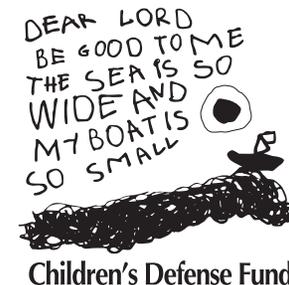
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## 2017 NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF CHILDREN’S SABBATHS

### DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

### Moving Forward with Hope: Love and Justice for Every Child

By Shannon Daley-Harris



## MONDAY: THE STONE OF HOPE

*“David said to Saul, ‘Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine [Goliath]; your servant will go and fight him.’” (I Sam. 17:32)*

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In Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s last Sunday sermon, he voiced hope even in the midst of exceedingly hard times, saying: “... *We have difficult days ahead in the struggle for justice and peace, but I will not yield to a politic of despair. I’m going to maintain hope as we come to Washington in this [Poor People’s] campaign. The cards are stacked against us. This time we will really confront a Goliath. God grant that we will be that David of truth set out against the Goliath of injustice, the Goliath of neglect, the Goliath of refusing to deal with the problems, and go on with the determination to make America the truly great America that it is called to be.*”

After expressing conviction that we shall overcome in familiar and moving words, Dr. King said, “*With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair the stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood [and sisterhood.]*”

Our nation faces a Goliath of poverty today that towers over more than 14 million children. But we cannot yield to despair. We must take up our stones—our voices, votes, persistent advocacy and acts of compassion—together to slay the Goliath of poverty. Dr. King envisioned a future in which America could become great by setting truth against injustice, neglect, and refusal to deal with the problems. With hope, may we work to make it so.

**Today**, look for a small stone that you can set somewhere in your home to serve as a reminder to work with hope and truth to end injustice.

**Prayer:** O God, use me—however small or inadequate I may feel—to end giant injustices in our land. Help me to chip away, despite difficulty or despair, to bring the hope of love and justice to children.

## SATURDAY: WHERE WE PUT OUR HOPE

*No king is saved by the size of his army;  
no warrior escapes by his great strength...  
We wait in hope for the Lord;  
[God] is our help and our shield.  
In [God] our hearts rejoice,  
for we trust in [God’s] holy name.  
May your unfailing love be with us, Lord,  
even as we put our hope in you.* (Psalm 33: 16, 20-22)

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An earlier verse in the psalm affirms: “God loves righteousness and justice; God’s steadfast love fills the whole earth.” (v. 5) Psalm 33 reminds us that God’s love and justice is our ultimate hope and our help. That assurance can be a source of strength and inspiration as we seek to reflect God’s love and justice through our work with and for children.

In a speech titled, “The Chance for Peace,” President Dwight D. Eisenhower said:

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.”

As our nation sets its budget priorities, how well will we reflect God’s love and justice? How will we invest in our children’s hopes and future?

**Today**, talk with a child or youth about their hopes for the future.

**Prayer:** God of power and might, it is easy to invest trust in myself or in those with authority. Help me to trust in you and live out your priorities of love, righteousness, and justice for the sake of our children.

## FRIDAY: PRISONERS OF HOPE

*“Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore you double.” (Zechariah 9:12)*

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Archbishop Desmond Tutu often refers to himself as a “prisoner of hope.” After South African apartheid was ended, he led the country’s Truth and Reconciliation process. Those who had experienced unimaginable, horrific harm were able to voice the truth to those who had harmed them as the nation began the slow, painful work of reparations and reconciliation.

Archbishop Tutu once responded to a questioner who asked, “After all you’ve seen and endured, are you really as optimistic as your book, *Made for Goodness*, says you are?”

Archbishop Tutu’s reply? “I’m not optimistic, no. I’m quite different. I’m hopeful. I am a prisoner of hope. In the world, you have very bad people—Hitler, Idi Amin—and they look like they are going to win. All of them—all of them—have bitten the dust.” (In *Time Magazine*)

Of the Zechariah passage, one scholar writes, “Restoration remains unfinished if it does not include the release of prisoners and their return... The fullness of God’s peace and presence is known only when all, not just some, parts of community life are restored to wholeness.”

When in our nation children of color and children in poverty are still pushed along a Cradle to Prison Pipeline with the odds stacked against them, we have much work to do to restore our national and community life. Easy optimism won’t sustain us; we need deep hope.

**Today**, learn more about the Cradle to Prison Pipeline and how we can work to end it. Find out more at [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org).

**Prayer:** Eternal, keep us captive to *hope* as we work for truth, reconciliation, and freedom so that every child may live a life of justice and joy.

## TUESDAY: IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING

*“I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” (Psalm 27:13-14)*

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The psalmist offered these hopeful words in the midst of troubling times. Even amid suffering and violence, the psalmist expected that God’s goodness would be realized not in some heavenly realm but in the land of the living. Holding onto that hope called for strength and courage.

Waiting doesn’t mean being passive but being *persistent*, knowing that what we hope for won’t come instantly or easily, but it will come. Waiting here isn’t an instruction to put off expectations but instead is an encouragement not to despair, to keep at it.

Strength and courage are needed for active, persistent, expectant waiting. Like gardeners who wait for crops to come to fruition but have much work to do in the meantime, we have work to do while we wait in hope for God’s intended harvest of love and justice to become real in the land of the living—our world.

What aspect of God’s goodness do you most deeply hope to see come about in our world? When do you need encouragement to persist and not despair? What could give you strength and courage for your work as you wait for the realization of that hope?

**Today**, start a conversation with family, friends, or others in your faith community about these questions. How might you strengthen each other?

**Prayer:** Grant me strength and courage, O God, and help me to persist until your justice is known in our land, in our day.

## WEDNESDAY: YOU ARE MY HOPE

*“Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel. For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.”* (Psalm 71: 3-5)

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God is our rock, fortress, hope and trust. What a comfort in these challenging times. We hope to raise our children with such knowledge and faith. How do we then, as God’s people, serve as rock and fortress for our children and youths, nurturing their hope and trust? For children facing violence in their home, neighborhood, or school, how can we as God’s people be a rock and fortress, rescue and keep them safe from harm? For children fearing deportation or facing deprivation, how can we be refuge and strength? For children who feel like their future is bleak, how do we nurture hope?

The CDF Freedom Schools® program, held in partnership with local congregations, schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, and secure juvenile justice facilities, seeks to build strong, literate, and empowered children prepared to make a difference in themselves, their families, communities, nation and world today. By providing summer and after-school reading enrichment for children who might otherwise not have access to books, the *CDF Freedom Schools* program helps curb summer learning loss and close achievement gaps, boosts student motivation to read, generates more positive attitudes toward learning, increases self-esteem and connects the needs of children and families to the resources of their communities. For thousands of children, a Freedom School is refuge and fortress, connecting them with caring young leaders who inspire hope and trust.

**Today**, learn more about the *CDF Freedom Schools* program by visiting their website: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org).

**Prayer:** O God, my rock and refuge, help me to serve as a refuge for children in the grip of injustice. Help me to nurture our children’s faith and to be worthy of their trust.

## THURSDAY: A FUTURE WITH HOPE

*“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”*  
(Jeremiah 29:11)

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The prophet shared this word from God with a people in despair, dislocation, and devastation. In exile, they had lost their homes, livelihood, place of worship, and sense of belonging. They were strangers in a strange land, longing for home.

This word of hope—in our day often isolated on a greeting card as a message to an individual—was intended for an entire community, a people experiencing loss and hopelessness.

From Houston to Florida to Puerto Rico to California, there are communities and families displaced by natural disaster, wondering when they will be able to return home. All across our nation, there are communities and families ravaged by economic disaster: too few jobs, not enough pay, too little job training, unaffordable homes, and rising costs of living. All across our nation, there are communities and families who feel like strangers in a strange land—unwelcome, under attack, targets of racial, ethnic, or religious hatred or other forms of bigotry.

To all of those who feel exiled, longing for home and belonging, aching for community, God offers this hopeful word and intention that the community be restored. What can we do to help usher in that future of hope, not harm, for others in our neighborhoods and nation?

**Today**, take an action that will bring one or many families closer to home—whether through donating goods or money, taking an advocacy action, or extending welcome in your home or community.

**Prayer:** God, keep my eyes open to see those who long for home, my heart open to those who yearn to belong, and my hands and voice active to restore to community those who are without.