

Don't let go when life seems too hard: Do not be afraid-Be hopeful instead.

Last weekend, my 10-year-old son stepped up to the monkey bars for his third attempt in a row. His first couple of tries lasted only two rungs before he let go. This time, however, he knew it was going to hurt his hands and he was ready for it. He knew how much it meant to him to get all the way to the end without falling off – and he focused on his goal. He then reached out to the first bar, gritted his teeth, made the “I’m pushing through the pain noise” and swung for the next bar. This extra sense of inner strength enabled him to keep going until the very end, even though he had previously believed he wasn’t strong enough to make it.

Just like falling off the monkey bars, it can be very tempting to let go when things seem too difficult. I’m sure we all know someone who would love to “let go” of 2020 and start all over again, and understandably too.

It’s during these tough, trying times that Jesus is calling us to be people of hope and, in doing so, to take up our cross and follow Him (Mt 16:24).

Hope is much more than being wishful. Wishing that everything will be okay is passive. It’s saying that you don’t have control over your situation and that you aren’t able to make a change. Instead, you rely on luck, fate or other people to turn things around for you. This style of thinking is called a victim mentality – when we believe that we have no control over our situations and how our circumstances unfold.

Being hopeful is using a survivor mentality. Hopefulness is having the will, the pathways, the people and strategies you need to reach your goals. It’s having the deep belief that you will get there despite setbacks. This mindset enables you to see more possibilities, resources, people who can help you and options for moving forward. When you come from a place of hope, emotions and traits like courage, confidence and happiness start to follow.

Even though the weight of our crosses may vary, hope provides the strength and resolve we need to keep moving forward. It is the strength deep within the core of your being that cannot and will not be defeated, no matter what comes your way.

Jesus gave his disciples a very similar message of hope when he sent them out on mission. While Jesus spoke with them, He said “Do not be afraid” three times (Mt 10:26-33).

Jesus also says “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). In fact, “Do not be afraid” is in the Bible a total of 365 times.

In other words, though you may want to let go of the monkey bars when things get difficult, hang in there. Do not be afraid of what might happen tomorrow, particularly when it is something you cannot control. Instead, remain hopeful. Focus on that which you can control, find and use new pathways, spend time in gratitude, connect with the right people and remember that things have worked out in the past and they will again.

No matter what comes your way, Jesus is in your corner saying “Do not be afraid”.

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