

A decorative border of blue and yellow butterflies surrounds the central text. The butterflies are scattered across the top and bottom edges of the cover, with some appearing in the corners and others forming a more dense line. The colors are vibrant against the dark blue background.

# *Abounding Hope*

**DURING DIFFICULT TIMES**

**TRICIA SODERSTROM**

“Darkness comes. In the middle of it, the future looks blank. The temptation to quit is huge. Don't. You are in good company... You will argue with yourself that there is no way forward. But with God, nothing is impossible. He has more ropes and ladders and tunnels out of pits than you can conceive. Wait. Pray without ceasing. Hope.”

John Piper

Abounding Hope During Difficult Times  
by Tricia Soderstrom

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Scripture Passages are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®* (ESV®)

You are welcome to print and make copies of the scripture pages and worksheet found at the end of this e-book.

<https://aboundinginhopewithlyme.com>

## ABOUNDING HOPE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

What is most impressive about Tricia's story isn't that her entire family suffered with Lyme disease or that she persevered to find help. It's that she knows where her help comes from and points her readers to Him. As a result, she helps us all abound in hope.

**Melanie Wilson, Ph.D.** [Psychowith6.com](http://Psychowith6.com)

We have all encountered difficult times in our lives. Sometimes, they have left us wondering what to do or how we are going to make it through it. Through experience and her natural ability to encourage others, Tricia beautifully shares what it means to have hope in Jesus, the ultimate Hope Giver. I loved the way that she continually pointed the reader back to a loving relationship with Jesus Christ. By nurturing that relationship and studying God's Word, it is possible for one to be full of hope regardless of the circumstances happening.

**Angel Penn, [AngelPenn.com](http://AngelPenn.com)**

Years ago, I was given the counsel to surround yourself with the "go-to" people for every area of life. This may sound odd, but the wisdom is in knowing the people who should be or become those "go-to" people in our lives. Tricia Soderstrom is one of those people in my life. I suspect that you will find her as one of yours as well.

Tricia knows tough times. She also knows how to get through tough times. She has found hope, abounding hope. Not only that, Tricia takes us by the hand and helps us to access that abounding hope for ourselves and our own struggles.

In a place of difficulty? In a place of struggle, sickness, crisis, or despair? You don't have to navigate it on your own. You don't have to stay there. You can access hope...abounding hope!

**Cindy Rushton, [CindyRushton.com](http://CindyRushton.com)**

## ABOUNDING HOPE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

Dear friend,

Thank you for taking the time to read *Abounding Hope During Difficult Times*. This e-book came about as I thought how I could encourage others who are living through a difficult time and who have either lost hope or don't know how to maintain hope because of their circumstances.

I remember being in that place and how painful it was. Not only was I living through one of the most difficult times of my life but I had also lost hope that my circumstances would ever get better.

Hope is a word that is sometimes taken lightly but for me it ultimately became the very thing that got me through that dark and extremely difficult time. My family and I suffered the loss of several pregnancies, the loss of our health when our entire family became sick with chronic Lyme disease, the loss of financial freedom due to the exorbitant costs of treating Lyme disease, the loss of our dreams, friendships, and the list goes on.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase, "when it rains it pours!" These difficult circumstances happened one after the other and some at the same time. I often felt like I couldn't handle another difficulty. My emotions were raw, my faith was wavering and I had no hope.

The first time I thought about hope was when a friend texted me the verse that I used as my theme verse for my blog.

*"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

Romans 15:13

## ABOUNDING HOPE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

This verse changed everything for me. I meditated on what these words truly meant and realized that I could have hope, joy and peace as I believed in God through the power of the Holy Spirit and I want you to know that you can too!

I pray this e-book is a blessing to you, that it encourages and challenges you.

XOXO,

*Tricia*

“Hope begins when you stand in the dark looking out at the light.” - John Kelly, Christmas Train

Hope is what gives us the motivation to keep going when things get difficult and it keeps us encouraged even when things look bleak. It's extremely dangerous to lose hope, because without hope you might give up.

Whatever you're going through right now it is possible to live with hope. You may have just gotten a chronic illness diagnosis or maybe you've been sick for years and it's worn you down. You could be having financial hardships, your marriage might be struggling, you might have a difficult child, but whatever it is that's pressing in on you; hope creates a glimmer of light that you can look towards when you're standing in the dark and we all need that glimmer.

Of course, circumstances don't always change. Healing doesn't always come and marriages don't always stay together. That's why it's important to understand what hope really is and how you can obtain it. Otherwise, hope is just a frivolous word and your feelings, which can't be trusted, will rule your thoughts.

It's hard to see clearly and think appropriately when you're suffering. Your brain chemistry changes during times of pain and illness. <sup>1</sup> When you're living through difficulties, it's normal for your thoughts to be directed inward, to feel bad for yourself and to think you'll never get through this difficult time. You might even question God's goodness and love towards you.

## Your Thoughts Impact Your Health

Your thoughts have a huge impact on your attitude, your health, and how well you'll heal. Negative, hopeless thoughts can even contribute to illness and disease. Your thoughts can keep you from finding the hope that you so desperately need. At the same time having a chronic health condition or too much stress in your life can increase your cortisol making it difficult, though not impossible, for you to think correctly.

Learning to practice thought control is vitally important. The only way to really do this is to capture each thought and as the Bible says, take it captive, control it, and change it.

*Take every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5*

## Taking Your Thoughts Captive

How do we take our thoughts captive when life seems like it's spinning out of control? What do we do when we're not getting better or our circumstances are not changing? How is it possible to have hope during pain and trials?

To control your thoughts, you first need to recognize which thoughts need to go. Grab a notebook and pen and begin by writing down the negative thoughts you repeatedly say and then write down replacement thoughts.

This exercise is so helpful to do anytime you're feeling those negative thoughts taking control.



## ABOUNDING HOPE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

Here are some examples to get you started:

### Negative Thoughts

### Replacement Thoughts

I'm never going to get better.	I don't know when I'll get better, but I trust that God has a plan for me.
God doesn't love me, otherwise I would not be going through this.	God loves me with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3) God works my circumstances for good because I love Him. (Romans 8:28)

Do you see how this works? It will take deliberate action on your part as well as intentional practice for your mind to change the way it thinks. If you struggle to think correctly, I suggest spending time doing word studies in Scripture. Look up every passage that refers to thinking, thoughts and your mind. Write them down and meditate on them. Then look up passages that specifically speak to your struggle. Is it faith? Then look up all the verses about faith. Maybe it's your health. Look up verses about health and healing.

Not only are there many examples in scripture that show us how to think correctly, biographies of Christians and missionaries are very encouraging and helpful to provide real life examples of suffering and how real people handled it.

## Chemical Imbalances

When you're sick or under a lot of stress your brain chemistry changes. It may be necessary to work on balancing your hormones as well as increasing serotonin. You need to take care of yourself during this time.

Eat a whole-foods diet, limit refined sugars and carbs, take a quality probiotic, get plenty of rest and moderate exercise if you can. Sometimes it's impossible to change your thought patterns when your body is not working properly. Do a little research and learn about the brain-gut connection. If your gut is loaded with processed food and bad bacteria, your brain is not going to work at optimum health. Amino acids such as L-tryptophan or 5HTP can help raise your serotonin without needing harmful drugs. I recommend Trudy Scott's website <https://everywomanover29.com> to learn about these things.

If this is all too overwhelming then please find a nutritionist, naturopath, or functional doctor who can help walk you through this.

### Trusting God

Sometimes it's difficult to have hope during difficult circumstances because we either don't trust God or we don't know Him. When I first became sick with Lyme disease my faith was immature. I often found myself at the whim of my emotions, and somehow, I viewed God through the lens of my human experience. There's no way to have true hope when you live this way because your hope will change when your feelings or circumstances change.

As difficult as our long battle with tick-borne diseases was, I can look back and see how that time strengthened my faith.

During our illness, I tried trusting God for healing, financial help and for the strength I needed each day. Because I was ruled by my emotions and what I could see right in front of me, my trust in God was often influenced by what was going on. I came to a place where I needed to

get myself into scripture and to stay there as much as possible. I couldn't trust my own thoughts.

*Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Hebrews 13:15*

Without the truth of God's Word on my mind and in my heart, it was impossible for me to trust Him fully. Each time my negative thoughts taunted me, I learned to recite the truth of God's Word and replace those thoughts, eventually, it became second nature. My negative thoughts came less and I began to see my circumstances differently. My trust in God became surer and while my circumstances didn't change right away, my attitude and my heart changed. This moved me to a place of spiritual healing.

You see in James 1:6 we're told, "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." If we're being tossed around like a wave of the sea because of our emotions, we ultimately doubt God and His love for us. We cannot please Him this way.

Trusting that God has our best interest at heart and that He allows suffering for the strengthening of our faith is not an easy concept for us to accept, especially when we live in a time where we are looked down upon if we're sick or suffering. You might have been told that you should never get sick if you have faith but this is contrary to what God's Word says.

There are many examples in scripture and in history of righteous people who suffered persecutions, trials, and illnesses; they are great examples

for us and by reading their stories can provide a lot of encouragement. Of course, we always need to evaluate whether our circumstances are of our own doing, such as poor choices, lifestyle habits and sin. Once we've dealt with those areas in our life then we move forward to live in God's forgiveness and grace.

### Learning to Hope

I believe the key to finding and living with hope begins and continues with a growing relationship with Jesus Christ; spending time with Him each day, reading Scripture, praying and meditating on His Word.

These practices have been proven scientifically to reduce stress and help you to heal. Read my post [Prayer is Good for Your Health, Want to Know How?](#) While these practices benefit all who practice them, having a saving relationship with Jesus Christ brings about eternal life and healing. That changes your perspective from the here and now to eternity. For me, that makes a huge difference in how I perceive and walk through my problems in life.

I want to challenge you to put these steps into practice on a regular basis. Hope will make all the difference for you and for how well you will live during your time of suffering. Without these daily practices, you'll be tempted to live as I once did, allowing your emotions to control your thoughts.

When you allow your emotions to rule, you end up focusing on your circumstances and not on your Savior. Your brain chemistry also changes which can make or keep you sick and stuck in a place where you don't have to stay. Hope is possible and it is my prayer for you.

## A Lifestyle of Gratitude

Gratitude is also very important for maintaining hope. How is it possible to have a grateful heart when you're suffering? As you practice taking control of your thoughts you can also practice a lifestyle of gratitude. Learning to notice the small things goes a long way toward having a grateful heart.

I remember a time when I was very sick. I was lying there in bed suffering with intense pain. Most of the time I would have been overwhelmed by the pain and feeling like I would never get better. For whatever reason, this time I realized how thankful I was for my comfortable bed and warm home.

I wasn't always grateful and I probably complained more than I gave thanks, but it was when I was giving thanks that my mindset changed about my pain and circumstances.

When your mindset is positive and grateful, your problems don't seem so impossible and you have more determination to do what needs to be done to overcome your obstacles.

Your gratitude list might only be compiled of little things you never noticed before. If you are at the place where you can't even recognize those little things, you might have to "fake it til' you make it". If you're able to, keep a gratitude journal. I used a journal app where I recorded short details about each day along with things that I was grateful for.

*God is in control, and therefore in EVERYTHING I can give thanks - not because of the situation but because of the One who directs and rules over it. –Kay Arthur*

### When Help is Necessary

If you're really struggling and nothing seems to be helping you, please seek out the help of a professional Christian counselor or therapist. This is one of the wisest things you can do for yourself. Seeking help is a sign of strength and is often necessary. A trained therapist can help you learn to recognize and replace toxic thinking. Many times, we don't realize where our thinking is off until someone else points it out.

### Action

Over the years God's Word has changed my heart and my mindset. Because I believe this exercise is so vital to obtaining hope, I've included scripture passages for you to meditate on and a chart for you to use as a tool as you rewrite your thinking patterns. Use this during your quiet time. Write these scriptures on 3x5 cards or in a notebook to carry with you throughout the day.

This exercise will get you started on the journey to finding true hope.

### Abounding Hope

Now that you have an action plan, you can begin to change your mindset about your circumstances. For the believer, you do not have to lose hope when everything around you seems to be falling apart. Your real hope is in Jesus Christ and the eternal life that He gives.

## ABOUNDING HOPE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

*So We do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner spirits are being renewed every day. 2 Corinthians 4:16*

When we face difficulties of any type we can turn to the all-powerful Creator God. He promises to strengthen us, renew us, walk with us and help us.

Take the time each day to renew your spirit by spending time with God, learn to trust Him and rely on Him for strength, direction and hope.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4530716/>

## Scriptures for Meditation

### God's Love

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because He first loved us.* 1 John 4:18-19

*For God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.* John 3:16

*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.* John 15:9-10

*But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.* Psalm 86:15

*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Romans 5:8

### How to Be Saved

God loves you and wants you to experience His peace and eternal life with Him. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* John 3:16

But we are separated from God because by nature we are sinful and God is perfect and Holy. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* Romans 3:23

God's love bridges that gap between our sin and His holiness. He gave His Son, Jesus Christ to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.



## ABOUNDING HOPE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

When Jesus died on the cross he did all the work that it takes for us to be right with God. He rose from the grave after 3 days and returned to heaven to sit at the right hand of God.

*He personally carried the load of our sins in his own body when He died on the cross. 1 Peter 2:24, TLB)*

When you respond to this invitation from God and you receive His personal gift of salvation by believing on Jesus then you are welcomed into the family of God and become one of His children.

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. John 1:12*

Read more: [How Can I Be Saved?](#)

If you've done this for the very first time, I would love to know. Would you please email me at [aboundinginhope1513@gmail.com](mailto:aboundinginhope1513@gmail.com) so I can celebrate with you?

### Hope

*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11*

*But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13*

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1*

## ABOUNDING HOPE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

*So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13*

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28*

*You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word. Psalm 119:114*

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:23*

*Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord! Psalm 31:24*

*But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Romans 8:25*

*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Romans 5:3-4*

*I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his Word, I hope. Psalm 130:5*

*But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Micah 7:7*

## Comfort

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4*

*The LORD is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid. Psalm 27:1*

## ABOUNDING HOPE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

*May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant. Psalm 119:76*

*The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Psalm 9:9*

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1*

*I reach out for your commands, which I love, that I may meditate on your decrees. Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. Psalm 119:48-50*

### Suffering

*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Romans 5:3-4*

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4*

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. Psalm 34:19*

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Romans 8:18*

*For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. 2 Corinthians 4:17*



## About Tricia



Tricia Soderstrom is the creator of Abounding in Hope with Lyme where she blogs about Lyme disease, homeschooling with chronic illness and her faith.

She and her husband Scott have four children and she has homeschooled for 17 years.

Tricia became ill with chronic Lyme disease and co-infections in 2007 but couldn't get an accurate diagnosis for over two years. By the time she was diagnosed she was bed-ridden and in severe pain. Once she began treatment and was well enough to research the disease she realized that her children were also having symptoms that were representative of tick-borne illnesses.

Despite her attempts she was unable to get their pediatrician to diagnose or treat them for Lyme disease. She took them to a Lyme Literate Physician, tested them through specialty labs and began treatment for them. It took seven years of aggressive treatments before they found healing through the care of a homeopathic physician.

Today, Tricia resides in Maryland with her husband and children. She continues to homeschool her son and blogs to share the hope that God gives when we look to Him.

