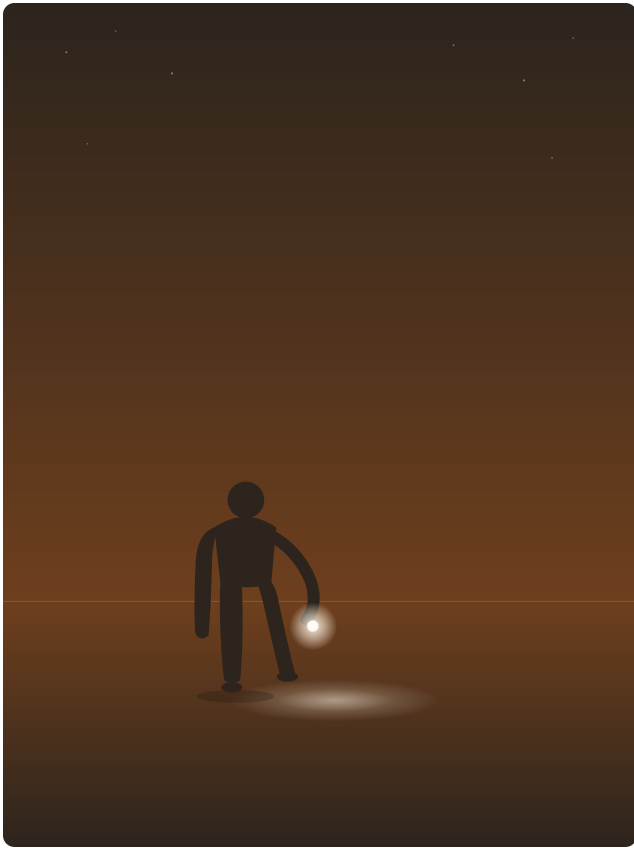




WEEKLY BOOK #4

The Light I Never Quite Put Out

*Stories and words about the hope that promises
no happy ending*

Written by José Martínez · Powered by AI



*For the one who, today, doesn't have the
strength to believe everything will turn out fine,
and just needs one small reason to make it to
tomorrow.*

“The Light I Never Quite Put Out”

Weekly Book #4 from Godlives

Stories and words about the hope that promises no happy ending.

Written by José Martínez · Powered by AI.

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Prologue

Last week we talked about forgiveness: about that weight we carry inside, which sooner or later each of us has to decide what to do with. If you made it to the end of that book, maybe you named something you'd been carrying for a long time. I hope it helped you, even just a little.

This week I want to talk to you about something different, though related: hope. And I want to start, like last time, by telling you what this book is **not** going to do. It's not going to tell you everything will turn out fine. It's not going to promise you a happy ending, or a date on which whatever is keeping you up at three in the morning will finally get resolved. It's not going to tell you that if you had more faith, you'd stop feeling this way. None of that is honest, and in this house we try to be honest, even when it hurts.

What I am going to do is tell you five ancient stories — about people who grieved, who protested, who waited for decades without a single sign, who groaned without ever getting an answer — alongside five stories from today, about real people who held on to something like hope with no guarantee of

how their story would end. I'll tell you now, so it doesn't catch you off guard halfway through: four of these five stories do not have a bright ending. That's not an oversight on my part. It is, in fact, exactly what I want you to see: that hope can hold, even when things don't get fixed.

God, the Eternal One, the Creator — call Him whatever you prefer — isn't asking you to feel encouraged right now for your faith to count. Neither am I. I just want to walk with you as you look straight at something that, very likely, weighs on you today: the question of whether it's still worth it to keep hoping.

With all my appreciation,



José Martínez

A Letter to the Reader

Before we begin, I want to be very clear with you about a distinction that will hold up this entire book, because the word “hope” has been used so loosely that it's nearly lost its real meaning.

Hope is not the same as optimism. Optimism says “everything is going to turn out fine” — a prediction about the outcome, often made with no real basis, that also demands you feel encouraged right now for it to count. Hope says something different: “this could go badly, and there is still something worth showing up for today.” It isn't a prediction. It's a decision to keep acting even with no guarantee of a happy ending.

There's a story that helps me explain this. Admiral James Stockdale spent nearly eight years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. He later said that the ones who suffered the most inside, during captivity, weren't the biggest pessimists, but the ones who kept telling themselves “we'll be out by Christmas” — and when the date passed and nothing happened, they'd set another date, and another, until their hearts couldn't take any more disappointment. The ones who made it through best were the ones who accepted, with total honesty, that they didn't know when or how it would end, and that it could be very hard, and that even so, somehow, they would prevail in the end. Never confuse the faith that you're going to make it through with the illusion that it's going to be soon or easy: they are different things, and only the first one survives the long haul.

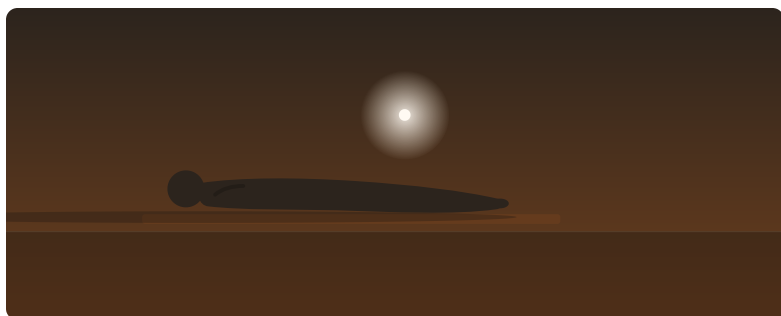
That, almost word for word, is what you're going to find in the five ancient stories in this book: a poet who falls into depression in the very same verse where he finds hope; a man who loses everything and cries out “Violence!” with no one answering him, and who nonetheless declares that his defender lives; a prophet who knows with certainty that ruin is coming and, even so, decides to rejoice; a psalmist who waits through the night the way a watchman waits, with the text never promising him when morning will come; and a letter that defines hope, quite literally, as what we do not yet see.

I'm not going to promise you an outcome. I'm not going to tell you “have hope and things will get better,” because I don't know that, and telling you so would be a kind of pressure disguised as comfort. You're going to read stories from today that will stay with you, and I want you to know, before you start, that most of them don't have a happy close. That's on purpose. This book isn't here to sell you hope as if it were a coin you could exchange for a guaranteed result.

BEFORE WE BEGIN.

This book talks about hope, and to do so honestly, it also talks about pain, exhaustion, and the moments when we feel there's no way out. If, at any point in this reading, you recognize in yourself — or in someone you love — a sadness that won't lift, an exhaustion that won't rest, or thoughts of not wanting to go on, this book is not enough, and it doesn't have to be. Seeking professional help — a psychologist, a doctor, your country's emergency services, or a local suicide prevention line — is not a lack of faith. It is an act of courage, and it is exactly the kind of care this book wants for you.

Let's begin, then. Slowly.



CHAPTER 1

Hope Is Born Inside the Lament

Have you ever felt that your body, or your situation, had become a kind of prison for everything you still had left to say? I don't mean a bad day. I mean something that truly locks you in, where the only thing left to you — a single idea, a memory, an eyelid — seems ridiculously small next to everything you lost. If you've ever felt that all that remained to you was one tiny sliver through which to keep being yourself, this story is for you.

On December 8, 1995, Jean-Dominique Bauby, editor-in-chief of *Elle* magazine in Paris, suffered a massive stroke in his brainstem. He was 43 years old. He woke from a coma twenty days later with what is called locked-in syndrome: his mind was intact, but his entire body was paralyzed. The only thing he could move was his left eyelid.

With that eyelid, he dictated a book. An editor, Claude Mendibil, would read aloud the French alphabet, ordered by letter frequency, and he would blink when she reached the letter he wanted. Letter by letter, over roughly two months of sessions, a manuscript of about one hundred thirty pages took shape. He titled it *Le Scaphandre et le Papillon* — in English, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*: his body was the heavy diving suit that dragged him down; his memory and imagination were the butterfly still flying inside. The book was published in France on March 7, 1997. Bauby died on March 9 — two days after seeing his finished work.

Bauby was not cured. There was no miracle recovery that gave him his body back. What he did, in the time he had left, was refuse to let paralysis take away his voice entirely, and he managed to finish what he had to say forty-eight hours before he died.

There's an ancient poem, also written from a place of ruin, that resembles this more than it might seem at first. It's called Lamentations, and it was written by someone who had just watched Jerusalem fall. In its third chapter, the sufferer first says: "*So I say, 'My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD.'*" (v.18) — the lowest point, with no dressing up. And a few verses later:

*“I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall. I well remember
them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet
this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:
Because of the LORD's great love we are not
consumed, for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning; great is your
faithfulness. I say to myself, ‘The LORD is my
portion; therefore I will wait for him.’ The
LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to
the one who seeks him; it is good to wait
quietly for the salvation of the LORD.”*

(Lamentations 3:19-26, NIV)

Notice something almost never mentioned when this passage is quoted on its own, as if it were a line from a calendar: the text itself says, without hiding it, that the speaker's "soul is downcast" (v.20) — plain language of depression, not a soft metaphor. And the poem, after this parenthesis of hope, goes right back into more weeping: *"My eyes will flow unceasingly, without relief"* (v.49), a number of verses further on. The hope of verses 21 through 26 does not close the grieving. The grief continues afterward, in full. And a little further still, the same poem clarifies something I find important: *"For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone"* (v.33) — not even the poet believes God enjoys watching his people suffer.

That is exactly what Bauby did with his eyelid: he didn't stop being trapped, he didn't stop losing everything he had lost, and even so something more came to his mind — a story to tell — and he decided to wait long enough to tell it. Hope didn't arrive after the lament, like a reward for finishing the crying. It arrived inside it, in the very same verse, in the very same paralysis, without displacing the pain from its rightful place.

If today all you have left is one tiny sliver — an eyelid, a sentence, a message you can still write — I want you to know that sliver doesn't have to be big for it to count as real hope.

Hope doesn't arrive after grief ends — it fits inside it.

THE WORD

Lamentations 3:19-26 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- What is your version, today, of that eyelid: the one small thing you can still move, say, or hold on to?
 - Have you ever felt you had to stop being sad to “deserve” hope? What does this poem tell you about that?
-



CHAPTER 2

The Hope That Doesn't Wait for an Explanation

Have you ever cried out for help with everything you had, and gotten nothing back but silence? I don't mean that no one listened closely. I mean crying out for real, with your whole body, and the world going on exactly the same afterward. If you've ever felt that particular kind of loneliness, I want you to know, before we begin, that this is the hardest chapter in the entire book.

On February 1, 2021, there was a military coup in Myanmar. Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng, of the congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, had worked since 2010 in a clinic run by the diocese of Myitkyina, in the country's north. When protests broke out, on March 8, 2021, she knelt in the dust in front of a cordon of heavily armed police chasing a group of

young protesters. She spread her arms and begged them not to shoot. Her words were recorded by the AFP news agency: *“I knelt down... begging them not to shoot or torture the children, but to shoot and kill me instead.”* Two police officers knelt down with her and touched their foreheads to the ground. The photograph went around the world.

IF THIS CHAPTER FEELS TOO CLOSE TO WHAT YOU'RE LIVING RIGHT NOW.

What you're reading here may describe something bigger than a bad moment. If you've spent weeks feeling like there's no way out, if you've had thoughts of hurting yourself or disappearing, please don't carry this alone. Talk to someone you trust today, and seek professional help: a psychologist, a doctor, your country's emergency services, or a local suicide prevention line. Asking for that help doesn't make you less of a believer or less strong. It is, in fact, one of the most courageous ways to hold on to hope: believing your life is worth calling in reinforcements for.

Within minutes, they opened fire anyway. At least two protesters died that day in Myitkyina. Sister Ann Rose tried to bring the wounded to her clinic; tear gas left her temporarily blind. She later described the scene: *“The floor of our clinic became a sea of blood.”* Her gesture stopped

nothing. She kept treating the sick all the same, even through that year's COVID-19 wave. The regime remains in power, and the conflict in Kachin continues to this day.

There is a man, many centuries earlier, who was also fired upon after crying out. His name was Job. He lost his estate, his children, and his health, having done nothing to deserve it — the book itself says so from its very first chapter. His three friends sat with him on the ground, in silence, for seven days and seven nights, because they saw that his pain was too great for words (Job 2:13). That part they got right. What they got wrong was opening their mouths afterward: chapter after chapter, they insisted that if Job was suffering this much, “he must have done something.” Job answered them without softening a thing: *“then know that God has wronged me”* (19:6) and *“Though I cry, ‘Violence!’ I get no response”* (19:7). It's an open accusation, not pious resignation.

And in the middle of that very same protest, with nothing yet resolved, Job says this:

“Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:23-27, NIV)

The Hebrew word behind “redeemer” is *go'el*: in ancient law, the kinsman who defended someone unable to defend themselves. Job has no proof that this defender will ever show up. His friends accuse him, his family turns him away, and he declares it anyway. Later in the book, God does not explain to Job why he suffered — he never says “it was because of this or that” — but he does correct the friends for not having spoken the truth about him (42:7). Job, who cried out and accused and demanded answers, turns out to have been more right than the ones offering him tidy explanations.

Neither Job nor Sister Ann Rose received an explanation for why the pain came, nor a guarantee that their cry would change anything. Both cried out just the same. That, too, is

hope: the kind that holds without an explanation for the suffering, not the kind that only arrives once you've gotten one.

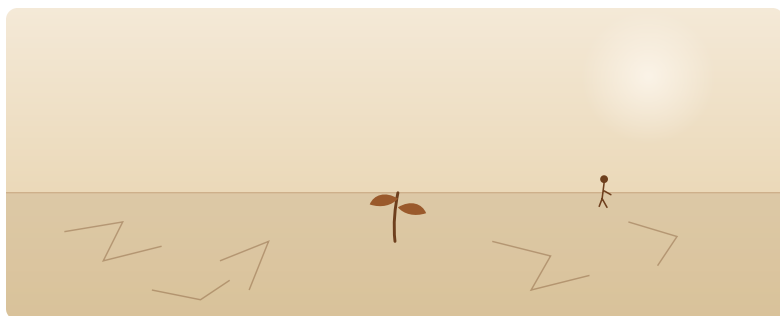
*I can cry out and get no answer, and still keep
hoping.*

THE WORD

Job 19:23-27 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- Have you ever felt that you cried out for help and the world went on exactly the same? What did you need to hear, instead of an explanation?
 - Has someone ever tried to explain your own pain to you with a theory, instead of simply sitting with you? What do you prefer when someone else is suffering?
-



CHAPTER 3

The Hope That Doesn't Depend on the Harvest

Have you ever kept doing something, day after day, for years, with no sign at all that it was worth it? Not a one-month project with a visible result. Something that stretches so far in time you almost forget why you started, and no one around you would bet it will ever amount to anything. If you know that kind of persistence with no evidence to show for it, this story is for you.

In 1979, very young, Jadav Payeng — of the Mising ethnic group, in Assam, India — saw hundreds of snakes dead from the heat, swept by a flood onto a sandbar with not a single tree for shelter. The image marked him. That same year he was hired as a day laborer for a government reforestation project covering two hundred hectares, along the banks of

the Brahmaputra River. The project, planned to run five years, was abandoned around 1983: no budget, no support, no government department behind it anymore. Every other worker left to find other means of support.

Payeng stayed.

For almost thirty years, with no salary, no subsidy, with almost no one knowing about it, he kept planting trees and bamboo, carrying water by hand through the dry season. He had no guarantee any of it would come to anything. The project that had given him his job no longer existed; no one asked him to continue. A journalist named Jitu Kalita found him around 2007, nearly three decades after he'd started. Today the so-called Molai forest covers about 550 hectares and is home to elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, and birds. In 2015 the government of India awarded him the Padma Shri, one of its highest civilian honors.

I want to be honest with you about something that usually gets told wrong: the most widely circulated version says a teenager planted an entire forest, alone, out of nothing. That's not accurate. Payeng started out as a paid worker on a state project. The extraordinary part isn't that he started from nothing: it's that **he kept going after the project was cancelled and everyone else left**, for thirty years, with no one asking him to and no one paying him for it. It seems to me that version — the real one — is better than the one that goes around.

And I want to tell you something else, too, because this book isn't here to sell you a formula: most of the time, doing something for thirty years without seeing results doesn't end in a five-hundred-fifty-hectare forest or a national award. It simply ends in thirty years of having kept going. That, too, needs to be said without disappointment, because it's the truth for almost everyone who perseveres like this: most of them never make the news.

There is an ancient prophet who knew this kind of persistence with no guaranteed harvest well. Habakkuk lived through the years before Babylon invaded his land. He knew what was coming: *“yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us”* (3:16), he says, his body trembling at the thought. He isn't waiting in hope that the ruin won't happen. He knows it will. And even with that certainty, he declares:

“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.” (Habakkuk 3:17-19, NIV)

Notice that the text does not promise the fig tree will bud. It deliberately imagines the worst-case scenario — total agricultural ruin, an entire family's economy lost — and holds on to joy *inside* that scenario, not as a bet that it won't happen. That is, for nearly thirty years, exactly what Payeng did without knowing it: kept planting with no promise at all that the cancelled project would ever become anything. That a forest happened to grow for him, this time, isn't the rule. It's the exception that doesn't invalidate everyone else who, doing the same thing, never sees it bloom.

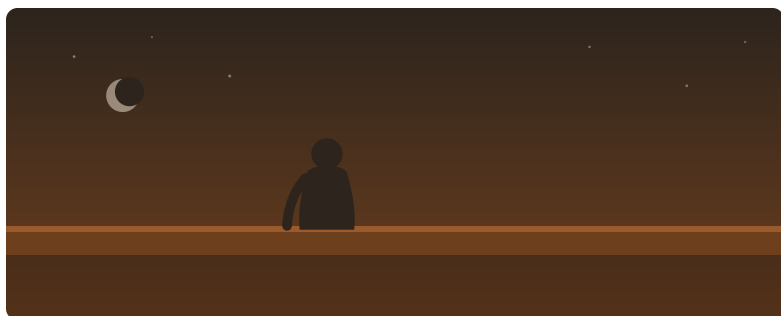
I can keep planting even when no one promises me the harvest.

THE WORD

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- Is there something you're still doing today with no proof at all that it will amount to anything? What keeps you going anyway?
 - Have you ever quit something because you didn't see results fast enough? What difference would it have made to measure time differently?
-



CHAPTER 4

The Hope That Keeps Watch Without Knowing When Dawn Comes

Have you ever waited for something — or for someone — for so long you lost count of the years, with no one able to tell you when, or even whether, it would ever come? I don't mean a wait of a few weeks. I mean the kind of waiting that turns into an entire way of life. If you know that kind of vigil, I want to tell you this story with all the respect it deserves.

In November 1977, in the middle of the military dictatorship in Argentina, Laura Estela Carlotto — the daughter of a schoolteacher in La Plata named Estela Barnes de Carlotto — was abducted. Laura was just past twenty years old and two and a half months pregnant. She gave birth in captivity to a boy she was able to hold for a few days and named Guido,

after her grandfather. Afterward, they took the baby from her. On August 25, 1978, the family was handed Laura's body.

Estela joined the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo) in April 1978, and has presided over the organization since 1989. She searched for her grandson for thirty-six years. On August 5, 2014, the National Genetic Data Bank confirmed the identity: the young man, raised as Ignacio Hurban by a farming family in Olavarría, had voluntarily come forward for a DNA test. He was the 114th grandchild restored by Abuelas. He chose to keep the name he'd grown up with, signing his name Ignacio Montoya Carlotto. Estela said publicly, at the time: "It hurt me that my grandson didn't take the name Guido, but I respected it."

I want you to notice something before we go on: finding her grandson didn't give her back her daughter. Laura is still dead. Nor did the search end with Ignacio: in July 2025, Abuelas announced the restoration of the 140th grandchild, and more than two hundred fifty are still unaccounted for. Estela is 95 years old today, and still presides over the organization, still searching for the ones who remain missing.

There's an ancient psalm, sung by pilgrims climbing toward Jerusalem, that describes this very same kind of waiting. It begins: *“Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD”* (v.1) — not a serene cry, but one from the very bottom. And at its center, it repeats the same image twice:

“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.” (Psalm 130:5-7, NIV)

The watchman doesn't count the hours of the night because he doubts morning will come. He counts them because the shift is long and dark, and his job is to stay awake, alert, without falling asleep, for as long as it lasts. The psalm never

gets to the moment dawn breaks: it ends in the posture of waiting, not in the arrival of morning. To wait, in this psalm, is not to sit still: it's an active vigil, with eyes wide open.

That is what Estela did for thirty-six years: she didn't sit and wait for someone to knock on her door. She went out and searched, organized, insisted, built an entire institution so she would never stop looking. And when something finally arrived — not everything she had dreamed, but a part of it, in the shape her grandson chose and not the one she would have preferred — she received it all the same, without it giving her back her daughter or erasing the thirty-six years of not knowing. The hope that keeps watch guarantees no one that something will arrive. This time, a part of it arrived for Estela. For the more than two hundred fifty that Abuelas is still searching for, for now, nothing has arrived at all.

*I can keep watch without knowing when, or how,
dawn will come.*

THE WORD

Psalm 130:5-7 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- What have you been waiting for so long that you've already lost count of the years? What has your vigil looked like, in the meantime?
 - If what you're waiting for finally arrived, but not in the exact shape you imagined, could you receive it all the same, as Estela did?
-



CHAPTER 5

Hope Is What We Do Not Yet See

Have you ever invested something of yours — time, care, a part of your heart — into a future you know you'll probably never see finished? I don't mean planting something to harvest tomorrow. I mean sowing while knowing, with total certainty, that you may never see the fruit with your own eyes. If you've ever done that, this last story is, perhaps, the one that touches you most closely.

On January 16, 2009, two days before the end of a twenty-two-day military offensive on Gaza, two shells hit the home of Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Palestinian gynecologist and the first Palestinian doctor to hold a staff position at an Israeli hospital. Three of his daughters died — Bessan, 21; Mayar, 15; Aya, 13 — along with his niece Noor, 17. Another

daughter, Shatha, was gravely wounded and lost an eye. Minutes later, Abuelaish was on the phone, live, with an Israeli journalist; his cries for help were broadcast that very night on television across Israel. His wife Nadia had died of leukemia barely four months earlier.

That same month, January 2009, he founded the Daughters for Life Foundation, which today provides higher-education scholarships to young women from the Middle East and North Africa. In 2010 he published a book, *I Shall Not Hate*. For thirteen years he pursued litigation seeking an apology and compensation for what happened. On November 24, 2021, Israel's Supreme Court definitively rejected his appeal, shielding the State under the doctrine of “an act of war.” The judges wrote that “our hearts are with the appellant,” but that no remedy was possible within that process. Abuelaish said afterward that his daughters had been “murdered a second time.” Today he lives in Toronto and teaches at the University of Toronto.

There was no visible justice for Abuelaish. What he built instead was a foundation that gives scholarships to young women he will probably never fully know, whose futures he won't see completed. He turned his grief into something that keeps growing beyond his own pain, without it giving him back anything he lost.

There's an ancient letter that defines hope with more precision than any other text in this book. It was written by Paul to a community in Rome, and it describes something not limited to one person: *“the whole creation... has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth”* (v.22), it says, subjected to a frustration it did not choose. And in the middle of that groaning comes the definition:

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” (Romans 8:18-25, NIV)

“Hope that is seen is no hope at all.” By definition, then, real hope always speaks of what hasn't arrived yet. The text itself doesn't minimize present suffering by comparing it to a future glory just so it stops mattering today: it places both things on the same scale of a real wait, without resolving it. And it adds something very much like what Abuelaish did: we don't even fully know what to ask for; the wordless groan, too, is part of hope, not something outside of it.

Abuelaish never saw the justice he asked for. What he sowed, instead, was something growing toward a future he himself may never see completed. That is, perhaps, hope in its purest form: holding on to the patience of something not yet seen, and maybe never seen in full, without that taking away any of the value of having sown it.

I can plant a future I may never live to see.

THE WORD

Romans 8:18-25 (NIV)

TO REFLECT ON

- Is there something you're building today — a relationship, a habit, a cause — knowing you'll probably never see its fruit in full?
 - What difference is there, for you, between groaning without words and giving up? Have you ever confused those two things?
-

One Step: A Sentence That Doesn't Need to Sound Certain

Come, sit with me a moment before we close the book. I'm not going to ask you to feel hope for everything you're missing. Instead, I'm going to leave you with one small sentence, and a few lines to think it through.

Today, even if it's your worst day, say quietly out loud — or write it down anywhere, on your phone, on a scrap of paper — a sentence that begins with “I still hope...”. It doesn't have to be big. It doesn't have to sound certain. It doesn't have to be about the same thing you've been asking for, for years. It can be as small as “I still hope I can get up tomorrow” or “I still hope this sadness won't last forever.” You don't need to fully believe it to say it.

First: it's an action, not a feeling. Naming hope, even a tiny one, is different from feeling nothing at all. It resembles what Payeng did, planting without knowing whether anything would grow: hope, when the whole picture feels like too much, is practiced in small units, not in big promises.

Second: it's honest, not magic. Saying the sentence doesn't guarantee that what you're hoping for will arrive, or when, or how. None of the five stories in this book promised that either. It guarantees only one thing, more modest and more real: that today, you didn't finish putting out the light you're still carrying.

AND IF, WHEN YOU TRY, NOTHING COMES UP AT ALL

And if, when you try, nothing comes up at all — not even a small hope — that, too, deserves to be said out loud, to someone you trust or to a professional. Not being able to name any hope today is not a failure on your part, nor a failure of faith. It's a sign that real company is needed, and asking for it is part of this very step. If you don't have hope for everything today, you don't need to. You only need enough for today's step. And if you can't even find that, you're not failing: it's simply time to let someone else — a friend, a professional, the Eternal One himself, through them — carry what you can't carry alone today.

A Closing Word

I want to close this book with a blessing for you, whatever the waiting is that you carried all the way to this final page.

May the Creator, the Eternal One, the One so many different voices have called by so many names, keep you company through the long stretch, without rushing you to feel an encouragement you don't have today. May He let you, like the speaker in Lamentations, weep and hope in the same verse, without one crowding out the other. May He, like with Job, never demand an explanation from you as the price of still hoping, and may the people around you know how to sit with you in silence before trying to explain what's happening to you. May He, like with Payeng, give you strength to keep planting even when no one promises you a harvest. May He, like with Estela, hold you through the vigil, even when you don't know when dawn will come. And may He, like with Abuelaish, let you sow something worth sowing even if you yourself never see its fruit in full.

I don't know how your story will end. No one being honest with you could tell you that. But I can tell you this: you don't have to feel hope for everything you're missing today for your faith to count. It's enough that, somewhere inside you, there's still a light you haven't finished putting out.

I don't know how long it will take you to see what you're hoping for, either, or whether you'll ever see it in full. But I can walk with you as you hold on to it, a little more each week.

Prayer for the Week

TO PRAY SLOWLY, OUT LOUD IF YOU CAN



*Eternal One,
I come today with no certainty that all of this will
turn out fine,
and I don't want to pretend to You that I have it.
I bring the waiting that already weighs on me,
the nights I doubted whether it was worth it to keep
hoping,
the question I ask myself when nothing changes:
“how much longer?”*

*I'm not asking You to show me the ending of the
story yet.
I'm asking You for what You gave the ones who
waited before me:
company through the long stretch, strength for
today,
and the courage to name, even quietly, what I still
hope for,
however small it is, even if no one else knows.*

*Don't let my faith depend on everything going the
way I planned it.
Just give me enough not to fully put out this light
I'm still carrying, even tired, even in the dark.*

***And remind me all through this week:
to hope is not to pretend it doesn't hurt — it's
to stay here, with You, one more day.***

Before You Close the Book

This week we walked together through five stories: a man who wrote an entire book with one eyelid and died two days after finishing it; a nun who knelt down to stop a crackdown, and people were shot anyway; a man who kept planting trees for thirty years with no one asking him to; a mother who searched for her grandson for thirty-six years and never got her daughter back; and a father who lost three daughters and a niece, lost the case too, and still sowed a future he'll probably never see in full.

None of these stories promises you that things will go better for you than they did for them. None of them tells you that hope guarantees an outcome. All of them show you the same thing, from different angles: that it's possible to keep hoping — crying, shouting, planting, keeping watch, sowing — with no one assuring you how it ends.

***A question for this week:** of everything you're hoping for today, what is the smallest hope — not the biggest one, not the one that scares you most to name, just the smallest one — that you could still say out loud?*

Carry this question with you. You don't have to answer it today. Just start asking it.

With love,
José.

Bibliography and Sources

Nothing you read here is made up. Every ancient word and every story has its own origin, and here it is, in case something moved you and you want to go find it.

The Scriptures

All quotations come from the **New International Version (NIV)**, © Biblica, Inc., checked against the official text, each passage read in its full historical-literary context before being quoted.

- **Lamentations 3:1-66** (full chapter) — hope born inside the lament, without closing it off
- **Job 2:13 and 19:1-29** (chapters read in context) — hope without an explanation for suffering; Job's friends, corrected by God in 42:7, were wrong
- **Habakkuk 3:1-19** (full chapter) — hope that doesn't depend on the harvest
- **Psalms 130:1-8** (full psalm) — hope as an active vigil
- **Romans 8:1-39** (chapter read in context, quoted through v.25) — hope defined as what we do not yet see

This book, following the theological review of its editorial team, chose not to quote Jeremiah 29:11 or Romans 8:28: they are two of the most frequently misused hope verses in popular Christianity, and both require a frame (seventy years of exile, in the first case; the definition given by v.29 itself, in the second) that doesn't fit inside an isolated quotation.

The Stories

Jean-Dominique Bauby, France. Editor-in-chief of *Elle* magazine, he suffered a massive stroke on December 8, 1995, and was left with locked-in syndrome. He dictated *Le Scaphandre et le Papillon* by blinking; it was published on March 7, 1997, and he died on March 9, 1997.

Jean-Dominique Bauby, Le Scaphandre et le Papillon, Éditions Robert Laffont, 1997 (English edition: The Diving Bell and the Butterfly, translated by Jeremy Leggatt, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

“What is locked-in syndrome? The extraordinary stories that help us understand this rare condition,” The Conversation, 2024.

Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng, Myanmar. A member of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, she knelt before police on March 8, 2021, in Myitkyina, Kachin State, to plead with them not to shoot the protesters.

AFP / The Guardian, “Shoot me instead’: Myanmar nun pleads with junta forces,” March 9, 2021.

“A sea of blood in the church’: Survivors recount Myitkyina’s lethal crackdown,” Frontier Myanmar, March 2021.

“Sr. Ann Rose Nu Tawng, Myanmar’s famed kneeling nun, has become a global icon of peace,” Global Sisters Report / UCA News, February 23, 2022.

BBC 100 Women 2021.

Jadav Payeng, India. He began in 1979 as a day laborer on a state reforestation project in Assam; he kept planting for almost thirty years after the project was abandoned. Today the Molai forest covers about 550 hectares.

Shailendra Yashwant, "The Strange Obsession of Jadav Payeng," Sanctuary Asia, December 2012.

"Molai's green journey to Padma Shri glory," The Shillong Times, January 29, 2015.

Forest Man, documentary directed by William Douglas McMaster, 2013.

Estela Barnes de Carlotto, Argentina. President of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo) since 1989; she searched for her grandson, the son of her daughter Laura, who was disappeared in 1977, for thirty-six years.

Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, institutional records and restitution announcements (abuelas.org.ar).

Fernando Soriano, "A 10 años del abrazo más esperado...," Infobae, August 5, 2024.

"Ignacio Montoya Carlotto cuenta su vida...," CNN en Español, July 9, 2021.

"Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo confirmó la restitución del nieto 140," Infobae, July 7, 2025.

Izzeldin Abuelaish, Gaza / Canada. A gynecologist; he lost three daughters and a niece in a bombing on January 16, 2009. He founded the Daughters for Life Foundation. Israel's Supreme Court rejected his lawsuit on November 24, 2021.

*Izzeldin Abuelaish, **I Shall Not Hate**, Random House Canada / Walker Books, 2010.*

*“Supreme Court rejects Gaza doctor seeking redress for strike that killed daughters,” **The Times of Israel**, November 24, 2021.*

Democracy Now!, interview, January 19, 2011.

Daughters for Life Foundation, “About Us.”

A Note on the Order of the Stories

The initial proposal paired Job 19 with Dr. Abuelaish's story and Romans 8 with Sister Ann Rose's. During drafting, they were swapped: Job 19 (hope without an explanation for suffering, a cry that gets no answer) was paired with Sister Ann Rose, whose own gesture didn't stop the violence either; and Romans 8 (hope as what has not yet been seen, sown toward a future one may never live to see) was paired with Dr. Abuelaish and his foundation. This was done for two reasons: the book of Job later goes on to a restoration this chapter never mentions or hints at, and that echo of a happy ending carried more risk paired with the story of a father whose justice never came; and Paul's image of sowing without seeing the fruit in full describes an educational foundation built for future generations more precisely than it describes a single afternoon's vigil.

An Honest Note

The contemporary stories in this book involve real people, told from widely documented facts, verified against primary sources, the protagonists' own interviews, and reliable journalistic coverage prior to this edition. Four of the five do not, as of today, have a favorable outcome. That is not an oversight: it is, in fact, exactly what this book needed to show about hope.

END OF WEEKLY BOOK #4



*“A new book every week, for the light
you haven't quite put out yet.”*

This is the fourth of many. Every week, a true story and an ancient word to help you hold on to hope. If something here moved you, don't keep it to yourself — share it with someone who needs it today.

This book is a gift, and it's yours. Download it, share it, give it to whoever needs it today: it's free, and it always will be.

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you feel like you need to talk to someone, reach out
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