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HOPE AND THE BAMBOO SEED

BY JANET CLEMENTS

With the coming of spring, many of us plant seeds in the expectation that they will grow to fruition. It's commonly known that seeds take different amounts of time to break through the soil with their first shoots. Some germinate and appear quickly. But did you know that a bamboo seed spends five years underground before shoots emerge? Then, in six weeks, these shoots can grow up to 90 feet!

During those first five years, it might seem as though nothing is happening at all. But underneath in the soil, roots are growing and forming a strong foundation, from which the bamboo plant will flourish. In some ways, hope can be seen in the conviction of the sower. Even though there may be no immediate evidence of development, there is a patience and perseverance of the heart, with the faith there will be a good outcome.

If one looks around the world, though, the landscape often appears barren of peace, economic stability, justice. Even in one's own personal experience, there may be a lack of self-esteem, good health, assured safety, and meaningful employment.

Our eyes may see no reason for hope. Events beyond our control may leave no room to believe in something better. Statistics may suggest no possibility for restoration, and troubling situations that have dragged on for a long time may offer no resolution. Here's where hope intervenes, as an awareness of present spiritual truth. It secures us in the certainty that no matter how bleak the human circumstances, good will inevitably prevail. Hope advances one from a material perspective to the spiritual sense of something divine, the operation of the higher law—the law of God.

Similar to that bamboo seed, whose roots are actively developing beneath the surface, this divine law is a force for good that often operates unseen to the five senses. And hope is a kind of trust in the power of that law. It confidently, joyously leans upon God. It's natural to hope in God because all the health, prosperity, peace, and productivity we need come from Him. What God initiates as divine Love, God sustains as divine Principle. Hope involves putting the weight of prayer behind the idea that all the good in life has the support of unencumbered, spiritual law behind it.

The good that we express is not naive or helpless. Far from it! We're connected to the divine law of good. We're the expression of Love's pure intent. Hope is recognizing that active, vital force or divine law that nourishes the accomplishment of progress. Maybe even in modest ways we already see the evidence of hope answered in our own lives. And, throughout history, confirmations of the importance of hope can be found in the bold words and fearless actions of

leaders. Dale Carnegie, a famous speaker and writer on the subject of personal development, echoed this sentiment when he said, "Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all."

Knowing that the good you desire is invariably safe in God, and that there is no power able to take away the good in your life, gives you spiritual poise when you're faced with distressing situations. The Bible expresses this refreshing promise so beautifully: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" ([Jer.17:7,8](#)).

Many of those ideas were helpful to me when I faced a series of discouraging challenges.

At first it all looked so good! There was a state university in the town where my husband, our small children, and I had just moved. One spring day as I drove by, the thought came very clearly to me to phone the school and inquire about teaching positions open in my field. I'd been praying about employment and was looking for a job that would coordinate with caring for our children. I felt this idea was the answer to my prayers. Before long, I'd secured an interview and was hired to teach classes in the fall.

Then at the beginning of the summer, I was suddenly faced with an internal illness that would make teaching at the university uncomfortable, if not impossible. Despair knocked at the door of thought, along with the fear that the dysfunction of my body could govern my health. But hope answered the door. This Bible promise pointed to my higher destiny and individuality: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" ([1 John 3:2,3](#)).

Prayerful affirmations of the fact that I was the daughter of God, expressing His likeness, anchored me. They allowed me to see beyond the precarious picture of myself as governed by discordant material law, or made up of organic matter that was abnormal or in flux. As God's child, I was governed only by the law of good, and the action of that law must invariably result in harmony.

When I prayed some more about the concept of harmonious action, I saw that it wasn't the action of matter that defined me, but rather my active expression of spiritual qualities. The ordered rhythm of those qualities was cadenced by divine Soul and held in perfect harmony and energy by divine Principle.

Another idea that brought hope was from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "Neither organic inaction nor overaction is beyond God's control; and man will be found normal and natural to changed mortal thought. . ." (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 125). All these ideas were purifying and changing my thought. And within a week or so, the normal functioning of my body resumed.

But then, in the middle of the summer, I got a call from the university saying the state government had cut their funds. They told me that it was highly unlikely there would be enough resources for the classes I was scheduled to teach. Now I had a sinking feeling that collective factors outside my control were creating a negative domino effect as if to say, "So much for hope!"

Despite this news, I resolved to pray about this latest challenge. And I remembered my intuition to call the university. I felt sure that this whole activity had so far been God-directed—and therefore *would* be God-protected and God-fulfilled. If the power of divine Spirit was undergirding my desire to teach, then nothing could possibly thwart the mutual good that could come from it. Like a piece of straw trying to go against the flow of a mighty river, it would not be possible for discouragement to take hold when a renewed understanding of God's love was coursing through my life

Another affirmation from the Bible winged my expectation: "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" ([Isa. 14:27](#)). Soon, my prayers expanded to include all those who could be affected by the university's lack of funding. I prayed to see more clearly that in God's government there is abundance and opportunity for all. I saw that Bible statement applying to the students, the faculty, and to those who would be making financial decisions for the university. And since the divine Mind alone supplied everyone involved with wisdom, things would take proper shape under His guidance.

During the summer, much to the surprise of the faculty, state legislators allocated the necessary funds the university had been lacking. All was again on track for me to teach.

Then, as if the previous challenges had not been enough, a week before my classes started, I was told that only a few students had signed up. If more students didn't express interest, my classes would be canceled. The hopeless uncertainty crept in that my good was dependent on other people and on whether enough students cared about the subject I was offering.

However, my prayers over that summer had buoyed me, and by that time I had the conviction that right where there was a roster barren of students, right there—in the "wilderness," so to speak—good could "blossom abundantly" (see [Isa. 35:1, 2](#)). I held to that conviction. And with two days to go until sign-ups for the semester were closed, the class I'd planned to teach filled completely. There was truly cause for rejoicing as I welcomed my students on the first day. If they'd only know all the hope I'd been cherishing throughout that summer and that they represented its beautiful fruition!

Teaching that year was a progressive career step. But more than that, it strengthened my understanding of why we should all *practice* hope. Whether you're faced with a lingering physical problem, an unfair policy, or aftermath from the seemingly random decisions of others, absolutely nothing is beyond the control of God's law of harmony. His goodness simply cannot fail. I've learned I can rest assured that despite these material pictures, when I pray, something wonderful is happening in consciousness. Just as when the bamboo seed doesn't appear to be growing, and yet is preparing to take off and shoot triumphantly into the air, our trust in God is not in vain. At first, answers may be unseen, but the activity of His goodness is ongoing, and its manifestation is assured.

We can all take comfort and trust in the healing fragrance of hope's complete fruition. God is on the scene, bringing His blessings into view, uplifting and restoring us. In fact, it's our individual mission to be witnesses of His power. The good that we hope for is inherent in the fabric of our identity. Mary Baker Eddy wrote that we are each "a living witness to and perpetual idea of inexhaustible good" (*Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, [p. 83](#)). Now there's a reason to hope! [css](#)

FOR MORE ON THIS TOPIC

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