

The Anchor of Hope

1. WHAT

Emily Dickinson:

Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul – and sings the tunes without the words – and never stops at all.

Desmond Tutu:

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”

Hellen Keller: Captures the true meaning of hope

Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible.

Hope is a powerful force. It has birthed nations, turned the tides of wars from what looked impossible to possible, overturned apartheid, secured the rights of women to vote, ignited the civil rights movement ... has raised up the Ghandis, Abraham Lincolns, Nelson Mandelas, Mother Teresas, suffragettes, Martin Luther Kings, John Lewises, among so many others.

Defined by one religious tradition as “a confident expectation for good.”

Has been referred to as an anchor. Appropriate.

We all know that an anchor for a boat, or ship, provides stability and safety in dangerous weather by holding the ship securely in one place. In storms, when the waters are tumultuous, the winds are violently strong, and the rains are torrential, the anchor prevents the ship from being tossed and turned by tethering it to the bottom of the sea or ocean. .

II. WHERE

Where do we get this hope? Search, seek? Don't have to get it because we've already got it! It comes as standard equipment with the basic human being model! It resides within us, in our hearts, souls and spirits. Part of our Authentic Self which called by some traditions the Divine Spark! As human beings we have it because this Authentic Self has been, as some traditions teach, created in the image and likeness of the Divine.

From Transcendental Meditation blog:

Jesus was once asked when the kingdom of God would come. “The kingdom of God,” Jesus replied, “is not something people will be able to see and point to.” Then came these striking words: “Neither shall they say, ‘Lo here! or, lo there!’ for, behold, the kingdom of God is

within you” (Luke 17:21). With these words, Jesus gave voice to a teaching that is universal and timeless.

Look into every great religious, spiritual, and wisdom tradition, and we find the same precept – that life’s ultimate truth, its ultimate treasure, lies within us.

As Jesus made unambiguously clear, we can experience this inner treasure – and no experience could be more valuable. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” he declared, “and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). From this interior plane of life, he is saying, we will gain all that is needful.

This inner treasure of life has had many names. Plato refers to it as *the Good* and *the Beautiful*, Aristotle as *Being*, Plotinus as *the Infinite*, St. Bernard of Clairvaux as *the Word*, Ralph Waldo Emerson as *the Oversoul*. In Taoism it is called the *Tao*, in Judaism *Ein Sof*. Among Australian aborigines it is called the *dreamtime*, among tribes of southern Africa *Hunhu/Ubuntu*. The names may differ, but the inner reality they point to is one and the same.

From the introduction of *The Upanishads*, translated by Eknath Easwaran, he says:
“THIS divine ground the Upanishads call simply atman, “the Self” – spelled with a capital to distinguish it from the individual personality. In the unitive state the Self is seen to be one, the same in everyone. This is not a reasoned conclusion; it is something experienced at the very center of one’s being, an inalienable fact. In all persons, the Self is the innermost essence. And it is identical with Brahman: our real Self is not different from the ultimate Reality called God. Tat tvam asi, You are That.”

From the translator’s Introduction to the *Bhagavad Gita* by Juan Mascoro:

“The spiritual experience of Atman is expressed in these words of the Chandogya Upanishad:

“There is a Spirit which is mind and life, light and truth and vast spaces. It contains all works and desires and perfumes and all tastes. It enfolds the whole universe, and in silence is loving to all.

“This is the Spirit that is in my heart, smaller than a grain of rice, or a grain of barley, or a grain of mustard-seed, or a grain of canary seed, or the kernel of a grain of canary-seed. This is the Spirit that is in my heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven itself, greater than all these worlds. This is the Spirit that is in my heart, this is Brahman.”

And also from the Chandogya Upanishad:

“In this body, in this town of Spirit, there is a little house shaped like a lotus, and in that house there is a little space. One should know what is there.

“What is there? Why is it so important?”

“There is as much in the little space within the heart, as there is in the whole world outside. Heaven, earth, fire, wind, sun, moon, lightening, stars; whatever is and whatever is not, everything is there.”

Everything, including HOPE!

III. How

How do we access it, realize it? How do we lower the Anchor of Hope? What we focus on expands. What we set our attention on grows. So what are we thinking on, focusing on, setting our attention on?

Philippians 4:8 “...whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them].

What are the things in your life that inspire you, bring you joy, a sense of peace and well-being?

Tweeted Common, an American rapper, actor and writer sharing a photo of himself with Biden.

“Today is A New Beginning and A Celebration of The People and The Power and Capacity we have. We Changed the World by thinking about Better Days and Acting On it,”

For me many times it is watching the sunrise or sunset out where I live ...

For Nelson Mandela, it was “Invictus.”

Viktor Frankl – the Austrian psychiatrist who spent 3 years in 4 different concentration camps, including Auschwitz. In the foreword to Viktor Frankl’s book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Rabbi Harold Kushner writes: “He [Frankl] describes poignantly those prisoners who gave up on life, who lost all hope for a future and were inevitably the first to die. They died less from the lack of food or medicine than from the lack of hope, lack of something to live for. By contrast, Frankl kept himself alive and kept hope alive by summoning up thoughts of his wife and the prospect of seeing her again, and by dreaming at one point of lecturing after the war about the psychological lessons to be learned from the Auschwitz experience.”

Read from pg 40 – 41 wife and pg 73 lecture

Elisabeth Tova Bailey – *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, whose snail observations are from a single year of nearly two decades of illness.

She writes a letter to her doctor: "I could never have guessed what would get me through this past year – a woodland snail and its offspring... I honestly don't think I would have made it otherwise. Watching another creature go about its life ... somehow gave me, the watcher, purpose too. If life mattered to the snail and the snail mattered to me, it meant something in my life mattered, so I kept on..." pg 154

"The snail had been a true mentor; its tiny existence had sustained me." pg 160

"The original snail and I had been fellow captives, but now we had both returned to our natural habitats. As I tried to make my life livable within a few rooms of my house, I wondered how the snail was coping in its native woods. Though I was home, I was still not free from the boundaries of my illness. I thought of the terrarium's limited space, and how the snail had seemed content as it ate, explored, and fulfilled a life cycle. This gave me hope that perhaps I, too, could still fulfill dreams, even if they were changed dreams." (from *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* by Elisabeth Tova Bailey pg 145-146)

Conversely, we can pull that anchor up by focusing our attention, our thoughts on the negative things.

Produces patience – many situations/circumstances take time to change; but even if they don't change, we can change and adapt and can still have joy, peace, and grace in the midst.

"When we are no longer able to change a situation – we are challenged to change ourselves."
Viktor Frankl

"One of the things I learned when I was negotiating was that until I changed myself, I could not change others." – Nelson Mandela

CLOSING:

In closing 3 things to remember:

1. We can never be without hope. It's as close as our very breath. As a reminder breathe on a mirror.
2. Lower your anchor of hope by focusing on those things which uplift, inspire, bring peace and joy.
3. Even if the situation does not change, we will.