I Still Have Hope

Michael Vick and Pastor John T. Boston share a story about second chances and redemption

* Melissa Charles ART
* inspire2aspire ft. Alejandra Torres
* Him & Her Series on Relationships
* What Are You Thinking?
form of Wireless Communication

Never A Dropped Call
B2B Tip:
Hope is a fundamental part of the Christian faith and your hope grows through encountering God and meditating on His Word.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life  
~ Proverbs 13:12 ~

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From the Publisher
There are many key terms and concepts in Scripture like faith, hope, love, joy, grace, peace, pleasing the Lord, etc. that we come across as we read our Bibles, but often these are just vague concepts for many people. In this issue, we define hope through the testimony of Michael Vick, Q&A with Alejandra Torres and inspiration from the art of Melissa Charles. “Hope” in Scripture means “a strong and confident expectation.” In the Bible, hope is never a passive thing. It is dynamic, active, directive and life sustaining. This is everywhere obvious as we read the Word. Take a concordance, look up the word “hope” and you will find reference after reference pointing out the active results of hope in the lives of those who truly have a biblical hope and live accordingly. We pray for hope this holiday season.

~ Brittany N. Winkfield ~
DEAR GOD,
IF TODAY I LOSE
MY HOPE PLEASE
REMIND ME THAT
YOUR PLANS ARE
BETTER THAN
MY DREAM...
MÉLISSE S. CHARLES, PhD

Dr. Charles is a trained Neuroscientist with a PhD in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics. Dr. Charles obtained her PhD at 25 and is currently a Professor of Medical Microbiology in Los Angeles.

Dr. Charles is a self taught artist that is extremely passionate about using her artistic gifts to help others. She credits her father as her first art teacher, teaching her how to draw at the age of 3.

Dr. Charles is inspired by the following artists: Michaelangelo, Leonardo DaVinci, Vincent Van Gogh, Salvador Dali, Wangechi Mutu, Sebastian Krüger, and Kehinde Wiley to name a few.

"Art is a collaboration between God and the artist, and the less the artist does the better." - André Gide
Ten years ago, I had hit rock bottom, at least I thought I did. I was a very naive, wide-eyed 17 year old college freshman in Canada. At that time, I was going to school because of the Black Canadian Scholarship, a prestigious award given to black students. On the surface it seemed like I should be doing well, but truly I was drowning. It seemed that life was stripping me of everything that I found refuge in; that included family, finances, academia, etc. Admittedly, in light of what was happening, I had absolutely no idea where life was going to take me. I desperately was investing my efforts in trying to fix everything, and I did a terrible job at it. In the process of trying to be a "fixer", something I'm still trying to moderate, I became overwhelmed. Hindsight is always 20/20 because though I thought my life was unraveling, God’s hand was in each situation. I was very embarrassed of having to pause to reorganize the direction of my life, but I now speak openly about it, because that experience taught me a lot about humility, perspective and recognizing what mattered.

Ten years ago, I never thought I’d overcome the tumultuous circumstances that were occurring. But here I am ten years later, still standing. Sometimes, I’m barely standing, but I’m still here. Ten years ago, if someone told me that I would go to the US, obtain an American education, get a Bachelors with almost no money to my name, obtain a Doctorate in four years, be a professor, be admitted to medical school on a full scholarship, I would have laughed! If someone said that I would be in Los Angeles establishing my art in a field saturated with talented artists, I wouldn’t believe them. Although at the time I was convinced that life had much more to offer than what I was experiencing. I never imagined that God would have led me to where I currently am.

My Goals

The trajectory that my life has taken me has taught me a very valuable lesson. It taught me that goals aren’t always met, and things don’t always go as planned. So with that said, I can only hope that my art work will show others that you should utilize the gifts that God has given you. Whatever it is, no matter how big or small. God has equipped everyone with a talent, and it is our responsibility to utilize it and contribute to our current environment. (The world needs it.) As with any other artist, I hope that my work will meet the eyes of art connoisseurs, art aficionados, art fans, both young and old. I am mostly self-taught and I create as my eye sees fit. My portfolio currently is in a novice stage, but I can’t wait to add pieces to my gallery. Currently, my sketch book has at least 30-40 ideas of surrealistic paintings, and 15-20 graphite portraits that I am dying to create. It is truly a blessing that people have responded so favorably to my art, and I hope that continues. Because when I create, I feel most at peace, most connected with my soul, and my purpose. When others express the same sentiment in seeing the finished product I embrace it fully. Ultimately, I hope my art can draw people from different walks of life to appreciate the vision that I am/was able to translate onto a canvas, or paper. Ideally I would hope that commercially I can also create art that would meet a specific need in the market. While these are goals, I try to stay open-minded to see what will unfold in the future. Right now I am taking things a step at a time: establishing a presence in LA, building my portfolio and art network, and seeing where things go from there.
The best part of waking up is....

...hitting the snooze button! While I am always grateful to see the light of day, I am not a morning person. God knows I’m a night owl. I’d rather stay up late! When I wake up, it takes me about 5 minutes to shake off that morning grrouch before I start my day. Anyway, to answer the question, which I believe is asking what keeps me going: that would be my parents, and my faith. I have seen my parents a total of 7 times in the last 8.5 years but the impression they made on me as a child has carried me through. With their example they have taught me that with a lot of determination, you can accomplish anything, even with scarce resources. I saw my mother raise four children on her own with a monthly allowance that wouldn’t pay a car note; and we never felt like we lacked basic necessities. While she was facing her hurdles, my father would tell me stories of having to memorize books and encyclopedias when he lived in the Caribbean for similar reasons. Their determination in the face of adversity is what keeps me going, and what I’ve somewhat “inherited” or try to emulate. So I keep going, even when I feel like giving up. Tough circumstances build character, so no matter how hard the day ahead of me is, I try to keep pushing as much as I can and try to find the beauty in what lies ahead. And lastly, I wake up because of my faith. I don’t know what the day will unfold, but I do know the God who controls it, and the part I have to play in it. Also, I get pretty overjoyed at the inspiration that I can potentially encounter that could be incorporated in one of my art work.

Next Generation

I think that the next generation is extremely promising. There are certain barriers that we had growing up, certain ceilings that existed, that are being completely abolished. The next generation will have a different standard of normal; academically, professionally, religiously, etc. Status quos are being re-invented as we speak; this is quite an exciting time to grow up in. Careers don’t have the same linear trajectory as they used to, Religion don’t have the same rigid standards about Women leaders, I believe that we have a generation that is quite passionate and gifted. Some may argue that with the advent of social media and gadgets, our next generation is being dwarfed. I think that their passion is simply expressed differently, and geared differently. Nevertheless, it is valid to say that the next generation is equipped with resources that were previously absent even when I was growing up; And I don’t like to think that I’m that old!

Despite the resources that are available to this coming generation, I am aware of the grim statistics out there about our youth. Particularly as it pertains to our young men and visible minorities. Yes it’s true that society and other social determinants may have contributed to the outcomes of their lives, and they may still have limited access to those very resources I boasted about earlier. I believe that these facts remind us that while the next generation have access to more now than ever before, there are quite a few who are are still ostracized, oppressed, profiled, etc. And because that still rings true today, we all have a part to play in ensuring that those who surround us don’t end up in that pool of statistics.

"Art is a collaboration between God and the artist, and the less the artist does the better."  
-André Gide
You know, I am the last person to preach on how to be with Christ, holy and/or righteous. Let me be the first one to call out that I am a perpetual sinner. Jesus Christ is the only example Christians should exemplify. I will say this; I do believe that walking with Christ, is like having a best friend. Best friends have their good times, and not so good times. And you have best friends that in spite of not speaking with them for an extended period of time, you can still pick up right where you left off as though nothing has changed.

Sometimes, religions as a whole miss the message of the gospel, and overlook how Christ revolutionized religion by being quite antagonistic to the ways of the Sadducees and Pharisees. I believe that Christ wants us to come to him and recognize our filth. Recognizing our filth instead of sweeping it under the rug is the basic step in walking with Christ. In walking with him we recognize his presence and power, and know that it isn’t us but him that guides our steps, that blesses us with a roof over our heads, with food to eat, etc. Walking with Christ isn’t complicated, and it shouldn’t be; it is a walk of love. It only becomes complicated and "burdensome" (ie. rules of dos and don’ts) when love is taken out of the equation. So in summary, 1) recognizing your filth, forgiving yourself 2) seeking him for everything and 3) falling in love with him should get us back to the basics. Everything else falls into place. That’s always been my experience.

CHECK THE RÉSUMÉ

- From Ottawa, Canada
- Oakwood University class of 2008
- President of Pre-Med Oakwood Bio-Medical Association
- Founder of Visual Arts council
- Loma Linda University PhD Class of 2012, Microbiology and Molecular Genetics
- Dissertation in Neuroscience
- LLU School of Medicine Basic Sciences Dean’s Award
- 1st Place Poster Presentation Annual Physician Convention LLU School of Medicine
- 1st Place 14th Annual Basic Sciences Research Symposium
- Class President of Basic Sciences Student Council
- Going to Med school Fall 2014

- Three siblings: One older brother, an older sister, and a younger brother (She’s # 3 out of 4)  
- Currently resides in Los Angeles
- Professor of Medical Microbiology Loyola Marymount University

“Man is unique not because he does science, and he is unique not because he does art, but because science and art equally are expressions of his marvelous plasticity of mind.”
- Jacob Bronowski
I Love You

“I Love You!” How special are those words between two people! But even more wonderful they become when spoken to us by our saviour who wants us to be happy and find joy in our relationship with each other. Christ has compared his love for the church to the love of husband and wife. Our heavenly father is concerned over our love-life.
Married Life Gets Better and Better

Men and women can reach God’s ideal for them if they will take Christ as their helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will accomplish for those who give themselves to him in loving trust. His providences can unite hearts in bonds that are of heavenly origin. Love will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet more firm, that can be woven by the looms of earth. The result is not a tissue fabric, but a texture that will bear wear and test and trial. Heart will be bound to heart in the golden bonds of a love that is enduring.

To love as Christ loved means to manifest unselfishness at all times and in all places, by kind words and pleasant looks. These cost those who give them nothing, but they leave behind a fragrance that surrounds the soul. The effect can never be estimated. Not only are they a blessing to the receiver, but to the giver; for they react upon him. Genuine love is a precious attribute of heavenly origin, which increases in fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others. Christ’s love is deep and earnest, flowing like an irrepressible stream to all who will accept it. There is no selfishness in His love. In this heaven-born love is an abiding principle in the heart, it will make itself known, not only to those we hold most dear in sacred relationship, but to all with whom we come in contact. It will lead us to bestow little acts of attention, to make concessions, to perform deeds of kindness, to speak tender, true, encouraging words. It will lead us to sympathize with those whose hearts hunger for sympathy.

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.

~ Proverbs 18:22 ~

(KJV)
I Still Have Hope

BY WHITNEY K. JORDAN

Hope: the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best.
Today, more and more people are finding themselves without hope. Instead, they are living with fear and concern, not only about the future, but the here and now. Jobs that were once considered stable are now questionable. The children are no longer safe from harm in the nation’s schools. Wars, terrorism, natural disasters, and deadly diseases take the lives of millions each year.

But, there is Good News! Help is available, not the kind the world has wherein it wishes for the best, but one that is based on the promises of God and the knowledge of His soon return. This is the hope that John T. Boston, newly appointed pastor, and the members of Ebenezer Church in Milledgeville, Georgia, and First Church of Dublin in Dublin, Georgia, want to share in their communities through the “I Still Have Hope” evangelistic crusade.

“Michael Vick’s testimony is one that people can relate to on a personal level. Anybody can make mistakes, the simple truth of the matter is that he just happens to be on a bigger stage,” explains Boston.

“There are so many messages out there that have very little to do with that hope. People are talking about getting better jobs and better houses. Those things are vitally important as we live and occupy time on Earth, but the hope that burns in my heart and the heart of my churches is that Christ is going to soon come, very soon come, and that's what we want to share with the world,” said Boston. “We want to share the second advent of Christ. We want to share that the world will not always be as bad as it is, because it's worse than it has ever been, and it's not getting better.”

On opening night, more than 3,000 people from across central Georgia packed the Walter B. William gymnasium in Milledgeville to not only hear the message of hope from Boston, but to hear professional football player Michael Vick speak.

With a focus on showing people that change is possible, Ebenezer members brought Vick in to share his personal, life-altering testimony.

“He came to express that he did have hope. A lot of people thought that when he was incarcerated that there was just going to be a contract out there waiting on him; that wasn’t the case. He needed somebody to come along aside him, and let him know, ‘you're going to make it through this,’” adds Boston. “That translates into the hope that people need to know they can have in Christ...another chance, another opportunity, even though they have, by their own choices, messed up, derailed, or gotten off track in life. Christ has the ability to take you and use you in another area.”
Vick’s story is about second chances and redemption, two themes attached to Vick since the dog-fighting allegations in 2007.

“I’m a guy that has been given a second chance in life,” said Vick, who spoke for eight minutes. “I know what that second chance is like.”

Vick — about believing in yourself, being around people who believed in him, and taking advantage of first chances — said, “Believe in yourself, listen to your parents, listen to the people who care about you, and don’t ever stop believing in yourself.”

The small, 23-member church prepared untiringly for the weeklong crusade. “We have been preparing for a crusade for the last three to four years. We’ve been fasting, praying, and doing prayer walks in the community we picked. We prayed with the people who are in need of prayer, and consoled those who needed consolation,” said Malcolm May, Ebenezer head elder. “So we’ve been preparing, not knowing what the outcome of the event was going to be.”

Two billboards were put up across the city, more than 4,000 tracks were passed out, and a website istillhavehope.com was set up for attendees to register for free tickets. Those who registered for the event were given the option to receive free Bible studies, and members of the church in pairs or family groups were responsible for conducting the studies.

Boston’s philosophy is to start with these large events, take those that respond to the appeal, bring them to the church, and use the evangelistic meeting to get them ready for baptism. “I Still Have Hope” evangelistic crusade yielded 62 baptized souls for the Lord in the cities of Milledgeville and Dublin.

Ebenezer and First Church of Dublin are taking their cities by storm, sharing the truth, and giving great hope to those in their community. They are doing it with one goal and question in mind, “How can we be guiltless when the Lord comes and ask us what did you do for Milledgeville and Dublin?” This was the largest religious gathering in Baldwin County history. “It’s not about where you’re coming from, but about where you’re going.”
The IGNITION conference is a three-day young adult gathering of leaders who passionately believe the world can be a better place for their generation. Together we will WORSHIP Jesus and pursue intimacy with Him, together we will experience deep COMMUNITY, and together we will LEARN how to lead with greater influence.

Together, ignited by the power of Jesus and Holy Spirit, we will change the world for today’s young adult generation. Ignition is proudly sponsored by the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and is open to all young adults.

http://www.jci4.org/ya-ignition
Alejandra Torres is a self-professed church punk. She believes that the local church is the hope of the world. Her greatest desire is to see young adults actively engaged in their local churches and infusing this world with creativity, art, music, and the love and kindness of God. This generation has the potential to positively influence the world in powerful ways. It is her desire that the iCreate Movement provide the support, space, and inspiration to our young adults and allow them to become restorers!
If you could do anything you wanted right now, what would it be?
I would plant a church in the Orlando area. I really feel a calling towards creating a place for "seekers" and "restorers" to meet to express themselves creatively, grow and learn, and do life together.

If money was no object, what would you do all day?
I would create environments that unchurched people could enjoy within our church. I would love to work on creating irresistible moments that people can connect with.

Where do you most want to travel, but have never been?
It’s a toss-up between England and Ireland. I love the countryside in those 2 countries. It’s so green and charming. The cities are amazing as well! London is definitely at the top of my list of cities to visit!

University or life experience, which do you feel best prepares you for life?
Life is the greatest teacher I’ve ever had. I thought I was prepared for life after graduating from college. But I was wrong! :) There’s nothing like time and experience and hitting a couple of bumps in the road to help you see clearer and be wiser.

What is your favorite book?
"The Shack". I like stories. Really interesting stories. And how the author turned this children’s story into one of the most powerful depictions of God and his beautiful character, will always be a divine moment, in my opinion. When we look at it as what it is - a story - we can appreciate how liberating it can be. My favorite chapter is the one called "Circle of Friends". And my favorite line is "I’m especially fond of you." At times, I can almost hear God saying that to me through this book.

What has been your biggest challenge?
Working with "minimizers". I want to be a "maximizer". And I want to be around "maximizers". I want to be with people that see the BEST in others and in a situation. I want to be about restoration. I want to breathe life and creativity and hope into people. Not take it from them.

What is your biggest success up until now?
Honestly? Being an older sister to my baby sister, Andrea.
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

Is this just a good thing for me to do or is it the best thing for me?

It is awesome to know that God’s purpose and plan for us is to give us a rich and satisfying life! In our culture we become so easily distracted and drawn away by the hundreds of good options out there for us. We can quickly become drained by our fast paced, overcrowded lives. But that is not God’s plan for us. He created us for so much more.

It is sometimes hard to stay focused on what God has purposed and planned for our lives and for those we lead. As you make choices ask yourself “Is this going to drain me or is this decision going to bring out the best in me so that I can be blessed and in return be a blessing to those around me?” God is ready to give us wisdom if we just take the time to ask!

TODAY’S PRAYER
Father, Today I thank you that your greatest desire for me as your child is to have a rich, satisfying and abundant life. I pray that you will give me the wisdom to know how to say “no” to the good things that come my way so that I can say “yes” to the best things that you have for me. I pray for your wisdom that is beyond human understanding to help me make these choices that will ultimately bring out the best in me as well as bring out the best in those around me for your glory and honor! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Send your questions to info@back2basicsmag.com

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From the B2B Team

Colossians 1:27

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

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