
Hope Alone by Ruth Meyer is an amazing read. It features easily relatable characters that have been through difficult and tumultuous moments but whose faith serves as an anchor even in the worst of times. Faith's family has been through it all – from abandonment by a spouse to dealing with teen pregnancy and a devastating accident. Their lives are far from perfect and sometimes they make mistakes. Still, their story offers a strong lesson on the liberating power of forgiveness and the unwavering presence of God even in the darkest of moments. The novel also contains themes of restoration and growth through overcoming trials by the power of God. It also speaks to Christians to shine God's love on other people. Adeptly written, Hope Alone by Ruth Meyer is an encouraging and eye-opening read.

Reader's Favorite

In loving memory of Jaclyn, who has realized the hope we have
in Christ as she now beholds her Savior face to face

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HALLOW PEOPLE

A NOVEL BY RUTH E. MEYER

THE SOLA SERIES



TruthNotes Press

Here we have a firm foundation,
Here the refuge of the lost:
Christ, the Rock of our salvation,
Is the name of which we boast;
Lamb of God, for sinners wounded,
Sacrifice to cancel guilt!
None shall ever be confounded
Who on Him their hope have built.
—Thomas Kelly, 1769-1855

CHAPTER

1

An ear-piercing shriek woke Grace Neunaber out of a dead sleep, and she groaned as she checked the time. Four seventeen. Next to her, David stirred and mumbled into his pillow, “Evelyn this time?”

Grace sighed wearily. “Yes. When will their antibiotics kick in? Charlotte was just up an hour ago. They’re going to wake up Katie too.” She didn’t make a move to get out of bed, secretly hoping David would offer this time, but her husband didn’t move a muscle. Rolling her eyes, she asked, “Would it kill you to get up with them *once*?” It had been eight months since the household had grown to include an additional three infants and a puppy, and it was taking its toll.

“You’re better at it than I am,” he replied sleepily. “Besides, I have a job to get to in the morning.”

Her anger flared. “While I sit in the lap of luxury at home, sipping wine and eating bonbons? No, David, I am busy all day long taking care of *your* children, so don’t you dare insinuate that I don’t have a job! I am drowning in the work involved in the upkeep of this house, and it’s still a mess! Most days I don’t even get out of my PJs or comb my hair until the girls are down for a nap. And my perpetual lack of sleep is not helping.

I'm turning into a crazy woman!"

By now, Charlotte was wailing along with her sister, and Katie in the next room over was starting to whimper in her sleep as well.

"Fine! I'm up!" David shot back. "Who do you want me to get?"

"Forget it," Grace said coldly, throwing the covers off. "I've got it."

"No, I'll come," he sulked. "I'm awake anyhow."

Both sullenly padded across the hall to their twin daughters' room. Grace walked over to Evelyn and let David deal with Charlotte, who was a fussier baby anyhow. *Serves him right*, she thought resentfully. *This is what I deal with all the time.*

They calmed the babies in silence, their shushing the only sound as the girls' fussing died down. Grace rocked Evelyn and rested her head against the cushion as she did so, closing her eyes for a brief respite. *Ah, parenthood*, she thought caustically. *It'll be the death of me yet.*

A mere hour and a half later, Grace dragged herself out of bed to wake the rest of the household and help the kids get ready for school while David showered and got dressed.

Jackson came in like a whirlwind, as always. He tossed his backpack on the floor and rummaged frantically through it, papers flying everywhere. The boy certainly had a flair for the dramatic.

"Mom, you have to fill out this form! It's due today!" he said urgently as he located the wadded-up sheet he was seeking. "I can't go on the AR reward trip if you don't sign it!"

Grace was in her bathrobe, sitting between two high chairs as she took turns spooning baby food into the mouths of Evelyn and Charlotte.

“Jackson!” she admonished, looking at the form. “This is dated a week ago, and you’re just *now* giving it to me?”

“I forgot!” he protested as he poured cereal. “It’ll take you two minutes! Just do it, please?”

Gritting her teeth, she set aside the baby food and hastily scribbled the required information as Katie entered with a hairbrush and ponytail holder.

“Mommy, can you fix my hair?” she asked sweetly.

Grace looked at her first grader and sighed. The poor child had inherited her own thick, curly hair, and it was every bit as unmanageable. This morning her hair looked like a rat’s nest, which meant that she’d been tossing and turning during the night as usual.

“Get the detangling spray first,” she said, turning back to spoon a few bites of rice cereal into the mouths of Charlotte and Evelyn, who were smacking their hands on their trays in protest at not being fed.

Katie ran to do her mother’s bidding as Grace heard Freddie yell, “Watch out!”

Before anyone could react, their Labrador puppy came running in, her nails scuffling across the tile floor, getting muddy footprints all over. She jumped up and placed her front paws on the table, sniffing for anything she could find.

“Freddie!” Grace shrieked. “Get the dog out of here!”

“Sorry, Mom!” he called as he ran in after his puppy. Not for the first time, Grace wondered why they’d gotten the dog for Freddie’s birthday in the first place. After a few weeks of insanity, she had banned the dog to the fenced-in yard. It was Freddie’s job to feed her every morning, but sometimes he forgot to shut the door all the way, allowing the dog free access to the house.

“Pluto, come!” Since Pluto was nowhere near trained, she

ignored Freddie's command and continued to sniff for scraps of food. Jackson caught her by the collar and dragged her over to Freddie, who obediently led her out of the house again. Katie returned with the detangling spray, and Grace set to work on the laborious task of brushing her daughter's hair as David entered the kitchen.

"Just cereal this morning?" he asked. It was his usual question, but this morning it irked Grace, who was still smarting from their tiff a few hours before.

"Yes, David, *just* cereal today," she said. "I'm sorry I didn't have time for eggs Benedict. I'm a bit busy. *My* shift already started!"

"I'm just asking!" he returned. "For Pete's sake, you don't have to bite my head off."

Katie looked up fearfully. She hated conflict of any kind, and the tension in the air was palpable.

Freddie rejoined them and asked, "Uh, guys?"

"That's what married people do," Jackson informed his younger siblings knowingly. "They fight."

Grace winced at her fourteen-year-old's comment. This was not the way she wanted to send everyone off to school. But at the same time, she was still ticked at David. So rather than making a snide comeback, she chose to do the grownup thing. She gave everyone the silent treatment.

"Mom?" Faith entered the scene a few moments later, holding ten-month-old Griffin and sounding slightly panicked. "Can I have some wipes? I thought I had another box, but I can't find them anywhere. I need to put them in the diaper bag for Mrs. Sullivan. I've gotta leave. Aaron needs to be at school early today."

Grace stifled another sigh. While she was thankful that Aaron was such a supportive boyfriend for not being Griffin's

father, it was difficult to work around yet one more schedule.

“Sure, sweetie,” she responded. “There should be a few extra boxes on the shelf of the changing table.”

“Thanks,” called Faith over her shoulder as she hurried upstairs.

“Did you eat anything?” Grace shouted after her.

“No,” she yelled back. “I didn’t have time. I’ll grab something at Aaron’s house.”

“Be sure you do! You shouldn’t skip breakfast!”

An uneasy silence now fell over the rest of them as David and Grace continued to ignore each other. Faith bustled out the door, calling goodbyes to everyone, and then Jackson rushed to get his backpack so he could make it out in time for the bus.

After Jackson left, David attempted to be cheery as he said, “Okay, Freddie and Katie, we’ve gotta go too. I need to get to the office. In the car on the double.” David hustled the two out the door, pausing to give Grace an obligatory kiss, which she reluctantly accepted.

In the relative silence of the house, Grace shook her head. She was about to go crazy, no question about it.

When her phone rang that afternoon at two thirty, Grace rolled her eyes. It was David’s ringtone. *He’d better be calling to apologize*, she thought, miffed that he hadn’t called sooner. This was the only time of day she had to herself, when the girls were down for their naps. Although she supposed she should make better use of this time by cleaning or folding laundry, all she could usually accomplish was taking a shower, clearing the table from breakfast and lunch dishes, and loading the dishwasher. The house was a complete disaster, and she knew she could make more of an effort while the girls napped, but

she just didn't have the energy to do it.

"What?" she answered.

"Well, hi to you too," David replied on the other end, his voice tight.

She took a deep breath. Already this was starting off badly. "I'm sorry," she said. "That was rude. How are you?"

"Not great. I don't have time to explain right now, but could you pick up Katie and Freddie in the car line today? Something came up, and I'll be delayed."

"David! I'm not even remotely ready to leave the house!"

"You have half an hour. That's plenty of time."

"The girls are still sleeping! They need this! They missed their naps completely yesterday because we were at the doctor for their ear infections. The medicine is finally kicking in, and they're having good naps now. I don't want to wake them up if I don't have to."

"I know it's inconvenient, but I take Katie and Freddie home the vast majority of the time. Please, Grace. Just for today."

"Why can't they just do after-school care like they usually do when you have to stay for a few minutes?" She hated how whiny her voice sounded even to her own ears.

"Grace, I can't explain right now! I don't know how late I'll be!"

"David—"

"Yes or no?" he interrupted.

"Oh, *fine*," she grouched. "I'll do it. But I'm not happy about it."

"Noted. See you later."

With that, he hung up, leaving Grace to pout on the couch. Now she'd have to get herself ready, wake the twins, strap both the girls into their car seats, and drive the two miles to school

to wait in the infernal car line. Neither Evelyn nor Charlotte was particularly patient in the car, so they'd likely whine the entire time. *What's so important for him, anyhow?* she thought resentfully. *Does he even care what an inconvenience this is for me?*

Groaning, she rose from the couch and stepped over the baby toys on the floor to go to her room and yank a pick through her tight black curls. Evelyn was waking up on her own, but sure enough, she had to wake Charlotte up and drag them both to school in bad moods. She stewed about how inconsiderate David was the rest of the afternoon until he walked in the door at four fifty.

"How kind of you to grace us with your presence," she remarked snidely. "Mind telling me what's going on?"

She saw the muscles work in his jaw, a sign that he was trying not to lose his patience. "Later," he said shortly, then walked upstairs to their room.

Grace could tell her husband's mind was a million miles away the rest of the evening, though she wasn't sure if it was because of the tension between them or something else. She hated that they were acting this way to one another, and she hated even more that the kids were witnessing it. But she was too stubborn to make the first move toward reconciliation, so she told herself she'd wait to speak with him in private rather than trying to patch things up in front of the kids.

But she couldn't avoid him forever, and she *was* curious about what had "come up" with him that afternoon, so she seized the opportunity when they put the twins to bed and the other kids were occupied. As she and David slipped out of the girls' room, she grabbed his hand and led him across the hallway to their own room. Shutting the door behind them, she fixed him with a hard stare and demanded, "Okay, David,

what is going on?”

He motioned for her to take a seat on their bed as he ran his hand over his short hair, a gesture Grace recognized as his nervous habit. This only served to make her more apprehensive. She perched gingerly on the bed as he stretched himself out on his own side. He took off his glasses and put them on the nightstand deliberately.

“David! Just tell me already, would you? What’s wrong?”

He looked straight up at the ceiling and said in a monotone voice, “I have a call.”

Sucking in a sharp breath, Grace searched his face for any hint of emotion, but there was none. It was his perfect poker face, but it irritated Grace. She wanted to know what he was thinking.

“You mean, a job offer at a new school?” she asked timidly, although she already knew the answer.

“Yes.”

“As principal?”

“Yes.”

Grace shut her eyes. She had no idea how the call process worked in the Lutheran school system. David had already taken the call to St. John when she’d met him four years ago, so she hadn’t been privy to any of the decision making that accompanied a call.

“Where?”

“St. Louis.”

The blood drained from her face, and she asked, “Missouri or Michigan?” It was a ridiculous question. Few people outside the state even knew there *was* a St. Louis in Michigan.

“What do you think?” he snorted. “Missouri, of course.”

Heat rose to her cheeks. “You don’t need to be snippy with me. I’m just clarifying.”

He inhaled deeply and held his breath for a second before releasing it slowly. "I'm sorry. It's been a long day. Yes, St. Louis, Missouri."

"So what does this mean?" Grace could hear her voice rising in pitch. "Do they just assign you there or can you say no? You don't have to take it, do you?"

David pushed himself to a sitting position. "No, I don't *have* to take the call."

Grace breathed a little easier. He could turn down the offer. *Relax, Grace. There's no way David would uproot our entire family. Maybe he's already told them—*

"I told them I'd give it prayerful consideration and get back to them." David's voice interrupted her thoughts.

"So we're moving to St. Louis?" The tightness in her chest returned.

"I didn't say that!" David sounded exasperated now. "I told them I'd take a few weeks to pray about it before deciding anything. It looks like a great opportunity from my initial impression. I had a conference call with a few members of their school board and their senior pastor today, and it went really well."

"Senior pastor," Grace said dully, the knot in her stomach growing tighter by the minute. "That sounds like a bigger congregation, then."

"It is. It's about twice the size of St. John. Pretty big school in Lutheran terms. Two classrooms per grade. I'd have my own secretary and an assistant principal."

"*What?*" Grace was fighting genuine panic now. There was no way David could resist a call that tempting. "David, I am *not* moving to St. Louis!"

"That's really not your decision to make."

"Well, thank you very much, *dear,*" she spat back. "I'd like

to think I have a *little* say in where we live! I don't want to drag this family across the country so you can have a staff!"

David's patience had worn thin as well. "It's seven hours away, Grace, hardly across the country. We could make that trip in a day. And besides, this is not about you! This is *my* career we're talking about!"

"Listen to yourself, David! You also have a family to consider, remember? Someone here has to be the voice of reason! We haven't even been in this house a whole year yet! We have twins who are eight months old. We have two mortgages already. And now you're suggesting we pack up and move again? Seven hours away? I'm barely hanging onto my sanity as it is, and that's *with* the help of my family! What do you expect me to do down there when I need help with child care?"

Tears sprang to her eyes as another thought occurred to her. "And what about Faith? She's going to be staying with Liv and Andy while she goes to college. We'd never see her or Griffin at all if we moved. Don't you care to see your own grandson?"

"Oh, my *word!* Grace, I haven't accepted the call! You make it sound like I'm the bad guy here, trying to whisk you away from your family. Don't you think I haven't already thought of all the things you just mentioned? I *know* this is a shock. One of my college classmates is a teacher down there, and he submitted my name. They called to interview me about it two weeks ago, and—"

"Whoa, wait! What? So you've known about this for *two weeks* and you're just now telling me this? David!" She was both dismayed and angry. "Since when do we keep secrets from each other? Especially if they involve, oh, I don't know, *moving our family halfway across the country?*"

David spoke through clenched teeth. "*This* is why I didn't

tell you sooner, Grace. This conversation right here. I *knew* you wouldn't be happy about it. An interview is one thing. They interview half a dozen people for the job. Maybe more. So just because I had an interview doesn't mean I'll get the call. I didn't want to tell you anything and make you fret unless they ended up extending the call to me. Well, they did, so here we are."

"At least I would have had time to get used to the idea. *This*, on the other hand, is like getting hit with a ton of bricks. I'm completely blindsided by it. I do *not* want to move. Especially not to St. Louis."

"You know what? This is a great opportunity for me. Honestly, I don't even know what to think yet. Yes, it would be a challenge for sure. But can't you at least be slightly encouraging? They must have a lot of confidence in me and my abilities to handle this big of a school. *You*, on the other hand, apparently do not have that same confidence."

He launched himself off the bed and strode quickly from the room in a huff, leaving Grace in tears. She was fuming at David, but she was also terrified. The absolute last thing she wanted to do was move now. Yes, she knew when she'd married David that he wasn't guaranteed to stay in Mapleport forever. But honestly, was it too much to ask that he at least stay a few more years? She was barely making it through the twins' infancy as it was. Suddenly she found herself wishing that David wasn't such a good principal after all.