The background is a light peach color. It features decorative elements including dark grey scrollwork, a pink flower with a black center, and a dotted line with small red starburst shapes. The text is centered and written in a purple, cursive font.

*Faith,  
Hope,  
Love  
Series*

RaeBeth McGee-Buda

RAEBETH MCGEE-BUDA

*Faith, Hope,  
And Love  
Series*

RaeBeth McGee-Buda

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Scripture taken from the New King James Version®

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# **CONTENTS**

## **~FAITH IN ACTION~**

What is Faith?  
A Mustard Seed  
Questioning  
Waiting  
Strength

## **~POWER OF HOPE~**

What is hope?  
Finding Hope  
Embracing Hope  
Reclaiming Hope

## **~POWER OF LOVE~**

Christian Virtues  
Unconditional  
Limitless  
Forgiveness  
Openness

## AUTHOR NOTE

You can find the original posts to each step in this series on the author's blog.



What is Faith?

**Faith.**



I asked today on my Facebook page, what does faith mean to you?

Here are my thoughts to this question:

Life. Faith to me means life. In today's world, many claim they have faith and are living a life full of faith. To some, it's a bonus to living with Christ. It's something that's optional or completely misunderstood. I have seen this. I have told others who I have seen going through trying times to have faith. They've responded, "I have faith but..."

**NO!! STOP!!**

There aren't any BUT'S in faith.

When one has faith, they turn EVERYTHING, every worry, fears, and all anxiety to Him. Everything. They take their issues directly to the Lord and ask for the help, strength, and wisdom to get through whatever it is they're facing. Then, they LET IT GO!! Once you give it to God, don't look back. Don't worry about it. Don't give into the whispers to the ears from the enemy.

Faith isn't perfected overnight. It's an ongoing process that EVERY Christian must work on. I don't believe anyone has perfect faith because if that were the case.... then, they'd be right there beside Christ.



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Faith is an important part of the life of a Christian. It's vital to our walk. My faith helps make the world around me make sense. It shows me that no matter what I'm facing, God is with me and HE knows what's going to happen, so I don't need to worry about the ending. I know this because I'm His child and He will take care of me. Everything will happen according to his plan.

Faith is my identity and way of life. I may struggle with it at times but when I catch myself not showing faith, I pull the reins and pull my faith back.

Faith is a form of trust in the Lord when you can't actually see Him. It's given just as love is, unconditionally.

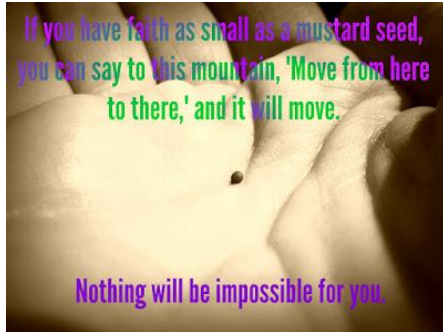
Faith isn't stepping into a situation and having doubt. When faced with a difficult situation, one must fully rely on God. They can't claim that they have faith if they let worry, anxiousness, fear, doubt, or any other negative feelings in. When one has faith, they let go and let God. Then, they don't worry about the situation again because God **WILL** take care of it.

## A Mustard Seed

*He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. - Luke 17:6*

I'm sure you have heard this verse many times before but have you ever stopped to truly see what it means for us today? First let's take a look at the mustard seed.

Look at how  
TINY a mustard  
seed is----->



It's so small that you can hardly see it when holding it. This is the point of faith. It only takes a tiny bit and we can move mountains through God. How amazing is that?

Faith wasn't something that was easy for me to come

by and I do find myself struggling with it at times. I mean I am only human. However, when I feel my faith wavering, I stop to think of this verse and what Jesus told his apostles. When I start doubting, I remember Jesus telling the apostles that they needed to increase their faith.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that birds come and perch in its branches. (*Matthew 13: 31-32*)

We are God's creation, his family, sons and daughters. We have been commissioned as Saints. We are to walk the earth as we proclaim of His return. If we believe and have faith, we can do wonders within this world through Jesus Christ.

When we have faith, it's a hard road. I'm not saying it's going to be easy, however just the smallest bit of faith can be grown through our dedication and love toward Christ. If we devote our time to reading His word like we devote to checking our Facebook page, just imagine all of the things we can do for Christ!!

But most of all, we NEED to put our faith in Christ. He said that he would never leave us, even when times are tough or when we sin. He still loves us. I know how rough life can get. I've been through so much which was designed to ruffle my feathers and it tested my faith. However, in my darkest moments, Jesus was there for me. He listened to my cries and answered my prayers.

Let me tell you about how my faith started with Jesus.

I was at the lowest of lows. My soul was crushed and shattered. I was planning the one thing in life I never imagined that I'd have to do. I was hurting because of the death/burial of my infant daughter. She was born still, forever sleeping, or some may recognize it as a stillbirth. I was lost, damaged, and depressed.

On this particular day, I was alone at home. My husband was at work and my oldest daughter was in school. I was supposed to be picking up the house and doing my daily chores. However, instead of doing my wifely duties, I sat in the corner of my living room, worship music blasting through the speakers of my computer while I held on to the only thing I had left of

her; her hospital blanket.

I remember standing up, walking to the center of the room, and crying out to God. I went weak in the knees and dropped to the floor. While praying, I asked God, "Why?" I did a bunch of unrecognizable rambles through my screams of pain and heartbreak.

Then, the most unexpected thing happened. My music stopped in mid-song. Then the computer jumped to another song on the list. (Phil Collins "You'll Be in My Heart) started blasting through the room. Immediately, my sobs stopped. I turned to look at my computer and a strong peace filled the room. I felt comfort, love, and a renewed strength. That's when I knew that Jesus was with me. To this day, these words ring in my mind when I'm faced with difficulty:

*Come stop your crying*

*It will be alright*

*Just take my hand*

*Hold it tight*

*I will protect you*

*From all around you*

*I will be here*

RAEBETH MCGEE-BUDA

*Don't you cry*

*For one so small,  
You seem so strong  
My arms will hold you,  
Keep you safe and warm  
This bond between us  
Can't be broken  
I will be here  
Don't you cry*

I believe that these words are to me from Jesus. He was comforting me. He told me to stop crying and hold His hand because He was going to protect me from all that was going on around me. He was promising me that he wasn't going to leave me. To the world, I'm small but through Christ, He had made me strong. However, when I would feel the need to fall, His arms would catch me, keeping me safe and warm. That's where our bond grew and I knew it'd never be broken.

That day was the day that my mustard seed was watered and began to sprout in all directions.

Think about it: Is your faith that of a mustard seed

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that's waiting to be watered by Jesus so it can grow into something so profound, that it will change your life?

## Questioning



The meaning of faith, as mentioned on the start of this series, is a form of trust in the Lord when you can't actually see Him. It's given just as love is, unconditionally. There will be times in our walk with Christ where you'll have questions about Heaven, the Bible, and God. That's okay. When we ask questions and seek answers; we learn. I have been actively pursuing and growing my faith for several years now and I yearn to learn more. If you watch my morning routine, it includes reading my Bible and doing my



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devotionals. If you watch my afternoon routine, it involves more reading of the Bible. Lastly, if you watched my nightly routine, it includes even more reading of the Bible. I crave to learn more of God's word and his hopes for us.

However, I'm not a Biblical scholar by any means. As a matter of fact, I still have A LOT to learn.

I still find myself asking questions, as I believe we will ask them until the day the Lord takes us home.

... And that's okay!!

Just because we ask questions doesn't mean we are lacking in faith. It means that we are seeking to grow our faith in Christ and His word.

Since we are told to LIVE by faith, this means that in everything we do, it should involve Christ and we should be making a conscious decision to TRUST in His promises. We shouldn't ever stop asking questions, especially when it comes to our faith. To learn and grow, a child drives their parents crazy with questions during their young years. I believe that we should drive Jesus loopy with our questions to learn of His ways and His desires for us.

Therefore, DO NOT BE AFRAID TO ASK.

The Bible tells us,

*"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."* Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV): This is telling us to ASK!!

*What are you asking the Lord to help you learn to strengthen your faith?*

Waiting



Wait.

This is often a word that no one wants to hear.

Waiting can be difficult, especially when we desire something good in life.

For example, "As a child on Christmas Eve, we must wait for Christmas to arrive to dive into the pile of gifts laid out nicely for all."

As a child, it's hard for us to wait for joyous moments such as these. I remember a time when I was little where the value of waiting was too much. On Christmas Eve, my mother used to give me and my sisters one gift to open. We joyfully ran into the living room, sat down in anticipation, while my mom handed us these beautifully wrapped gifts. We tore off the wrapping to reveal what was inside. As I dropped the last of the wrapping paper on the floor, I noticed that the gift I held in my hands were different then what my sisters unwrapped. The two of them marveled at their new dolls while I held a knitted scarf and hat. They were beautiful, however, my next set of actions weren't. I threw the gift down and threw a fit because I didn't get a doll of my own. After my fit, I ran off to my room. In the haste of my fit, I didn't realize what my actions had done to my mom, who was excited for us to see what she worked so hard to get us.

In my mom's anger, she shuffled through the bits of gifts hidden in her room for the one she thought she grabbed and threw it at me. I came to find out that I did get a precious little doll from her but in her rush to

give these gifts; she grabbed the wrong one for me. Her feelings were hurt because I wasn't being grateful, nor did I wait to see what Christmas day would bring.

I remember this Christmas and the feelings that I felt afterward weren't pleasant. I felt guilty, sad, and I felt bad for not being grateful for what I had. I felt bad for what I did. If I had been grateful and waited, I would have found out the next day that my mom got me a doll too. That was the year that I ruined Christmas for my family. If I would have waited, I wouldn't have broken my mom's heart, stole the joy from the season, and I could have saved myself my own heartache.

Our relationship with God and faith is just that... waiting. Sometimes when we ask God for things, we take His response as Him not answering our prayers or ignoring us. That is not the case. We need to have faith when we take things to God in prayer that He will answer them according to His will. Perhaps God did answer your prayer and it was a simple "no" or "not yet?"

When we are praying, we need to wait patiently and have faith that God will answer us in His time and in the way He sees is best for us. Sometimes when He says no, we later find out that it was, in fact, better for

us. Therefore don't let the enemy to persuade you that God is deaf to your prayers or ignoring you because **HE'S NOT!**

I believe that waiting is God's way of testing our faith and helping us to grow in our faith. Therefore, the next time you feel you're in the waiting period, thank God for the waiting moment and see what blessing He's trying to show you.

# Strength

Isaiah 40:31

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.



When we know the meaning of faith, have a tiny bit of faith, continue to grow our faith through questions, be content in waiting, and rely on God, we are

building our strength in faith. This means that even though we walk in a dark world if we build up ourselves by taking in the Word of God, we will be ready to overcome any battle we may face.

Each Christian in this world is weak compared to God. This is why we must lean on Him and allow Him to direct our steps. We are not perfect and this is a gift when realized. We need to realize that we need God and His love and mercy.

The best way we can strengthen our faith is to practice our faith. This means that we let go of our worries, fears, anxiety, and sadness by handing it over to Jesus. Once we pray for His will to be done and we allow God the opportunity to take these things from us, we need to remember to LET IT GO! That doesn't mean to pray about it and continue on with these negative feelings. That means once you pray, move on to something that is worth your time and energy.

\*\*\*\*

*We are now in the last part of the Faith in Action Blog Series. Thank you for following along and I pray that you see your faith in a different light and see just how important it is to have faith as a child of God.*



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*If you enjoyed this series, please send me a little note telling me what it was that you enjoyed so much and keep an eye out for my next blog series.*

*God Bless*

# **POWER OF HOPE**

## What is hope?

Perhaps you're in a dark, scary place in your life.

Nothing is going right and everything seems to be falling apart.

Life is chucking everything at you at once and you're being to feel defeated.

Maybe it feels like you're being tossed around in this tornado of a life.



Maybe it feels like the floor of life has dropped out from underneath your feet and you feel as if you're

free falling and at any moment the thud will come.

Just hang on...

...there's still hope.

We were promised this.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

### **What is hope exactly?**

First, let's see what the dictionary says about hope:

*(Noun) a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen;*

*A feeling of trust;*

*(Verb) want something to happen or be the case.*

I believe that hope is eternal. We always hope for better things than what we have or for the things we want. In a way, hope is faith for the future.

When things are going crazy in our lives, sickness hits

home, or a disaster hits our country, we hope that things will get better and our future will be brighter. Hope is something that we search for, something that is desired, a fulfilled promise of something good.

If you think about it, hope is something much deeper. I believe that hope co-sides with faith. Without faith, hope is nonexistent. When we have hope, we are expecting that what we believe and are waiting for will happen, as Christians this is in God's perfect timing.

In a world of so much chaos and negativity toward God, we need to be careful that we don't allow ourselves to slide into the turmoil. The belief in God gives us hope that there will be better things to come.

Therefore, I ask you, Reader...  
How do you define hope?

## Finding Hope

In a world where being strong, independent, and bold takes the stand. It can leave us feeling beaten and battered when we come to a standstill because of an unforeseen circumstance that leaves life with uncertain plans. We encounter times in our lives that try to weaken us and make us feel that it's hopeless.



However, as Christians we don't have to worry about the situations we face because God has our backs. *Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and hope."*

I believe that faith and hope intertwined with one another. I see faith in the now and hope in the future. For if we have hope for our future, especially if Jesus is walking beside us, the down right exhausting parts of life won't get us down. **Everyone who allows Christ to guide their footsteps is guaranteeing themselves for a better future and a forgiven past!**

But, how is it that we find this hope that I speak of?

How is it that we hold this hope close to our hearts when life has us so overwhelmed and uncertain?

Finding hope when we have hit rock bottom in life can be a tricky one but I'm here to tell you **that it IS POSSIBLE!!!**

First, I want you to completely forget anything that is causing you to stress or worry. Clear the mind of all these negative things. Now, think of the times in your life where you have done something amazing. For me,

I believe it's absolutely amazing that I have **managed to push forward into year three without** my daughter. To live without a child is hard, however the most amazing part of this is that I had hope in Christ that things would (are) getting better. I love thinking of the ideas and plans that the Lord has set up for me because I know it'll all be worth it in the end. Now, if only we can ALWAYS think this way. It's hard but if we change our mindset to see the beauty in the hard times, the blessings when all seems lost, and the joy that is to come, we can grasp onto hope and ride this life with ease.

Another way to find hope is to read God's word on a daily basis. How can we fight the battles we face if we aren't equipped with the gear needed? The things we need in order to face and destroy the enemy in his tracks are in the Bible. I use the Bible App on my phone to help with this. If you're not sure of the app I'm talking about, go to the app store on whichever device you have and look it up. This app comes equipped with daily reading plans to help you stay on track and prepare for the battle of daily life.

In addition to finding hope within the Bible, we should allow ourselves to be surrounded by positive inspiration. If we surround ourselves with optimism... we're sure to always look toward the bright side of things before we focus on the negative.



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The power of hope is there. We just have to grab it and hold on tight.

## **Embracing Hope**

When we show faith, we're showing we have hope for our future.

We are showing we're strong enough to let go of what was to embrace what is and what will be.

In order for us to find and embrace hope, we need to let go of the control we want for our lives and hand it over to God. He's in control and I promise that He will do what is best for our lives. All will go according to His divine and wonderful plan.



When we are embracing hope, we are embracing Jesus. Jesus can be and will be our hope in the future. When we take a hold of His hand and we allow Him to lead us in this life, we can be assured that He will lead us to the satisfaction of our hope. He won't ever leave us behind.

When we embrace hope, we are embracing life!

Our stories are still unfolding, so don't judge life based on an unfinished chapter. Christ is not done with us, yet.

Even after losing my daughter in 2013, I have found a way to find and embrace hope in my future. I have endured pain, disappointment, and heartbreak, but I never let go of my hope. I fixed my eyes on Jesus because I know He will never fail me. As He will never fail you.

I believe I am a work in progress who is loved by The Most-High.

At times, the best fight we can give is to stand on our faith and push back with our hopes. But if we must fall, we should do so, directly to our knees to call out to the Lord in prayer. Our battles have already been made into victory by the cross. We can do the dance of victory because God has our backs. His grace, his love, his peace... will forever be restored within us when we reach out and embrace our hopes in Him.

**Are you ready to embrace your hope?**

## Reclaiming Hope

Life can get pretty stressful and chaotic. Right? I believe so.

If we don't take the opportunity to reclaim the peace, hope, and calmness life offers, we will eventually be weighed down by the negativity that surrounds us.



Let's take a look at the word reclaim.

**Reclaim** (v)

- To recover (substances) in a pure or usable form from refuse, discarded articles, etc.
- To **bring back to a preferable manner of living**, sound principles, ideas, etc.

The most important part of this definition is in bold: **bring back to a preferable manner of living!** In order to do this we take each part of this series and put them into play. Once we see what hope is and know the meaning, we can find it and embrace it. After we can reclaim it for our lives and live a life full of hope.

Our focus for the future is to look forward with faith and hopes that the Lord has something great in store for us. We need to live by the fact that the Lord promises us many things and He will come through.

For us to completely reclaim our hopes, we **HAVE** to lean on the Lord for guidance. Some may not understand, however, this is not for us to understand. We can have hope in our future because God is here with us. He wants us to live a full life of greatness. He has set us free and has given us the ability to reclaim that hope so that we may live a joyful life.

The Lord wants us to push away darkness and lies so we are not oppressed any longer. We are not to allow the spirits in the world to discourage or lie to us. Jesus is our hope in the dark times and we must reclaim this!

We are precious to Him. It takes one heck of a man to give up His life for those that He loves. This in itself should give you hope. He has joy and mercy in abundance to give us. We must not allow the mayhem or misery of the enemy to steal our faith, hope, and joy.

When life begins to feel hopeless, lift your eyes and look higher than this world. Look at Him. Look for Him. He is the One who has all power over heaven and earth. He is the one who reigns.

Reclaim your hope by believing that **YOU ARE WORTH IT!**

Reclaim your hope by knowing there is more to this life than what meets the eyes.

Reclaim your hope by prayer and calling upon the Lord.

Reclaim hope.  
Reclaim joy.

Reclaim peace.

**Reclaim your life!**

*Are you ready to reclaim your life by reclaiming hope  
in the future and in God?*



**Power  
Of  
Love**

## Christian Virtues

Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).



We are commanded by Christ to love in more than one verse in the Bible. The instruction to love is mentioned approximately 16 or 17 times, depending on which Bible version you are using. In fact, loving as a Christian isn't just a feeling; it's actually a lifestyle we should take very seriously. Jesus said we should love Him with all of our heart, mind, and soul. He mentioned this is the greatest commandment.

In a world full of malice, there's no better time than now to focus on the virtues of love as a Christian. Let's talk about love as a Christian for a moment. If you observe the world, you will see a lot of pride in the community and hate plastered all over the place. The

true meaning of love is slowly being destroyed right in front of us. This isn't how the Lord wanted His people to be. Love is indispensable and it's vital to the values of a true Christian.

God's love for His people is unconditional. This is proven in John 3:16; For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. We should be doing our best to show His love to the world through us. Love should be unconditional and pure. Pure love is acceptance and forgiveness of fellow Christians and the world around us. Jesus tells us to love ALL. He doesn't say that we should dislike, hate, or even frown upon anyone.

The will of God for us is to remain filled with the Holy Spirit, truth, and love. We are to be the love, joy, peace, kindness, faithful, gentle, and patient filled person so that the Lord may use us for His greater plan. How can He do this if we aren't doing our best to be Christ-like, which then opens us up to hear the whispers of God? In order to have the right relationships among those within our lives, we need to have the right relationship with God by following His Word and direction. If not, this could be a big hindrance with our personal relationship with God.

There is no one person in this world that is free of sin. We all have sinned. Jesus was/is one who lived a

sinless life and loves us so much. Why shouldn't we show our love for Him by displaying our love for others?

## Unconditional love.

Do you know the meaning of this...the *true* meaning?

Let's take a look at what the meaning of unconditional love is. It means to show affection without limitations or conditions. It's associated with true or complete love.

To love without conditions is a rare type of love that some believe takes a lifetime to find. Of course, if we have a relationship with Christ, we most certainly know how it feels to be loved unconditionally. Regardless of our past sins, Jesus loves us and even showed us this by the cross.

Another aspect of life where we find unconditional love is with our very own children. Thinking about it, there isn't anything in this world that my son or daughter could do that would make me love them any less. Yes, my daughter tests my limits at times but this doesn't change anything with the way I love her.

Now if we think about unconditional love towards our spouse... does this change any? Do you love your spouse regardless of what he/she has done and is forgiveness ever present within your marriage? I know when it comes to my husband; I will always love him

unconditionally and forgive him as I always have. My husband and I have been through so much that most would say would push us apart, however, once we got past it, we ended up being even closer.

Let's talk a bit more about this unconditional love I'm speaking of. I define it as caring for someone in a selfless way. This type of love is hard work for one to give or sustain in life. It's looking past all the flaws and failures. It's pushing the person forward when they feel as if they want to give up. It's standing by this person even when no one else will. It's genuine love that's tough and demanding on both parties and it's the one love that needs constant care.

This type of love is selfless, as I have mentioned above. Part of loving unconditionally is that we put others first. We aren't too quick to judge or dismiss them. We take the time to truly understand them and we want the best for them. Having a selfless type of love means that one doesn't try to figure out what's in it for them. They don't focus on their wants and desires.

God wants us to love others as He loves the church. This is the purest type of love there is. I'm always excited where the next step of unconditional love is going to take me.

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*How would you define unconditional love? Is it important to you? What would you add to this?*

I believe it should be because it's the best type of love one could ever experience.

## **Limitless**

The world can be a tough place to be. It's full of negativity and it's easy for people to hurt us or rub us the wrong way. It could be within the community during the work week, our family, friends, church, or even someone we encounter on an outing. Rude remarks can be exchanged. Someone could throw an insult while you're driving down the road. It could be someone who invaded our personal space. The encounters are limitless. However, regardless of any hurtful actions we encounter, it can knock us off our game and upset the entire day.

As a Christian, how do we go about these types of encounters with those challenging individuals? We're called love fully, love selflessly and without ceasing. Are we supposed to falsify a smile while grumbling on the inside? Are we supposed to completely disregard the situation and person altogether? How is it that we are supposed to respond to these kinds of circumstances?

We are supposed to love without limits. Let's define this. What does it really mean to love without limits? How is it that we're supposed to be truly kind to everyone, regardless of what they have done to us?





Having a limitless love is one where harmony, joy, peace, kindness, and happiness are present. It's nonjudgmental, compassionate, and open. Limitless love is not allowing anger to flare up when you're driving down the road and encounter someone who tries to provoke you; giving the middle finger, yelling out the window, cutting you off during driving. Instead, you give a sincere smile and pray to God that He touches that individual and move within their life. We pray for God to change their day and help them to push off anything the enemy is tempting them with.

Limitless love is not being greedy, self-indulgent, resentful, dishonest, or corrupted. One who has a limitless love will not hesitate to share with someone in need, even though you may have very little. It's someone who thinks about the well being of others without any inside motives. It's someone who always tells the truth, regardless of the way it may make you or another feel. It doesn't lie, cheat, or steal to get

ahead.

When someone truly has a limitless love, they love themselves. They don't indulge in anything harmful to destroy their body. They care for themselves in the best ways possible.

A person who exercises limitless love doesn't judge others based on who they are, what they believe, or what sins they have in their past. Limitless love is a never ending type of love that extends to all beings without prejudices.

How can we be a person with limitless love?

To help us build this type of compassionate love, first we must seek God. We seek Him in each and every situation we encounter. We talk to Him without stopping. We pray. We ask Him to intervene in the situation and give us the ability to interact with difficult people or we ask Him to help us know what it is we need to know in order to love limitlessly. While praying, we consult His word. The Bible is full of wisdom and strength. It's full of compassion and direction for us. Without learning God's words, how can we be ready to battle the enemy who seeks to destroy us?

Remember when we encounter those who are difficult,

keep in mind that there maybe something steaming from the negativity. Perhaps a family member of theirs passed away. Or they are overwhelmed with anxiety or feel lost. If we take a moment to consider what this person's story is, maybe we won't be so quick to anger, judgments, and we will be quicker to understand.

When we find ourselves being tempted and not expressing our limitless love, we could always take a moment of silence. If we wait before we speak, we can stop any harmful words from stumbling from our mouths to cause any other ill feelings. We should always try to speak with wisdom, kindness, and love.

For us to embrace limitless love, we should be open to constructive criticism. This is a good way to learn what bad habits we have and may not see them. Most of the time, the criticism is entangled with truth, which can help us be a person with limitless love. Ephesians 4:32 puts it great: "Be kind to each another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you."

So, push away the grudges and keep to love. Jesus extends His grace to you, as you should to those around you. Jesus is the reason we can love so fully, joyfully, and freely. Therefore, we should take heed to Christ and love with respect, kindness, and

compassion.

*What is limitless love to you?*

## Forgiveness

1 John 1:8-9 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We can't love unconditionally, fully, or limitless if we are bond by un-forgiveness. This means that if we hold grudges against those who cross us wrong, we are not loving as Christ calls us to do. If we practice forgiveness, I fully believe that God will extend His grace to us.

Think about it: If God can fully forgive us for our sins, we should be able to forgive those who have wronged us. Jesus even forgave over and over in the Bible. Forgiveness is a fundamental part of our faith. Each time we openheartedly forgive those around us, we are growing closer to God. When we extend grace to though around us, we're showing these people God's grace and love.

Matthew 6:14 tells us, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you."

We are required to forgive. That doesn't mean for the time or until something happens again. That doesn't mean we say we forgive the person but won't

forget. We take these circumstances and we learn from them. We grow with them. There isn't a set amount on how many times we must forgive someone for hurting us. I believe that Christ would want us to continually forgive them and not hold it against them. We are not called to judge the sins of others. Leave that part to God. We should forgive and extend compassion to those who hurt us, regardless of how many times they have done it.

When we choose to hang on to the hurts, we are opening ourselves up to bitterness, resentment, and disgust. These are not attributes of a Christian. How can we call ourselves a Christian if we allow these things into our hearts. (1 John 4:20)

Are there people who you need to forgive and extend grace to?

I know were a few for me before I sat down to write this, they came to mind. I have openly forgave them for the hurtful words and actions.

Perhaps you should do the same!

## Openness

Openness when it comes to love is when we open our hearts to allow God in and all Him to do what He needs to through us. At one time or another, you'll ask *"How is it that I can be the person the Lord planned me to be?"* At times, I'm right there with you.

I found that in order for us to be the person we are called to be, we need to strive to be more every day. We need to learn how to live out the greatest commandment the Lord has set for us.

**1 Corinthians 13:13** says, *"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."*

As a Christian, we were chosen by the Lord and He loves us. We must remember that God is a God of love and He has always loved us before we even had the chance to love Him. The apostle John tells us a bit about this. In Exodus 34:6 he tells us about God. He says, "...The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth," By this verse, we see that love is WHO God is and not what He does. I believe that this tells us that this is what God desires from us. He wants us to be the most abundant thing from His children. In 1 John 4:19 it says, "We love Him because He loved us

first."

When we love with such openness, it has the power to strengthen our faith and that gives us hope. Loving God should be our first priority in life. That means...we should hold God FIRST. This is before our children and spouse. Loving him means with every fiber of us; our heart, soul, mind, and overall being. Our relationship with Christ should be as solid as a rock and not that of moss. We shouldn't have a mushy, spotty relationship with Him.

Opening ourselves to loving God isn't something that is optional as a Christian. Our love for Christ is the most important and wholeheartedly thing we must do. If we open us to God, we will see Him work wonders in our lives and blessings will pour in like the rain.

### *How do we open ourselves to Him?*

We devote our time to Him. We open ourselves fully to Him in prayer. Every aspect of our lives should be talked about in prayer; the good and the bad. We have a tendency to jump to prayer when things in our lives are going wrong. We don't have a problem asking for help, strength, support, or just a plain out blessing. I have seen it time and time again. As I praised God for answering a prayer, He was showing me something more to this plan of His that I am seeking.



As an example, when I attended church on Feb. 7th, our Pastor said some powerful word, which I felt were directed towards me. Several times throughout the service, certain points felt as if it were God reaching out to me and telling me that my answers for my prayers are coming. I felt as if God told me to hang tight and let Him work. I'm a very impatient person and don't like waiting. I know... I know... that's just something we (Christians) do and sometimes it feels like it's a lot!

I love when this happens. Don't you?

It's like God is confirming that He's heard me. The openness that I have with Christ is amazing and I know that if you're not at that point yet, keep your faith because it's coming. He's about to extend His grace to you. Remember, our God is faithful to His promises and He will extend His love to you. All you have to do is reach out. As I have said time and time again, Jesus is a true gentleman. He won't force Himself on you. You must reach out to Him and tell Him that you love Him and allow Him to use you for the good of His plans.

*Are you ready to take that leap?*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rae-Beth McGee-Buda resides in the rolling hills of Farmington, West Virginia with her husband, daughter, and son.

She's been writing in some form her entire life, but her loving young sister, Audra McGee noticed her talent and gave her the reassurance she needed to start her writing career. After many months of deliberation, Rae-Beth decided to trust her sister's word and expand her short story into what we all know and love as The Silenced Series.

Rae-Beth is a mother to an angel in Heaven...Miss Dakota, whom she honored in Saying Goodbye without Saying Hello. Her goal for her books is to inspire and give hope. She is a Christian author, who firmly believes in God and incorporates her faith into some of her work.

Learn more about RaeBeth by visiting her website [here](#).