

Dear Open Door Family,

Christmas can be a time of joy for some and a time of discouragement or others. Many times how we see it is based on the things we have experienced or the things that we are currently going through in our own lives. This time of the year which normally brings me so much joy is different. Please do NOT misunderstand me I am thrilled and proud as I can be that Tascha and Kathryn are serving the Lord in Quito, Ecuador. But I miss them, I miss their laughter, and I miss the tears when we are moved by something, I miss the conversations we have, and the special times we spend together. Yes, I am thankful that God has called them and that they are serving Him but Christmas will be different without them. So these verses today were encouraging.

Psalm 42:5-6 (NLT) *Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I WILL put my HOPE in God! I WILL PRAISE him again - my Savior and my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I WILL REMEMBER you...*

I love the way the Psalmist honestly says what he is feeling. He is deeply discouraged, sad and down. But he does NOT stop with the statement of what he is feeling. He goes onto remind himself of what he should do. He goes on to make three statements of purpose. **I WILL put my hope in God, I WILL praise Him, I WILL remember You.** WHY? Why can the writer say I will Hope, Praise, and Remember even during the difficult things he is facing? After all he cannot control the circumstances; he cannot change the things that are happening all around him. However, he can CHOOSE to Believe and Trust God. He can DECIDE that he will put his TRUST in God’s promises. Many times life may feel like the waves of fear and doubt are crashing over us - vs. 7. But this writer reminds that ...each day the Lord pours His unfailing love upon us... vs.8. So he speaks of commitment when he says I will choose to HOPE in God, I will choose to PRAISE God, I will always seek to REMEMBER God - even during those times when nothing is going right and God FEELS like He is far, far away. My prayer is that this Christmas will be all you hoped it would be and that you will be full of joy as you PRAISE God for His wonderful gift. But then maybe you are going to be separated from those you love, or perhaps you will not be able to buy the gifts that you wish you could have. That is when it is important to REMEMBER God, to HOPE and Trust Him, and no matter what happens ALWAYS respond by PRAISING Him. May we see Christ Jesus and the HOPE and JOY only He can bring this Christmas.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank you that I can choose Hope and Joy no matter what. Thank You that we can share Tascha and Kathryn with others... Please give them Your Joy and Hope this Christmas. May we all worship YOU - You are worthy.

Pastor Mark Kieft

