

We all have hopes; we all wish for a better future. We're taught from early on to make a wish before blowing out the candle on a birthday cake, to find a 4 leaf clover and make a wish, and to make a wish if you get the biggest piece of wish bone after breaking it with someone else. I'm not sure why a broken wish bone would do us any good when it didn't do anything for the turkey. And of course, Jiminy Cricket sang a song called, "When you wish upon a star."

You can create your own wish list on line for birthday, baby, or wedding presents. There is even an online site where people can post some their wishes anonymously. Some of those wished include getting good news tomorrow, getting a hybrid and becoming a world famous prima ballerina. Many of the wishes deal with getting jobs, resolving financial problems, finding a friend or healing a broken relationship. ([www.qoqoa.com](http://www.qoqoa.com))

There is one thing we have to remember when it comes to our hopes and wishes. Our wishes don't all come true. You may or may not get what you want. Eventually our hopes for things will disappoint us. That is why we need something more than wishful thinking. We need someone to put our hope in and it needs to be the right one. The Right One is the Lord God. People will let us down, but God always keeps His promises. People may not have the time, the resources or the ability to help us, but everything is possible with God.

Sometimes it takes time for the hope to become a reality. The Bible has a lot of 40 day stories. It also has promises that sometimes took weeks, month, years or even longer to come true. Today I want to talk with you about how God has worked in as little as three days to give His people help and hope. In these situations we see a series of events take place that follow the same pattern: Day 1: things go bad. Day 2: a day of waiting when sometimes things seem worse. Day 3: God acts and offers hope.

That was the case with the children of Israel during the time of the Judges. The Israelites were liberated from slavery in Egypt by God and brought to the Promised Land by Moses. Then Joshua led them in the conquest of the land and called the people to faithfully to serve God. Of course they didn't. So in the time of the Judges, the people were attacked and harassed by other nations. This was before Saul, David or Solomon were crowned as kings and rulers of the people. One of Israel's main enemies were the Philistines. The account of one series of battles between Israel and the Philistines is record in 1 Samuel 4-6.

After losing a battle against the Philistines, the Elders of the people asked, **"Why did the LORD allow us to be defeated by the Philistines?"** Then they came up with an idea and said, **"Let's bring the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from Shiloh. If we carry it into battle with us, it will save us from our enemies."** (1 Samuel 4:3 NLT) The Ark of the Covenant was a symbol of God's presence among the Israelites. It contained the Ten Commandments and some of the manna from the wilderness. They thought of it as "God in the Box" that He would not allow to

be captured in battle. Of course you know what happened, the box was lost. Day 1: Bad News -- the Ark of the Covenant has been captured.

The Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant and put it in the temple of their idol Dagon and hold a feast to celebrate their victory. That night, after everyone left, something very strange happened. When the priest entered Dagon's temple on the morning of day 2, they discovered that the idol had fallen face down in front of the Ark. So they propped it back up. The Israelites were in shock, wondering what to do. They didn't realize on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day that God was at work. 1 Samuel tells us this about the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, **“But the next morning the same thing happened—Dagon had fallen face down before the Ark of the Lord again. This time his head and hands had broken off and were lying in the doorway. Only the trunk of his body was left intact.”** (1 Samuel 5:4 NLT) The third day is a day of hope. After that the Philistines returned the Ark to Israel.

There are a number of other examples in the Bible of God moving his people from despair to hope in three days. When Israel was afraid to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land, God said to them through Joshua, **“In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you.”** (Joshua 1:11 NLT) They did when God parted the waters of the Jordan to allow them to cross the river on dry land. When Israel was threatened with genocide, Queen Esther said that she would fast for three days before going to see the king to seek help for her people. The king welcomed her on the third day, listened to her warning and the Israelites were spared. Do you remember how long Jonah was in the belly of the big fish? Three days! The Prophet Hosea said, **“Come, let us return to the LORD ... After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.”** (Hosea 6:1-2) The 3<sup>rd</sup> day is God's day.

That is certainly true when it comes to Jesus. Even though Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and had compassion on the people who needed help, the religious elite of Israel hated Him. He didn't fit inside their box. Jesus refused to be a “God in the Box.” So they crucified Him. On the first day Jesus' dead body was buried. Talk about hopelessness. Things didn't get any better on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day when a Roman guard was posted at the tomb. But on the dawn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day everything changed because Jesus rose from the dead leaving an empty tomb behind. Jesus kept his promise. God the Father raised Him from the dead. Jesus is alive.

So what does this mean for you and me? It means that even when we go through tough times, when we have a bad day, we should not give up hoping in the Lord. Even if things appear to get worse and there appears to be no way out on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, remember that God can do everything. There was no way out of the tomb on Easter Sunday morning, but Jesus found a way out. Romans 8:28 tells us, **“We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”** (NLT) So don't ever give up hope. Put your hope in the Lord God. After all, the 3<sup>rd</sup> day is God's day! Amen.