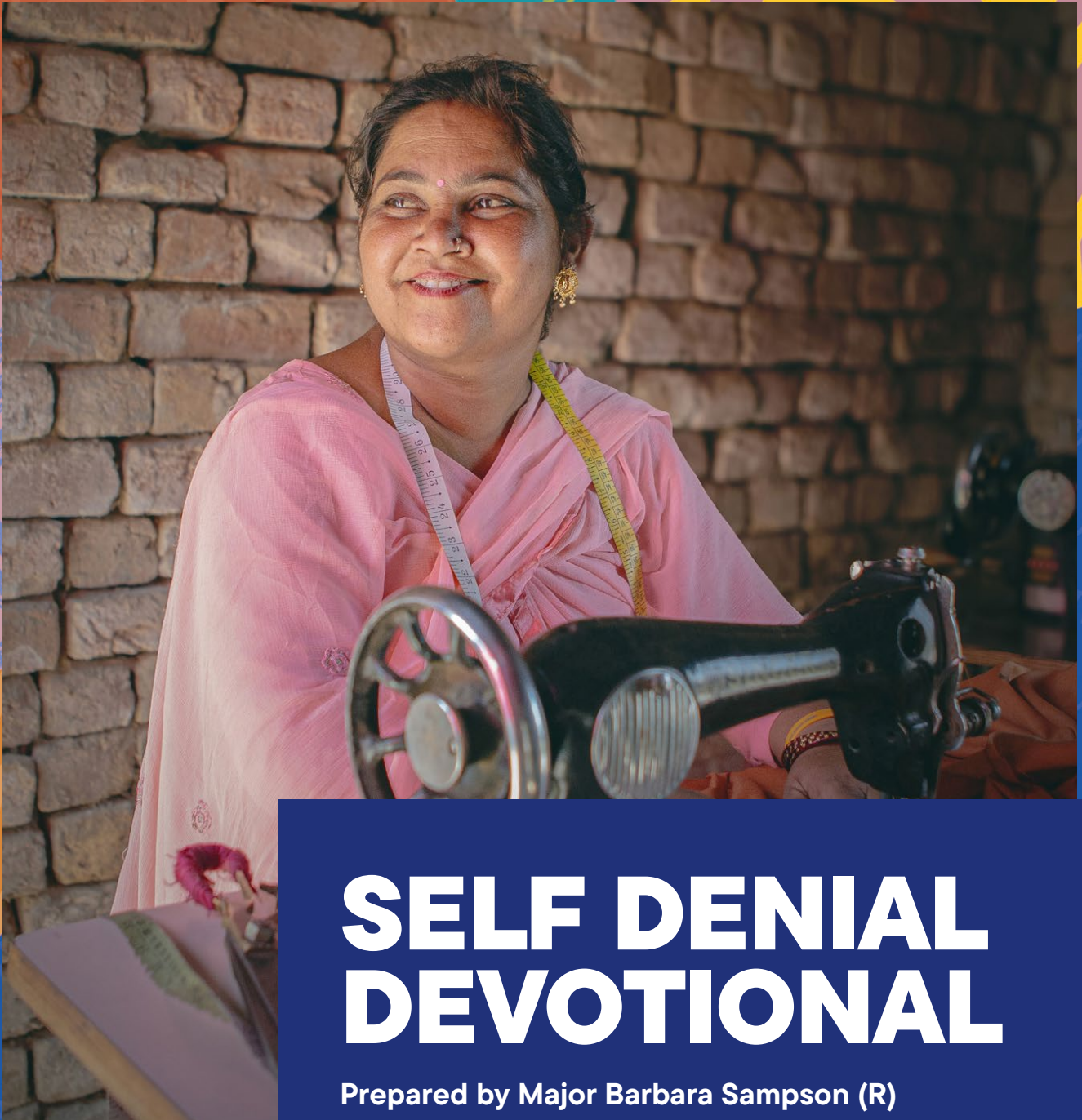


# HOPE REVEALED

SELF DENIAL 2025



## SELF DENIAL DEVOTIONAL

Prepared by Major Barbara Sampson (R)



BELIEVE IN GOOD



## LOVING THE QUESTIONS – LIVING THE HOPE

# WEEK 1: WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

*When we read the Bible, the Bible reads us. As we hear the questions put to individuals in the pages of Scripture, we hear them being put to us as well.*

### REFLECTION

Fresh from our commissioning as Salvation Army officers, my husband and I, with our two young children, headed off to our first appointment — in the very heart of Africa. This was our dream, our hope, our plan for a lifetime. But three years into the appointment, illness forced us to return home, carrying the broken fragments of that dream.

In settling into life back home we held onto God's promise that he knew the plans he had for us (*Jeremiah 29:11*) and we watched and marvelled at how God slowly fashioned new dreams, new opportunities for service out of those broken pieces. God, who knows every end from every beginning, was not daunted by our disappointment or our sense of failure. He knew what lay within us, opened a path ahead of us and gave us his peace.

After the prophet Elijah's great showdown against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, he was threatened by Jezebel and he fled "afraid ... for his life". In a desert place he lay down under a broom tree, told God he had had enough, and prayed that he might die. But God had not finished with Elijah. As the prophet stood at the mouth of a cave God asked him, "**What are you doing here, Elijah?**" (*1 Kings 19:9*). God was not done with Elijah. God had more in store for Elijah's life; more hope to reveal to his people.



## INVITATION

In this season of Self Denial within The Salvation Army, we may well hear God asking us the same question he put to Elijah at the mouth of the cave. What are you doing here in this season, in this place, with your unique resources? Whatever is happening in your life, wherever you are standing, God has given you this present moment “for such a time as this” (*Esther 4:14*). What will you do with it?

Are you trusting God and allowing him to fill you with his peace, that you might overflow with his hope?

---

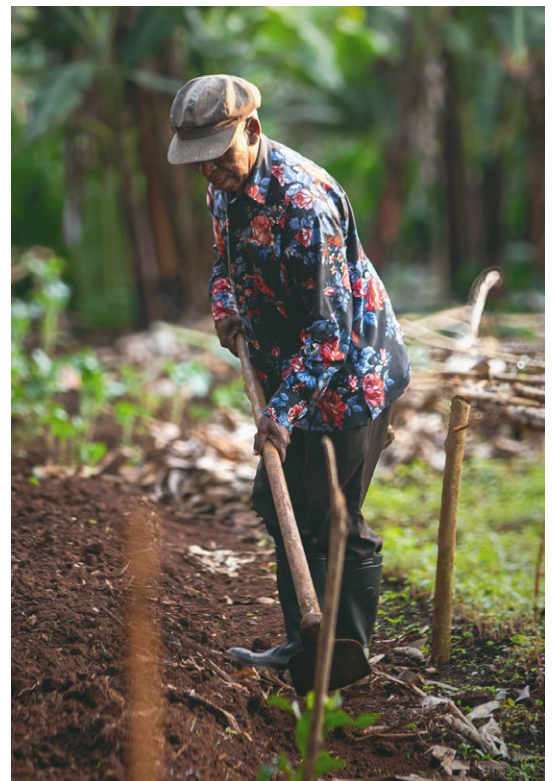
There is an old Christian tradition that every person comes into the world with a song to sing a message to deliver an act of love to offer. No one else can sing your song deliver your message or offer your act of love. These are entrusted only to you.

### Francis Dewar

---

Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (*Romans 15:13*). This verse is a promise for our Self Denial offering and a reminder of the hope to which we have been called.

**OUR OFFERING PLUS GOD’S BLESSING WILL BECOME A GIFT OF HOPE FOR MANY OTHERS.**





## LOVING THE QUESTIONS – LIVING THE HOPE

# WEEK 2: WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

*“When You said, “Seek My face,” My heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.”” – Psalm 27:8, NKJV*

### REFLECTION

I was about to start a new Salvation Army appointment, different from any other role I had ever had. Previous appointments had been with people who already knew the Lord, such as cadets in training or Salvationists in a corps.

But this appointment was with people coming fresh from prison — referred to us for community service, or needing help with budgeting, parenting or basic life skills. What could I do or say that might make a difference to people in these situations?

As I prayed, God led me to Psalm 27:8. “Your face, Lord, I will seek.” It was as if God was telling me to look, see and understand with his eyes and his compassion. So that is what I tried to do — look deeply into the faces of those who came for help. In the process, I discovered that God wears some strange disguises at times!

The unnamed Good Samaritan in Luke’s Gospel was my inspiration. On the road to Jericho, a traveller was beaten up and left for dead. A priest and then a Levite came by but, seeing the man, they hurried on their way. The Samaritan, by contrast, “saw ... took pity ... went ... bandaged ... poured ... put ... took care ... gave ... reimbursed.” With the eyes of compassion, this man saw the wounded fellow and did what he could to help.

This story comes in Scripture in response to someone who should have known better, testing Jesus with the question, **“Who is my neighbour?”** (Luke 10:29).



## INVITATION

This same question comes to us at this time of Self Denial. Who is my neighbour? It is the one I am urged to see, called to look out for, care for, and offer compassion and hope to. Maybe it is the one right in front of me, even the different, awkward, hard-to-love one, the one I may have called stranger until now. It is also the one in another country, the one I've never met or spoken to, but who God is calling me to sacrificially love because his Spirit knows no geographical bounds.

So we pray, Lord, please give us eyes to see others as you see them.

We may wonder  
Whom can I love and serve?  
Where is the face of God  
to whom I can pray?  
The answer is simple.  
That naked one  
That lonely one  
That unwanted one  
is my brother and my sister  
If we have no peace,  
it is because  
we have forgotten  
that we belong to each other.

### Mother Teresa



Are you walking in the peace that Mother Teresa spoke of and revealing the hope that your neighbours near and far can have too?

Our skin colour, complexion, facial features may all differ, but cut us and we will bleed, hit us and we will hurt. We may have surface differences, but we also hold many things in common. When we learn to see another as our neighbour, our brother or sister, then we may be looking into the very face of God.

Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (*Romans 15:13*). This verse is a promise for our Self Denial offering and a reminder of the hope to which we have been called.

**OUR GIVING PLUS GOD'S LOVE  
WILL TURN STRANGERS INTO  
BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**





## LOVING THE QUESTIONS – LIVING THE HOPE

# WEEK 3: DO YOU LOVE ME?

*“To love another person is to behold the face of God.” – Victor Hugo*

### REFLECTION

Love is a many-splendoured thing, so sang many of the old crooning stars. When applied to jelly and icecream, a favourite movie or a passing fad, love is just a surface fancy. But look into the face of a father in Tanzania, finally able to feed his family and send his children to school, or an elderly couple celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary, and you see a different kind of love.

In the Greek language there are four different words for love: natural, familial, protective love of a brother or sister (storge); passionate, romantic love between a committed couple (eros); affectionate, companionable love between friends (philia). Then there is agape, the love of God that tells a much deeper story. This is the unconditional, selfless, committed love that declares, “I will love you no matter what”.

On the beach after his resurrection, when Jesus spoke to Peter, he asked the hard love questions. Jesus had been waiting for Peter and some of the other disciples when they returned from a fish-less night’s work. Their nets were empty, their minds and bodies weary, their muscles no doubt aching. Summing up the situation, Jesus told them to throw

out their nets on the other side of the boat. A strange command, given that they were the expert fishermen. But they obeyed and then had to haul in a catch bigger than they had ever seen before.

Breakfast by the fire followed — bread and fish cooked and handed around in a simple act of communion. Afterwards, Jesus spoke to Peter (*John 21:15-17*), asking him three times if he loved him. The first and second time he used the word agape. “Do you love me with that kind of love, Peter?” And the disciple replied, “Of course, Lord, you know that I do.” The third time Jesus used the word philia. “Are you my friend, Peter?” “You know that I am,” the disciple replied.

The whole scene is evocative. Think back to a courtyard just before Jesus’ crucifixion. Remember Peter’s three denials by a fire. Feel his shame and remorse. Now another day, after the resurrection, by a fire on the beach, three questions, three replies. This is the mathematics of forgiveness! This is Peter’s reinstatement, his new commissioning. Jesus tells him to feed and take care of the sheep — those who will follow Jesus as Lord and Master.



## INVITATION

As we read this story in John 21 it may well read us. There are times when Jesus poses the same hard question to us. **“Do you love me,** (insert your name here)? Now go and do what you can to feed, nurture and care for those I have given you.” This year’s Self Denial Appeal gives us the perfect opportunity to show what kind of love lies within us.

Do we have sacrificial love, that sees a stranger overseas as a brother or sister in need of hope?

Are we compelled by the agape love of God to give generously so that others can experience a new, hopeful beginning with Christ?

---

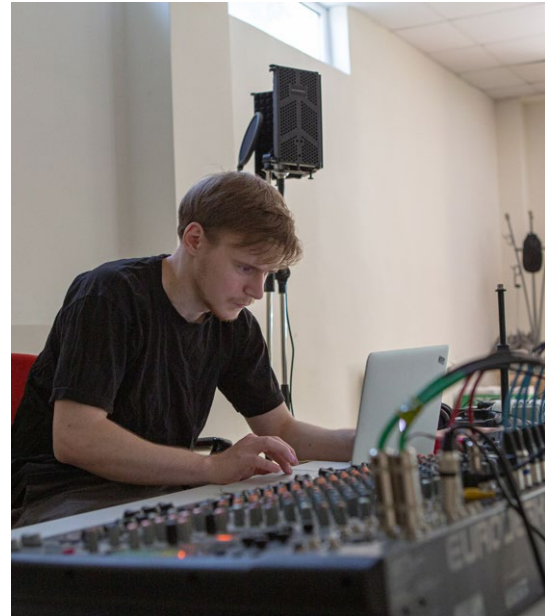
To love another person is to behold the face of God.

### Victor Hugo

---

Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (*Romans 15:13*). This verse is a promise for our Self Denial offering and a reminder of the hope to which we have been called.

**OUR RESPONSE PLUS  
GOD’S FORGIVENESS WILL  
RESULT IN HOPEFUL NEW  
BEGINNINGS FOR OTHERS.**





## LOVING THE QUESTIONS – LIVING THE HOPE

# WEEK 4: WHY ARE YOU SO AFRAID?

*“When my heart is faint and overwhelmed, lead me to the mighty, towering Rock of safety.” – Psalm 61:2, Living Bible*

### REFLECTION

It had been a full day of ministry — people, people, non-stop people with their non-stop needs. Jesus was exhausted. As the sun set, he murmured to his disciples, “Let’s get away to a quiet place where we can rest.” They all piled into the boat and headed across the lake. Almost immediately he was asleep, head on a pillow.

The disciples were seasoned fishermen but when a sudden squall hit, pouring water into the boat and threatening to sink it, they shook Jesus awake. “Teacher,” they yelled, “do something. We’re going to drown!” He stood and commanded the sea to calm down and suddenly it did. As he looked into their panicked faces he asked, **“Why are you so afraid?”**

They had no answer but later, quietly among themselves, they went over what had happened and marvelled at what he had done. “How did he do that? Who is he anyway?” (see Mark 4:35-41, paraphrased).

There are times when we too stand before an impossible situation and feel overwhelmed. What lies within us is nothing compared to what lies before and beyond us. An illness within the family, some tragic news, a tumultuous situation that threatens to swamp us. What to do? Where to turn? Can God help us in this matter?

How do we step into the peace that is ours through Jesus? How can hope be revealed in us when we face a difficult situation?





## INVITATION

The challenge of this season of Self Denial is to see the needs and hardships of others as a call on our attention and our giving. When we hear the stories of Ukrainian refugees separated from all that they know, parents struggling to provide essentials for their families in India and children begging on the streets of Georgia, we may feel confronted and overwhelmed. What to do? Where to turn? Can our giving to these or other needs make any difference at all? The truth is, it does make a difference. We see the hope in our Self Denial videos and have an opportunity to further that impact in other places.

The psalmist cried, “When my heart is faint and overwhelmed, lead me to the mighty, towering Rock of safety” (*Psalms 61:2, Living Bible*). God, the One who challenges us at this time also calls forth a trust that he alone can give us. When our prayers, our giving, our faith seem like nothing more than a drop in a vast ocean of need, remember that God notices the least, the lowest, the smallest gesture of kindness or sacrifice.

God doesn’t run out of joy or hope — he has enough to pour out over us so we can be full of joy and overflowing with hope. So why are we so afraid of trusting in God to provide for our needs? Why are we so afraid that our little will not do a lot? All he asks us to do is trust him.



---

It’s the open hands  
the letting go  
holding loose  
plunging in  
surrendering my all  
to his majesty  
and to the mystery  
of his provision  
and care

Can I trust him  
with my offering  
that seems so small  
can it make any difference  
for someone far away?

Maybe it will make  
the greatest difference  
not to the faceless  
‘they’ or ‘them over there’  
but to me myself  
right here  
right now

So what am I afraid of?  
Please help me God

**Barbara Sampson**

---

Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (*Romans 15:13*). This verse is a promise for our Self Denial offering and a reminder of the hope to which we have been called.

**OUR GIVING PLUS GOD’S “SO MUCH MORE”  
WILL DO FAR GREATER THINGS THAN WE COULD EVER IMAGINE.**





## LOVING THE QUESTIONS – LIVING THE HOPE

# WEEK 5: WHAT IS THAT IN YOUR HAND?

*“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,” – Ephesians 3:20, NKJV*

### REFLECTION

It is not just in moments of discouragement that we can ask ourselves the tough questions. “What difference do I make? What difference does my praying, my serving, my giving make? In the face of the world’s massive and unending need, why is it that what I am, what I do, what I give seems so small, so meagre?”

Thankfully, our God is not daunted by such questioning. In fact, he seems to ignore the ‘difference’ question altogether and poses another one to us: **“What is that in your hand?”**

This is the question put to Moses out the back of beyond near Horeb mountain. At that time Moses was tending his father-in-law’s sheep. Confronted with a bush that burned yet was not consumed, he heard a Voice asking him, “What is that in your hand?” (*Exodus 4:2*).

Moses replied matter-of-factly. “It’s my staff, my shepherd’s crook.” “Throw it down,” the Voice said, and it became a serpent. “Pick it up,” and it turned back to a staff. “Now go,” said the Voice. “I will be with you. Together we will bring deliverance to your people.” In the hands of God, Moses’ staff, his ordinary tool of trade was to become proof of his calling and the symbol of his empowering.

That life-changing encounter before the burning bush changed Moses from shepherd to servant leader. He went as commanded, met his brother Aaron on cue and together they challenged Pharaoh to set God’s people free from slavery.



## INVITATION

Our calling may not be so dramatic, but the same question stands starkly before us at a time such as this. “What is that in your hand? What are you holding? What resources are stored up within you?” We may feel that we have nothing much at all, just a meagre snack in the face of a huge hunger, but still God waits for our answer.

The miracle is that when we give of our substance, we discover, as Moses and countless others have discovered, that God can do so much more than we could ever imagine or dare to ask. Like the widow in the temple who gave her smallest coins as an offering (*Luke 21:1-4*), or the lad who handed over his lunch (*John 6:9*), we too may discover that in the hands of Jesus, what seems not much at all becomes a blessing to thousands. Can we trust our God who does immeasurably more (*Ephesians 3:20*) to do that again in these days of our Self Denial Appeal? Can we give our offering and trust God to use that to reveal hope to more people than we can imagine?

---

I gave my lunch to Jesus  
and let him do the rest,  
He took the humble bread I had  
gave thanks and broke and blessed.  
It fed a mighty multitude  
my lunch that was so small  
in Jesus' hands it was enough  
to satisfy them all.

**Barbara Sampson**

---



Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (*Romans 15:13*). This verse is a promise for our Self Denial offering and a reminder of the hope to which we have been called.

**OUR SACRIFICIAL GIVING PLUS  
GOD'S MULTIPLICATION WILL  
FEED A MIGHTY MULTITUDE.**





## LOVING THE QUESTIONS – LIVING THE HOPE

# WEEK 6: DO YOU SEE THIS WOMAN?

*When we read the Bible, the Bible reads us. As we hear the questions put to individuals in the pages of Scripture, we hear them being put to us as well.*

### REFLECTION

Many of Jesus' healing miracles were to do with the restoring of sight. There was blind Bartimaeus who, when asked what he wanted Jesus to do for him stated the obvious, "Lord, I want to see" (*Luke 18:35-42*).

There was the man born blind whom the disciples tried to use to make a theological point. "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither ... sinned," said Jesus. "This man's blindness was for the glory of God" (*John 9:1-3, paraphrased*).

Maybe the most dramatic story of seeing belongs right back in the first book of the Bible (see *Genesis 16*). Abram and his wife Sarai were old and childless. Hopeless case! Sarai gave Abram her maidservant Hagar who bore a son to Abram. Joyful answer! But no! Conflict between Hagar and her mistress resulted in Hagar running away. Hopeless case!

But no! By a spring in the desert an angel messenger of God spoke to Hagar, reassuring her that her desperate cries for herself and her son had been heard. In that place God was named El Roi, the God who sees (*Genesis 16:13, CEB*).

Turn the pages of hundreds of years to another day when Jesus asks his host the question, "**Do you see this woman?**" (*Luke 7:44*). Jesus has been invited to the home of Simon, a Pharisee. None of the usual formalities of welcome, such as foot washing or a kiss of greeting or anointing with oil, are offered to Jesus. But a woman with a well-known sullied reputation throws herself at his feet, washing them with her tears and her perfume and smothering them with kisses. In response to this wild, extravagant, scandalous outpouring of devotion, Jesus tells Simon a pointed story, then turns to the woman, speaks forgiveness to her and extends a blessing of peace.



## INVITATION

You don't have to be a woman with a questionable reputation to want to be seen. It is a basic need of the human spirit. If someone sees me, really sees me for who I am, then I am known and valued.

The stories from India, Bulgaria, Georgia and Tanzania in this year's Self Denial Appeal have featured people who have been 'seen' and become involved with projects that support and benefit them.

May what we place on the altar as our Self Denial offering give us the joy of seeing with fresh eyes the many ways in which we can help others to see and be seen as well.

---

Hope is the bird  
who sings in the dark  
knowing that dawn is coming  
Hope is the bud  
appearing on a rose bush  
after a long cold winter  
Hope is the prayer  
of a mother  
rocking her fretful child to sleep  
Hope is the risk  
of love that  
bends low and serves  
Hope is the gift  
digging deep  
reaching wide  
stretching far  
Hope is the peace  
that holds us  
and will not let go

**Barbara Sampson**

---



Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (*Romans 15:13*). This verse is a promise for our Self Denial offering and a reminder of the hope to which we have been called.

**OUR OFFERING PLUS GOD'S HOPE,  
LOVE AND JOY WILL WORK A  
MIRACLE IN OUR OWN LIFE  
AND IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.**

## SELFDENIAL.INFO

