SNAPSHOTS OF HOPE
FROM A CHRISTIAN'S SCRAPBOOK
For those Facing Loss and
the Grief Journey

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The snapshot on the front cover is of four of my six grandchildren during a trip to the zoo in 2008. See Snapshot #2, "New Order—No Fear" where our zoo experience is used as an illustration of Isaiah 11:6 and the "new order" that promises hope. Pictured, left to right, are Brianna, Kahri, Keenan and Noah (Noah was pictured on the cover of the first book, Snapshots of Encouragement. Since this photo, Charlotte and Brady have been born.)
CONTENTS

Preface v
Acknowledgements vii

Section 1 – "Let's Have Dessert First" 1

Snapshot # 1 –
I Know Where I'm Going 3

Create Your Own –
"I Know Where I'm Going" 8

Snapshot # 2 –
New Order—No Fear 11

Create Your Own –
"Imagining the Unbelievable" 15

Snapshot # 3 –
The Best is Yet to Come 17

Create Your Own –
"The Future Holds Only the Best for Me" 21

Poem – "The Way Things Are" 24

Snapshot # 4 –
Heaven—At Home with the Lord 25

Create Your Own –
"At Home with the Lord" 30

Section 2 – Death & Dying – "Departure" 32

Snapshot # 5 –
Departure – The Ship Leaving on a Journey 33

Create Your Own –
"Setting Sail for the Promised Paradise" 37

Snapshot # 6 –
Departure – The Prisoner Set Free 39

Create Your Own –
"Free at last; free at last" 42
Snapshot # 7 –  
Departure – Removing the Yoke and Giving Rest from Toil  
Poem – "The Yoke Has Been Lifted"  
Create Your Own –  
"Rest at the End of the Day"  

44

Snapshot # 8 –  
Departure – Taking Down the Tent and Breaking Camp  
Poem – "Taking Down the Tent"  
Create Your Own –  
"From the Tent to the Palace"  

50
54
55

Section 3 – Trading my Fears for Peace  

57

Snapshot # 9 –  
No Fear  
Create Your Own –  
"Who's the Engineer on Your Train?"  

60
63

Snapshot # 10 –  
The God Who Brings Good Out of Bad  
Poem – "To Ponder"  
Create Your Own –  
"God is Working (Even the Bad) for My Good"  

65
69
70

Snapshot # 11 –  
Looking Death in the Eye; Jesus Removes the Sting  
Create Your Own –  
"Dealing with the Stinger"  

72
76

Snapshot # 12 –  
Give Me Wings  
Create Your Own –  
"Give Me Wings"  

79
86
PREFACE

This is the second Snapshots I have published, highlighting scriptures and stories to assist Christians who are going through tough times. In 2008, I published Snapshots of Encouragement from a Christian’s Scrapbook, which was designed to edify those facing difficult or life-threatening circumstances.

Snapshots of Hope speaks to those who have suffered personal losses and are making the grief journey. Grief is a normal process that affects us all, even Christians – especially Christians. But, as the apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Christians, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, don’t have to grieve “like the rest of men, who have no hope,” or as The Message states, “...like people who have nothing to look forward to, as if the grave were the last word.” “Hope” is the key word in the Christian’s grief process.

As a Christian minister for 36 years and a hospice chaplain/grief counselor for the last 14 years, I have been able to reach out to the hearts of thousands of believers (and non-believers) facing end-of-life circumstances and significant losses. Because of the personal relationship and friendship that has developed with each of them, I have prayed and wept as part of their extended “family.” Like the Lord’s heart, mine has been touched by their grief. So, this much I can say about the contents of this book: There is not one scripture reference or related illustration used here that has not ministered to me over and over again as I shared in each individual’s grief journey.

There are no easy answers, no magical formulas, no “simple steps” to assist the dying or to comfort the bereaved. There is, however, a God who “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.” (Ephesians 3:20) His word and promises serve as a lamp and light to those walking the dark path of grief. His Holy
Spirit serves as “counselor” and “guide.” He doesn’t instantly remove the pain of sorrow, but His presence makes the journey bearable and even life changing.

As in most areas of life, the simple and practical ideas often are most applicable in enduring and resolving loss and grief. These brief devotions, using short scriptures and relevant stories and songs, have already helped many who have been forced to walk through “the valley of the shadow of death.” (Psalm 23:4). It is my prayer that Snapshots of Hope will be God’s tool for those who grieve and for those who minister to them.

If you have recently lost a loved one or still struggle with grief after much time, I urge you not only to read each “snapshot,” but also to take the time to work through each “Create Your Own Snapshot.” This will give you an opportunity to personalize the scriptures and apply the illustrations to your own circumstances. Some points may not be applicable, but as you work, you will find yourself moving through the doors that God has opened for your spiritual growth and maturity.

So, enjoy this second “Scrapbook” and create one of your own. Pass these on to a friend, and be ready to share the ones you create (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Every Christian is in God’s school, and today’s lesson becomes tomorrow’s blessing.

Bill Gilliland
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been blessed with a wonderful hope in life, which is "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." (Hebrews 6:19). I thank God for that hope, which has been channeled through the "endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures . . . ." (Romans 15:4). The Lord and His scriptures are the motivation and the inspiration behind this book.

As in the case of the first book of this series, Snapshots of Encouragement, many of the folk who should be cited as contributors to this volume, Snapshots of Hope, are part of a special group who will remain unnamed, but not unacclaimed or unappreciated. I refer to a host of faithful, persevering Christians who have braved each step of the "grief journey" while claiming the protection and promises of God and have found hope in the midst of their darkness.

In my 36 years as pastor in the Christian ministry and a 14-year tenure as a hospice chaplain and grief counselor, I have countless times been exposed first hand to the wounds and suffering of those facing loss and bereavement. And, I might add, most of them have been directly tied to my heart, causing ripples or waves of grief to rush into my own life. These are the folk who are responsible for and have contributed to the contents of this book. Each sufferer longed for security, comfort, and HOPE as they were forced to look death in the eye. And most of them were able to find their needs met through the promises that Jesus came to bring. Out of their wounds and hurts, their journey through the "dark night of the soul" eventually led them back into life and the ability to remember with less pain. Through
it all, these people never forgot that Jesus was ever present, and they never lost hope.

Once again, I want to acknowledge my spiritual "family" at First Christian Church in Covington, Virginia, where I grew up, found and served the Lord, and later returned 25 years ago to minister. Many of the illustrations and stories used in this book came from true-life experiences of these saints whose faith is a testimony to anyone seeking hope. Hope continues to be a major theme because of faith.

The staff and volunteers of Mountain Regional Hospice in Clifton Forge, Virginia, have been "hope messengers" from its beginning 14 years ago. To serve the dying on a daily basis demands special and unique qualities. This great team has been a source of hope to me on many occasions, so it is only natural that they, along with the patients they serve, be highlighted as "heroes of hope."

My three beautiful daughters have been a source of hope for me from birth. Bringing brightness to dark days and renewal in down times, Susi, Jeri Rae, and Julie have consistently and faithfully lived so vibrantly that there was always the promise of a better tomorrow. Now, with their husbands, they have blessed me with six wonderful grandchildren (three boys and three girls), and there is every reason to believe that hope grows fonder.

Finally, my heartfelt gratitude once again goes to my lifelong friend who has sacrificed many hours and much expertise to help with the organization, editing, and preparation for publishing this second Snapshots. She has been an editor and encourager from the beginning, when the "snapshots" were written and distributed individually, to the now completed collection. There are periods in the creation of any book where every author needs some hope to continue on. Her positive spirit and constant
encouragement has provided that hope. And her grasp of the English language and proper usage of words has made this project both enjoyable and fulfilling.
Some Snapshots of Heaven –
Let’s have dessert first.

Did you ever come to the dinner table and decide that you were going to eat dessert first? That piece of cake or pie was sitting to the side, waiting to be served as the final course. But you popped the big question: Why do I have to wait for dessert? So you didn’t; you dove right into it and savored every bite.

My original intention for this book was to place the “snapshots” about heaven at the end of the book. But then, the “fork” story in “The Best Is Yet to Come” caused me to re-think the order. We will eventually consider themes like “death” and “fear,” but we need to have our spiritual “dessert” first. After all, these are “snapshots of hope,” and hope can’t present itself