

The power of hope

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There are many things a person can learn from watching movies—some are good and some are not so good.

Today, I'd like to spend a moment with you meditating on the 1994 movie "The Shawshank Redemption."

Andy Dufresne is a successful, prosperous banker until the day he learns that his wife is having an affair. To add to the injustice, when she and her lover are murdered, Andy is wrongfully accused of committing the crime and sentenced to life in Maine's harsh Shawshank Prison.

While there, confinement, boredom and hard manual labor begin to break Andy down. He also experienced the savagery of living in a prison society.

When Andy learns that a prisoner nicknamed "Red" is adept at smuggling in contraband items, Andy asks Red to get him a rock hammer so that he can enjoy rock collecting. After this, they become close friends. Later, as inmates watch the film "Gilda" starring Rita Hayworth, Andy asks Red to get him a poster of the beautiful movie star.

One day Andy confides in Red, "There's something inside that they can't get to, that they can't touch. That's yours." When Red asks, "What are you talking about?" Andy replies, "Hope."

Life changes when Andy uses his knowledge of accounting to keep the chief prison guard, Hadley, from being taxed heavily. Afterward, Warden Norton forces Andy to use his banking skills to help embezzle money. The money is placed into an account held by a fictitious "Randall Stephens."

Meanwhile, Andy uses his rock hammer to slowly chip away at his prison wall, hiding his work behind the Rita Hayworth poster. In the end, Andy escapes, takes on the identity of Randall Stephens, and flees to Mexico. Red is later released on parole and reunites with him there.

In the Bible, a young man named Joseph was also falsely accused of a crime and sent to prison. He spent many years there and they "hurt his feet with fetters" (Psalm 105:18 NKJV) until one day he also was released. (Genesis 39:1-41:16; Psalm 105: 17-21 NKJV) Like Andy, Joseph was kept alive by hope—hope that he would one day be free.

Andy said, "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good ever dies." Hope is a good thing, and while love for God and others is "the best of things," hope is one of the three most vital things we can have in this life.

My friends, never, ever give up hope in God. He promises to never abandon us. (John 14:18 NKJV).

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13 NKJV)