YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN:
A Motivational Thought for Dispairing Youths

"God heard the voice of the boy... and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, 'What troubles you? Do not be afraid.'" (Genesis 21:16-17)

There is a moment in Genesis I think about whenever I meet a tired young person. A mother named Hagar and her teenage son, Ishmael, have been sent away with little more than bread and a skin of water. They wander in the wilderness until the water runs out. Hagar, exhausted and out of ideas, places her son under a bush, walks a distance away, and sits down. She cannot bear to watch him die. Then she lifts her voice and weeps.

Maybe that is where you are tonight: under a bush in your own wilderness. The water has run out, and so have the answers. You are tired of pretending to be fine.

The Wilderness is Real
Let me say this plainly: your pain is not a weakness. Some of you have lost parents, jobs, school fees, or the future you imagined. Some of you were abandoned by people who should have protected you. Some of you carry shame about things done to you or things you did in order to survive.
When pain goes unheard, it looks for relief anywhere it can find it. Drugs promise to quiet the noise. Gambling promises a way out of poverty overnight. Selling your body promises money and, for a moment, a feeling of being wanted. And when nothing seems to work, a darker thought whispers that everyone would be better off without you.
I will not shame you for any of this. Each of these roads begins with the same question: Does anyone see me? And each of them takes more than it gives. The drug takes your mind, the bet takes your little remaining money, the street takes your dignity and your safety, and despair takes your tomorrow.

Look at What the Story Says
Read verse 17 again slowly. It does not say God heard Hagar's crying. It says God heard the voice of the boy. The child was silent in the story, yet heaven heard him. Even when you have no words, no prayer, and no strength left to ask for help, you are heard.
God did not ask Hagar, "What did you do wrong?" He asked, "What troubles you?" He still asks you that. He is not looking for a performance. He wants you to tell the truth about where it hurts.

Then comes verse 19: "Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water." The well was already there. She was too exhausted and too full of tears to see it. Sometimes hope is not missing. Our eyes are just closed by grief.

What to Do While You Wait for Your Eyes to Open
1. Tell one person today: Choose a trusted adult—a pastor, a school chaplain, a counselor, a teacher, or an older friend—and say the words: "I am not okay."
* Isolation makes despair stronger, and one honest conversation can break it.
2. Get away from the thing that is hurting you: If you are using drugs, gambling, or being exploited for money, you do not have to clean yourself up before asking for help.
* Come as you are. Help begins at the point of honesty, not at perfection.
3. Take the next small step, not the whole road: You do not need to solve your entire life tonight. Eat something, drink water, sleep, and get through today.
4. Remember that this is a season, not your identity: Ishmael's lowest moment was not the end of his story. The Bible says God was with the boy as he grew.
* Your worst chapter is not your last chapter.

Note
You are not too broken, too far gone, or too late. Your life is not a mistake, and your story is not finished. The same God who heard a thirsty boy under a bush in the middle of nowhere hears you right now, in your room, on your phone, in your loneliness.
You are not forgotten, let your eyes be opened for there is a well nearby.