

July 12, 2026

Underneath It All

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Underneath It All

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The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

DEUTERONOMY 33:27

In an Alabama church in 1887, Anthony Showalter was leading a singing school when he returned home one evening to find two letters waiting for him. Both were from former students. Both shared the heartbreaking news of having recently lost their wives.

Moved with compassion, Mr. Showalter sat down to write words of comfort to these grieving young men. Searching Scripture for reassurance, his eyes rested on Deuteronomy 33:27: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

As he reflected on that promise, the phrase Leaning on the Everlasting Arms took shape in his heart—unbeknownst to him, the beginning of a hymn.

Though the chorus came easily, the verses did not. So he reached out to a friend, Elisha Hoffman, explaining the situation. Hoffman responded with the remaining lyrics, completing what would become one of the most beloved hymns of faith.

The music was later written by Sam Duncan, a student and nephew of Mr. Showalter, and the hymn was published in an Evangelistic Hymnal.

It's easy to overlook how deeply hymns can minister to us—not only as songs of praise, but as devotionals that speak straight to the soul. Many of them, like this one, were born from seasons of sorrow.

And isn't that just like God? He meets us in our pain and turns heartbreak into hope.

Scripture reminds us that “the God of all comfort... comforts us in all our troubles” (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). Even as we walk through dark valleys, we are not alone. His presence steadies us. His arms uphold us.

Ellie Holcomb beautifully echoes this timeless truth in her modern-day song Hope's Gonna Find You, inspired by the hymn written so long ago. “What if hope's not a rope you hold on to? What if it's the arms that have always held you...I'm leaning, I'm leaning on the everlasting arms.”

While tragedy is never God's design, He faithfully uses it to draw us closer, to comfort our hearts, and to deepen our trust in Him.

When words fail and strength runs low, we discover that hope is not something we must cling to—it is Someone who is already holding us. And underneath it all, always and forever, are the everlasting arms.

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