



ENCOURAGEMENT FOR EVERY DAY

Reflections From
Our Daily Bread

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Blaise Pascal, the 17th century French mathematician and philosopher, said there's a God-shaped vacuum in every human heart. Centuries before Pascal, a man named Augustine searched to fill the aching void in his own life. After he found what he had been missing, he wrote a prayer in which he said to God, "You have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless until we find our rest in You" (Confessions).

Those two thinkers expressed what each one of us realises in our quiet, reflective moments. Deep within us is a restless need to know the One who

made us. We want to discover the purpose He has for our existence in His universe. We long to find peace in a world that never quite seems to give us what we're after.

Maybe you've never really had an active relationship with God before? Or maybe your time with Him has been slowly taken over by other things? Maybe your everyday life has just rumbled on and you're wondering where the spark has gone?

That's why we have created this little booklet. Within its pages are twenty daily readings that are designed to help you rediscover the joy of spending time with God. Refresh yourself in the truth of the Bible and be reminded just who God is and what He has done for you in Jesus.

These brief, daily articles will offer the real food your soul is craving! It is our prayer that the following pages will speak to you directly, helping to point you to the satisfaction that can only be found in knowing Jesus.

Your friends at Our Daily Bread Ministries





¹ “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.”

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

⁹ Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

Notes

Seeing God

Author and pastor Erwin Lutzer recounts a story about television show host Art Linkletter and a little boy who was drawing a picture of God. Amused, Linkletter said, “You can’t do that because nobody knows what God looks like.”

“They will when I get through!” the boy declared.

We may wonder, *What is God like? Is He good? Is He kind? Does He care?* The simple answer to those questions is Jesus’ response to Philip’s request: “Lord, show us the Father.” Jesus replied, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (JOHN 14:8–9).

John 14:8

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

If you ever get hungry to see God, look at Jesus. “The Son is the image of the invisible God,” said Paul (COL. 1:15). Read through the four gospels in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Think deeply about what Jesus did and said. ‘Draw’ your own mental picture of God as you read. You’ll know much more of what He’s like when you’re through.

A friend of mine once told me that the only God he could believe in is the one he saw in Jesus. If you look closely, I think you’ll agree. As you read about Him your heart will leap, for though you may not know it, Jesus is the God you’ve been looking for all your life. 🌿

DAVID ROPER

We’re so prone, Lord, to want You to be something You are not. Help us to see You more clearly on the pages of Scripture. Help us reflect Your Son in our lives.

The clearer we see God, the clearer we see ourselves.



¹ The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

² When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

³ Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.

⁴ One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

Notes

When Beauty Never Ends

love looking at the Grand Canyon. Whenever I stand at the canyon rim I see new brushstrokes of God's handiwork that take my breath away.

Even though it's just a (very large) 'hole' in the ground, the Grand Canyon causes me to reflect on heaven. A very honest twelve year old asked me once, "Won't heaven be boring? Don't you think we'll get tired of praising God all the time?" But if a 'hole in the ground' can be so overwhelmingly beautiful we can't stop looking at it, we can only imagine the joy of one day seeing the very Source of beauty—our loving Creator—in all of the pristine wonder of the new creation.

David expressed this longing when he wrote, "One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD" (PS. 27:4). There's nothing more beautiful than the presence of God, which draws near to us on this earth as we seek Him by faith, looking forward to seeing Him face-to-face.

On that day we'll never tire of praising our amazing Lord, because we will never come to an end of fresh, new discoveries of His exquisite goodness and the wonders of the works of His hands. Every moment in His presence will bring a breath-taking revelation of His beauty and His love. 

JAMES BANKS

Psalm 63:3

**Because your love
is better than life,
my lips will glorify
you.**

Beautiful Saviour, please help me to seek You every day and to live even now in Your presence and Your love.

We were created to enjoy God forever.



¹ The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength;
indeed, the world is established, firm and secure.

² Your throne was established long ago;
you are from all eternity.

³ The seas have lifted up, LORD,
the seas have lifted up their voice;
the seas have lifted up their pounding waves.

⁴ Mightier than the thunder of the great waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea—
the LORD on high is mighty.

⁵ Your statutes, LORD, stand firm;
holiness adorns your house
for endless days.

Notes

Mightier than All

Iguazu Falls, the border of Brazil and Argentina, is a spectacular waterfall system of 275 falls along 2.7 km (1.68 miles) of the Iguazu River. Etched on a wall on the Brazilian side of the Falls are the words of Psalm 93:4, “Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!” (RSV). Below it are these words, “God is always greater than all of our troubles.”

The author of Psalm 93, who wrote its words during the time that kings reigned, knew that God is the ultimate King over all. “The LORD reigns,” he wrote. “Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity” (vv. 1-2). No matter how high the floods or waves, the Lord remains greater than them all.

The roar of a waterfall is truly majestic, but it is quite a different matter to be in the water hurtling towards the falls. That may be the situation you are in today. Physical, financial or relational problems loom ever larger and you feel like you are about to go over the falls. In such situations, the Christian has Someone to turn to. He is the Lord “who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (EPH. 3:20), for He is greater than all our troubles. 🌿

C. P. H/A

Psalm 93:1

**The LORD reigns,
he is robed in
majesty; the LORD
is robed in majesty
and armed with
strength.**

Lord, I know that You are powerful and greater than any trouble that might come my way. I trust You to carry me through.

Never measure God's unlimited power by your limited expectations.



¹⁰ The name of the LORD is a fortified tower;
the righteous run to it and are safe.

¹¹ The wealth of the rich is their fortified city;
they imagine it a wall too high to scale.

Notes

Your Safe Place

My daughter and I were arranging to attend an extended family gathering. Because she was nervous about the trip, I offered to drive. "Okay. But I feel safer in my car. Can you drive it?" she asked. I assumed she preferred her more spacious vehicle to my compact one so I responded, "Is my car too cramped?" "No, it's just that my car is my safe place. Somehow I feel protected there."

Her comment challenged me to consider my own personal 'safe place'. Immediately I thought of Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." In Old Testament times, the walls and watchtower of a city provided warning of danger from without and shielding for its citizens within. The writer's point is that God's name, which stands for His character, person and everything that He is, provides true protection for His people.

Certain physical places promise longed-for safety in moments that seem dangerous. A sturdy roof overhead in the midst of a storm. A hospital offering medical care. The embrace of a loved one.

What is your 'safe place'? Wherever we seek safety, it is God's presence with us in that place that provides the strength and protection we really need. 🌿

ELISA MORGAN

Proverbs 18:10

The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

Dear God, thank You that no matter what worries and concerns we have today, when we think about You, we find safety in Your presence.

God is a safe place in life's storms.

¹ You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. ⁵ You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. ¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.

Notes

Intimate Details

The universe is astonishingly grand. Right now the moon is spinning around us at nearly 2,300 miles an hour. Our Earth is spinning around the sun at 66,000 miles an hour. Our sun is one of 200 billion other stars and trillions more planets in our galaxy, and that galaxy is just one of 100 billion others hurtling through space. Astounding!

In comparison to this vast cosmos, our little Earth is no bigger than a pebble, and our individual lives no greater than a grain of sand. Yet according to Scripture, the God of the galaxies attends to each microscopic one of us in intimate detail. He saw us before we existed (PS. 139:13–16); He watches us as we go about our days and listens for our every thought (VV. 1–6).

It can be hard to believe this sometimes. This tiny ‘pebble’ has big problems like war and famine, and we can question God’s care in times of personal suffering. But when King David wrote Psalm 139 he was in the midst of crisis himself (VV. 19–20). And when Jesus said God counts each hair on our heads (MATT. 10:30), He was living in an age of crucifixion. Biblical talk of God’s caring attention isn’t a naïve wish. It is real-world truth.

The One who keeps the galaxies spinning knows us intimately. That can help us get through the worst of times. 🌿

SHERIDAN VOYSEY

Psalm 139:2

You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

Father God, Your eye is on me as much as it is on the stars in the sky.
Thank You for Your love, Your care, Your attention.

The God of the cosmos cares for us intimately.

GOD'S BELOVED

GOD ACCEPTED ME. It was a message I had heard in churches all my life. But it had usually been followed by something—a *but*, an *and*, a *so*. God loves you, and in response to His great love, you will want to read your Bible more, fast and pray, tell the lost about Jesus. God loves you, so you shouldn't worry, doubt or fear. God loves you, but He doesn't want you to stay the same.

In the mountains of Chiang Mai, I finally understood, both mentally and emotionally, that the sentence didn't need anything added. God loved me. Full stop.

In school I might have told you, if you'd asked, that my 'life verse' was Luke 12:48 (AMP): "To whom much has been given, much will be required." I had known God from the cradle. I'd grown up in a happy Christian family and had every material advantage. So much had been given to me, and I was weighted with the responsibility of doing much with it.

When I visited third world countries as a teenager, I recognised that I hadn't just been given the advantage of a happy family and a Christian upbringing, but I'd been given . . . opportunity and wealth and security. The weight of

responsibility shifted subtly into guilt: if I didn't find some way to selflessly give back some of my privilege, how could I live with myself? I had to do big things. I had to make a difference. I had to deserve what I'd been given.

But now I was wondering what 'big' even meant. Had Jesus made a distinction between 'big' things we could do for God and 'small' things we could do for Him? Was 'making a difference' really something I was called to do—was it even possible? No verse in my New Testament asked me to make a difference. According to Jesus, I wasn't supposed to try to be "salt and light" to a desperate world; I already was. It wasn't something to do; it was the very identity I'd been given.

At church a few weeks prior, after the Indonesian tsunami, my Malaysian rector Wai Mung had reminded us that Jesus entered a world that was full of political corruption, social inequalities, unfair taxation, illness, poverty, hunger—and that when he left, thirty-three years later, there was no visible change in any of those areas.

It is easier, Wai Mung had said, to serve Jesus than to follow Jesus. It was easier to commit than to surrender. It was easier to work for Him than simply to accept my identity, and to walk in the world as the beloved of God.

I hadn't been able to understand that I was loved by God until I stopped doing anything for Him. I had to stop being 'useful' before I could believe that I was loved. That night, I ate the bread and drank the wine, and knew for the first time that regardless of what I had or hadn't done for God, He was delighted with me. I might be a smouldering wick, all but extinguished; even so, I was God's beloved. 

AMY PETERSON



¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Notes

Approaching God

A woman desiring to pray grabbed an empty chair and knelt before it. In tears, she said, “My dear heavenly Father, please sit down here; you and I need to talk!” Then, looking directly at the vacant chair, she prayed. She demonstrated confidence in approaching the Lord; she imagined He was sitting on the chair and believed He was listening to her petition.

A time with God is an important moment when we engage the Almighty. God comes near to us as we draw near to Him in a mutual involvement (JAMES 4:8). He has assured us, “I am with you always” (MATT. 28:20). Our heavenly Father is always waiting for us to come to Him, always ready to listen to us.

There are times when we struggle to pray because we feel tired, sleepy, sick and weak. But Jesus sympathises with us when we are weak or face temptations (HEB. 4:15). Therefore we can “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (V. 16). 🌿

Proverbs 73:28

But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge.

LAWRENCE DARMANI

Lord, thank You that I can pray to You in all places at all times. Put the desire to come near to You in my heart. I want to learn to come to You in faith and in confidence.

God is everywhere, is available every time and listens always.

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Notes

A New Name

In the article “Leading by Naming”, Mark Labberton wrote about the power of a name. He said: “I can still feel the impact of a musical friend who one day called me ‘musical’. No one had ever called me that. I didn’t really play an instrument. I was no soloist. Yet . . . I instantly felt known and loved. . . . [He] noticed, validated and appreciated something deeply true about me.”

Perhaps this is what Simon felt when Jesus renamed him. After Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, he immediately found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus (JOHN 1:41–42). Jesus peered into his soul and validated and appreciated something deeply true about Simon. Yes, Jesus saw the failure and impetuous nature that would get him into trouble. But more than that He saw the potential of Simon to become a leader in the church. Jesus named him Cephas—Aramaic for Peter—a rock (JOHN 1:42; SEE MATT. 16:18).

And so it is with us. God sees our pride, anger and lack of love for others, but He also knows who we are in Christ. He calls us justified and reconciled (ROM. 5:9–10); forgiven, holy and beloved (COL. 2:13; 3:12); chosen and faithful (REV. 17:14). Remember how God sees you and seek to let that define who you are. 🌿

MARVIN WILLIAMS

John 1:42

Jesus looked at him, and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

Lord, thank You for knowing me fully, yet loving me like no other. Help me to see others through Your eyes.

No one can steal your identity in Christ.

 ³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Notes

The Perfect Prayer Partner

Few sounds are as beautiful as hearing someone who loves you praying for you. When you hear a friend pray for you with compassion and God-given insight, it's a little like heaven touching earth.

How good it is to know that because of God's kindness to us our prayers can also touch heaven. Sometimes when we pray we may struggle with words and feelings of inadequacy, but Jesus taught His followers that we "should always pray and not give up" (LUKE 18:1). God's Word shows us that one of the reasons we can do this is that Jesus Himself "is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (ROM. 8:34).

Romans 8:34

[Jesus] is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

We never pray alone, because Jesus is praying for us. He hears us as we pray, and speaks to the Father on our behalf. We don't have to worry about the eloquence of our words, because no one understands us like Jesus. He helps us in every way, presenting our needs before God. He also knows when the answers we ask for would not be good for us, handling every request or concern with perfect wisdom and love.

Jesus is the perfect prayer partner—the friend who intercedes for us with immeasurable kindness. His prayers for us are beautiful beyond words, and should encourage us to always pray with thankfulness. 🙏

JAMES BANKS

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for interceding for me with love. Help me to love and serve You with my prayers today.

There's no greater privilege than praying with Jesus.

 ¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Notes

Forgiven!

My friend **Norm Cook** sometimes had a surprise for his family when he arrived home from work. He would walk through the front door, and shout, "You're forgiven!" It wasn't that family members had wronged him and needed his forgiveness. He was reminding them that though they doubtless had sinned throughout the day, they were by God's grace fully forgiven.

The apostle John supplies this note about grace: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin [no inclination to sin], we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 JOHN 1:7-9).

To "walk in the light" is a metaphor for following Jesus. Imitating Jesus with the Spirit's help, John insists, is the sign that we have joined with the apostles in the fellowship of faith. We are authentic Christians. But, he continues, let's not be deceived: we will make wrong choices at times. Nevertheless, grace is given in full measure: we can take what forgiveness we need.

Not perfect; just forgiven by Jesus! That's the good word for today. 🌿

DAVID ROPER

Lord, I know I'm not even close to being perfect. That's why I need You and Your cleansing in my life. I'm lost without You.

Monitor your heart daily to avoid wandering from God's wisdom.

Psalm 119:176

I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant.

 ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Notes

It Takes Time to Grow

On her first day in preschool, young Charlotte was asked to draw a picture of herself. Her artwork featured a simple orb for a body, an oblong head and two circle eyes. On her last day of preschool, Charlotte was again directed to draw a self-portrait. This one showed a little girl in a colourful dress, a smiling face with distinct features and a cascade of beautiful red tresses. The school had used a simple assignment to demonstrate the difference that time can make in the level of maturity.

While we accept that it takes time for children to mature, we may grow impatient with ourselves or fellow believers who show slow spiritual growth. We rejoice when we see the “fruit of the Spirit” (GAL. 5:22–23), but are disheartened when we observe a sinful choice. The author of Hebrews spoke of this when he wrote to the church: “Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again” (HEB. 5:12).

As we continue to pursue intimacy with Jesus ourselves, let’s pray for each other and patiently come alongside those who love God but who seem to struggle with spiritual growth. “Speaking the truth in love”, let’s continue to encourage one another, so that together we may “grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ” (EPH. 4:15). 

Ephesians 4:15

Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

CINDY HESS KASPER

Lord, we love You! In our walk with You,
help us to receive and give encouragement.

Words of truth spoken in love can guide us all towards maturity in Christ.

Building Your Relationship With God

God speaks to you through the Bible.

In Old Testament times God spoke directly to His people. Today, God's communication comes mainly through the Bible, and the Holy Spirit will enlighten your mind as you read it.

Relationships are built through two-way communication, and so is our relationship with God.

When you approach a portion of the Bible, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, ask yourself, "What does this mean?" Within the passage is a core spiritual truth that is meaningful in all ages. Strive to discover the message a passage has for you today. Then ask, "How does it apply?" The Spirit can change your thoughts, speech and behaviour when you allow Him to use the principles in God's Word to shape you. Another way to phrase the question is, "In what ways should my life change as a result of studying this passage?"

Respond to God in prayer. As you pray, you are free to tell God all of the things that concern you. But you have just read in the Bible about what concerns Him. In response:

- Take the time to respond to what you have read.
- Thank Him for His promises.
- Be responsive to the changes the Holy Spirit wants you to make.
- Confess your sins.
- Thank God that you are learning more and more what He is truly like.
- Ask Him for a deeper, clearer understanding of what a passage means and how it can help you to become more like Jesus.

Write it down. Keep a written record of what you discover when you spend time reading God's Word and praying. Your diary will help you see how you are growing in faith. It will help you remember what you have learned and will keep it fresh in your mind so that you can continue to be influenced by it for the rest of the day.

Building a relationship isn't easy. It requires diligence, discipline, communication, patience, trust and time. A relationship with God is no exception. Spend time with Him in His Word and in prayer. Take your conversation with Him into every part of your daily life. Allow Him to speak to you and take time, often, to speak with Him. As you do, your life with God will develop and deepen, and, as it does, you will find that the results are well worth the effort. ☯

- 
- ¹ My heart is not proud, LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
- ² But I have calmed and quietened myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.
- ³ Israel, put your hope in the LORD
both now and for evermore.

Notes

Held by God

As I was nearing the end of lunch with my sister and her children one afternoon, my sister told my three year old niece, Annica, it was time to get ready for her nap. Her face filled with alarm. "But Aunt Monica did not hold me yet today!" she objected, tears filling her eyes. My sister smiled. "Okay, she may hold you first—how long do you need?" "Five minutes," she replied.

Whilst I held my niece, I was grateful for how, without even trying, she constantly reminds me what it looks like to love and be loved. I think sometimes we forget that our journey of faith is one of learning to experience love—God's love—more fully than we can imagine (EPH. 3:18). When we lose that focus, we can find ourselves, like the older brother in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, trying desperately to win God's approval while missing out on all He has already given us (LUKE 15:25–32).

Psalms 131 is one prayer in Scripture that can help us to "become like little children" (MATT. 18:3) and to let go of the battle in our mind over what we don't understand (PS. 131:1). Instead, through time with Him we can return to a place of peace (V. 2), finding the hope we need (V. 3) in His love—as calm and quiet as if we were children again in our mothers' arms (V. 2). 🌿

MONICA BRANDS

Psalms 131:2

**I have calmed and
quieted myself, I
am like a weaned
child with its
mother; like a
weaned child I
am content.**

Lord, we are so grateful for those in our lives who remind us what it means to love and be loved. Help us to be ever more deeply rooted in Your love.

Like children, we can learn to rest in the love of God

¹ There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:

² a time to be born and a time to die,

a time to plant and a time to uproot,

³ a time to kill and a time to heal,

a time to tear down and a time to build,

⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh,

a time to mourn and a time to dance,

⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

⁶ a time to search and a time to give up,

a time to keep and a time to throw away,

⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend,

a time to be silent and a time to speak,

⁸ a time to love and a time to hate,

a time for war and a time for peace.

⁹ What do workers gain from their toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the
burden God has laid on the human race. ¹¹ He has made

everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in
the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done
from beginning to end. ¹² I know that there is nothing better

for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. ¹³

That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in
all their toil—this is the gift of God. ¹⁴ I know that everything

God does will endure for ever; nothing can be added to it and
nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him.

Notes

A Time for Everything

While flying recently, I watched a mother and her children a few rows ahead of me. While the toddler played contentedly, the mother gazed into the eyes of her newborn, smiling at him and stroking his cheek. He stared back with a wide-eyed wonderment. I enjoyed the moment with a touch of wistfulness, thinking of my own children at that age and the season that has passed me by.

I reflected, however, about King Solomon's words in the book of Ecclesiastes about "every activity under the heavens" (v. 1). He addresses through a series of opposites how there is a "time for everything" (v. 1): "a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot" (v. 2). Perhaps in these verses King Solomon despairs at what he sees as a meaningless cycle of life. But he also acknowledges the role of God in each season, that our work is a "gift of God" (v. 13) and that "everything God does will endure forever" (v. 14).

We may remember times in our lives with longing, like me thinking of my children as babies. We know, however, that the Lord promises to be with us in every season of our life (ISA. 41:10). We can count on His presence and find that our purpose is in walking with Him. 🌿

Ecclesiastes 3:1

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

AMY BOUCHER PYE

Lord God, You lead me through the seasons, and whether I'm laughing or crying I know You are with me. May I reach out to someone with Your love today.

God gives us the seasons of our lives.

 ⁴⁶ “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? ⁴⁷ As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. ⁴⁸ They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When the flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

Notes

Table Rock

A large, illuminated cross stands erect on Table Rock, a rocky plateau overlooking my hometown. Several homes were built on neighbouring land, but recently the owners have been forced to move out due to safety concerns. Despite their close proximity to the firm bedrock of Table Rock, these homes aren't secure. They have been shifting atop their foundations—nearly three inches every day—causing risk of major water pipes breaking, which would accelerate the sliding.

Jesus compares those who hear and obey His words to those who build their homes on rock (LUKE 6:47–48). These homes survive the storms. By contrast, He says homes built without a firm foundation—like people who don't heed His instruction—cannot weather the torrents.

On many occasions, I've been tempted to ignore my conscience when I knew God asked more of me than I had given, thinking my response had been 'close enough'. Yet the homes in the shifting foothills nearby have depicted for me that being 'close' is nowhere near enough when it comes to obeying Him.

To be like those who built their homes on a firm foundation and withstand the storms of life that so often assail us, we must heed the words of our Lord completely. 🌿 KIRSTEN HOLMBERG

Luke 6:46

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

Help me, Lord, to obey you fully and with my whole heart. Thank you for being my firm foundation.

God's Word is the only sure foundation for life.

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Notes

We've Got the Power!

The loud crackling noise startled me. Recognising the sound, I raced to the kitchen. I'd accidentally tapped the start button on the empty coffee maker. Unplugging the appliance, I grabbed the handle of the carafe. Then I touched the bottom of the container to

ensure it wasn't too hot to place on the tile counter. The smooth surface burned my fingertips, blistering my tender skin.

As my husband nursed my wound, I shook my head. I knew the glass would be hot. "I honestly do not know why I touched it," I said.

My response after making such a mistake reminded me of Paul's reaction to a more serious issue in Scripture—the nature of sin.

The apostle admits to not knowing why he does things he knows he shouldn't do and doesn't want to do (ROM. 7:15). Affirming that Scripture determines right and wrong (V. 7), he acknowledges the real, complex war constantly waging between the flesh and the spirit in the struggle against sin (VV. 15–23). Confessing his own weaknesses, he offers hope for victory now and forever (VV. 24–25).

When we surrender our lives to Christ, He gives us His Holy Spirit who empowers us to choose to do right (8:8–10). As He enables us to obey God's Word, we can avoid the searing sin that separates us from the abundant life God promises those who love Him. 🌿

XOCHITL DIXON

Lord, thanks for breaking the chains that used to bind us to a life controlled by our sinful nature.

The Holy Spirit transforms us through His love and by His grace.

Galatians 5:25

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

 ¹ Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Notes

An Encounter with Stones

After centuries of war and destruction, the modern city of Jerusalem is literally built on its own rubble. During a family visit, we walked the Via Dolorosa (the Way of Sorrow), the route tradition says Jesus followed on His way to the cross. The day was hot, so we paused for a rest and descended to the cool basement of the Convent of the Sisters of Zion. There I was intrigued by the sight of ancient pavement stones unearthed during recent construction—stones etched with games played by Roman soldiers during their idle moments.

Isaiah 53:5

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.

Those particular stones, even though probably from a period later than Jesus, caused me to ponder my spiritual life at the time. Like a bored soldier passing time in idle moments, I had become complacent and uncaring towards God and others. I was deeply moved by remembering that near the place I was standing, the Lord was beaten, mocked, insulted and abused as He took all of my failure and rebellion on Himself.

“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (ISA. 53:5).

My encounter with the stones still speaks to me of Jesus' loving grace that is greater than all my sin. 🌿

DAVID MCCASLAND

Lord Jesus, through Your great sacrifice for us, we find forgiveness, healing and hope. Thank You that we live today and forever in Your love.

Our sin is great—God's grace is greater.

AT THE CROSS

Standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene (JOHN 19:25 NASB).

“Standing by the cross of Jesus . . .”. John puts the scene into focus. We do not see many of Jesus’ followers there. It was just too dangerous to be identified with a condemned criminal. Such recklessness could land you on the next cross. But these women are there . . .

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

That moment that Jesus hung on the cross became the agonising fulfilment of words that had been spoken to Mary three decades earlier. After the birth of Jesus, when she and Joseph had brought the Child to the temple, an aged man, Simeon, stepped into the temple and declared the arrival of Messiah. His words of joy were muted, however, by the words of prophecy he spoke to Mary:

“Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed” (LUKE 2:34–35 NASB).

Tucked away in those words of victory and joy was that phrase filled with pain: “and a sword will pierce even your own soul”. Now, the agony of watching her Son die becomes that sword of grief and suffering that Mary had feared for so many years.

Salome, the Rebuked (Mary's Sister)

She is the mother of James and John (cousins of Jesus). The

interesting thing about her presence at the cross was that she had received a stern rebuke from Jesus when she had sought the chief places in the kingdom for her sons (MATTHEW 20:20–23). Though she had been rebuked, her presence at the cross shows that she had the humility to accept the rebuke and to love with undiminished devotion. It also shows that Jesus was able to rebuke in such a way that His love was still evident.

Mary, the Wife of Clopas

She was the wife Clopas and the mother of James the Less and Joses (MARK 15:40). It is added, in some ancient histories, that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Biblical scholar John Gill added, “This Mary was no doubt a believer in Christ and came and stood by his cross; not merely to keep her sister company, but out of affection to Jesus, and to testify her faith in him.”

Mary Magdalene

Mary had been demon possessed and Jesus rescued her (LUKE 8:2). Of all the characters delivered from demons by Christ in the Gospels, none showed such consistent devotion to the Saviour as this Mary.

These women and others, at no small amount of personal risk, continued to identify themselves with the Master, even as He died for them. They showed the strength of courage simply to be there. Their courage was more than courage though—it was fuelled by their love.

Adapted from Windows on Easter by Bill Crowder. Used by permission of Discovery House.

¹ Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

³ Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. ⁴ He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. ⁵ You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, ⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ⁸ You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

⁹ If you say, "The LORD is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, ¹⁰ no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. ¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; ¹² they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. ¹³ You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. ¹⁵ He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. ¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

Notes

Under His Wings

When I think of protection, I don't automatically think of a bird's feathers. Though a bird's feathers might seem like a flimsy form of protection, there is more to them than meets the eye.

Bird feathers are an amazing example of God's design. Feathers have a smooth part and a fluffy part. The smooth part of the feather has stiff barbs with tiny hooks that lock together like the prongs of a zipper. The fluffy part keeps a bird warm. Together both parts of the feather protect the bird from wind and rain. But many baby birds are covered in a fluffy down and their feathers haven't fully developed. So a mother bird has to cover them in the nest with her own feathers to protect them from wind and rain.

The image of God "[covering] us with his feathers" in Psalm 91:4 and in other Bible passages (SEE PS. 17:8) is one of comfort and protection. The image that comes to mind is a mother bird covering her little ones with her feathers. Like a parent whose arms are a safe place to retreat from a scary storm or a hurt, God's comforting presence provides safety and protection from life's emotional storms. Though we go through trouble and heartache, we can face them without fear as long as our faces are turned towards God. He is our "refuge" (91:2, 4, 9). 

LINDA WASHINGTON

Psalm 91:4

**He will cover you
with his feathers,
and under his
wings you will find
refuge.**

Father God, help me trust that You are bigger than any fear I have.

*When fear causes hope to fade, flee to God, the refuge you can reach on
your knees.*

 ¹ “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. ³ Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

⁴ Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. ⁶ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Notes

Wake-Up Call!

During the years when I travelled frequently and stayed in a different city every night, I always scheduled a wake-up call when I checked into a hotel. Along with a personal alarm, I needed a jangling telephone to help get me out of bed and moving in the morning.

The book of Revelation contains a spiritual wake-up call in the apostle John's letters to the seven churches in the province of Asia. To the church in Sardis he wrote this message from Jesus Himself: "I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God" (REV. 3:1-2).

In the midst of spiritual fatigue, we may fail to notice the lethargy that creeps into our relationship with God. But the Lord tells us to "remember . . . what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent" (V. 3).

Many people find that scheduling some extra time each morning to read the Bible and talk to the Lord in prayer helps them stay spiritually alert. It's not a job but a joy to spend time with Jesus and know that He prepares us for whatever lies ahead that day. 🌻

Revelation 3:2

**Wake up!
Strengthen what
remains and is
about to die, for I
have found your
deeds unfinished
in the sight of
my God.**

DAVID MCCASLAND

Lord, enable us to hear and respond to Your wake-up call today.

Spending time with Jesus is a joy!

³⁵ As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

³⁸ He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

³⁹ Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁰ Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹ "What do you want me to do for you?"

"Lord, I want to see," he replied.

⁴² Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." ⁴³ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

Notes

Divine Interruptions

Experts agree that a staggering amount of time is consumed each day by interruptions. Whether at work or at home, a phone call or an unexpected visit can easily deflect us from what we feel is our main purpose.

Not many of us like disruptions in our daily lives, especially when they cause inconvenience or a change of plan. But Jesus treated what appeared to be interruptions in a far different way. Time after time in the Gospels, we see the Lord stop what He is doing to help a person in need.

While Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem where He would be crucified, a blind man begging by the side of the road called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (LUKE 18:35–38). Some in the crowd told him to be quiet, but he kept calling out to Jesus. Jesus stopped and asked the man, “‘What do you want me to do for you?’ ‘Lord, I want to see,’ he replied. Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has healed you’ ” (VV. 41–42).

When our plans are interrupted by someone who genuinely needs help, we can ask the Lord for wisdom in how to respond with compassion. What we call an interruption may be a divine appointment the Lord has scheduled for that day. 🌿

DAVID MCCASLAND

Luke 18:40-41

Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord, I want to see,” he replied.

Lord Jesus, fill us with Your wisdom and compassion that we may respond as You did to people in need.

Interruptions can be opportunities to serve.

 ⁸ The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. ⁹ Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites.

Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.”

¹⁰ So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. ¹¹ As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. ¹² When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. ¹³ So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

Notes

Don't Run Alone

This was his first marathon, and he was running alone. After stopping for a drink of water at an aid station, he felt exhausted and sat down on the grass beside the course. Minutes passed, and he couldn't get up. He had resigned himself to quitting the race when two middle-aged schoolteachers came by. Although they were strangers, they noticed Jack and asked if he wanted to run with them. Suddenly, he found his strength restored. Jack stood and accompanied by the two women he finished the race.

Those women who encouraged Jack remind me of Aaron and Hur, two friends who helped Moses, the leader of the Israelites, at a key point (EX. 17:8-13). The Israelites were under attack. In battle, they were winning only as long as Moses held his staff up (V. 11). So when Moses' strength began to fail, Aaron and Hur stood on either side of him, holding up his arms for him until sunset (V. 12).

Following God is not a solo endeavour. He did not create us to run the race of life alone. Companions can help us persevere through difficulty as we do what God has called us to do. 🌿

Hebrews 12:1

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses . . . let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

AMY PETERSON

God, thank You for relationships that encourage me to continue following You. Help me to be a source of strength for others, as well.

Who can I encourage to persevere through difficulty today?

 ¹ Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Notes

A Little Bit of Paradise

Gazing out of my open study window, I hear birds chirping and hear and see the wind gently blowing in the trees. Bales of hay dot my neighbour's newly tilled field, and large, white cumulus clouds stand out in contrast to the brilliant blue sky.

I'm enjoying a little bit of paradise—except for the almost incessant noise of the traffic that runs past our property and the slight ache in my back. I use the word paradise lightly because though our world was once completely good, it no longer is. When humanity sinned, we were expelled from the garden of Eden and the ground was “cursed” (SEE GEN. 3). Since then the Earth and everything in it has been in “bondage to decay”. Suffering, disease and our deaths are all a result of humanity's fall into sin (ROM. 8:18–23).

Yet God is making everything new. One day His dwelling place will be among His people in a renewed and restored creation—“a new heaven and a new earth”—where “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (REV. 21:1–4). Until that day we can enjoy the bright splashes and sometimes wide expanses of breath-taking beauty we see around us in this world, which is just a small foretaste of the paradise that will be. 🌿 *ALYSON KIEDA*

Revelation 21:5

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”

Dear Lord, thank You that in this world that can seem ugly with sin and decay You allow us to see glimpses of beauty.

God is making all things new.



WHY READ THE BIBLE?

The Bible, has been given to us so that we may know its author and grow to love Him. To get to know someone we need to communicate with them. We need to talk with them and listen to them.

It's the same with our relationship with God. If we want to get to know Him, we need to communicate with Him. We can talk to Him through prayer. But how can we hear His voice?

The way we can hear what God has to say is to read His message to us . . . the Bible. Paul, one of the writers, actually says it's "God-breathed". Think of it, the very breath of God is somehow infused in those words. But how do we know those words are really His? How do we know they can be trusted?

Jesus Himself believed in the Bible and referred to it often. He didn't quote the New Testament; that hadn't even been written yet. He believed and quoted the Old Testament. So Jesus trusted the Bible. But there's plenty of evidence that supports the accuracy of the Bible too.

Hundreds of archaeological sites have uncovered the exact locations of biblical events. And there's the way the Bible lines up with other historical documents.

However, the best place to find out about Jesus is in the four accounts of His life found in the Bible. Four writers of different backgrounds and personalities: Matthew (a tax collector), Mark (an investigative reporter), Luke (a doctor) and John (a fisherman), all wrote about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus from their own unique viewpoints.

But isn't it boring and confusing? The Bible is an epic thriller that contains the all-time best love story. But some portions of it can seem boring. It's important to remember that the Bible is not just one book; it's many different books put together over the centuries. And not every book is to be read like a novel. Some are historical events written for study. Some even contain a census. (Imagine curling up in bed at night to read a nice, long census!) Those sections are included in the Bible for very good reasons, but they are best read along with a book that can explain the historical context.

Other books in the Bible contain first-hand descriptions of God's magnificence and His creativity. Some are insightful poetry. Others honestly explore doubt and every possible aspect of the human condition. Still others are full of wisdom and no-nonsense approaches on how to succeed in life. Finally, there are the prophetic books that point to what we can expect in the future. When combined, these books from the Creator of life show us how to best understand life.

God wants to use His Word in our lives to ...

Give Us Faith

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast (EPHESIANS 2:8–9).

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ (ROMANS 10:17).

Encourage Us

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope (ROMANS 15:4).

Equip Us

All Scripture . . . is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17).

Guide Us

In this chaotic world where there no longer seem to be absolutes, no right or wrong, the Bible is an unwavering compass always pointing us to True North. And it is that truth that guides and directs our steps. According to Psalm 119, it lights the path for our feet so we know where to walk.

The Next Step

Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (JOHN 6:35). Jesus says that human beings don’t just live on physical food “but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (MATTHEW 4:4).

Our bodies would cry out if we only fed them once a day. How can we do any less for our souls? Yes, the world constantly demands our attention. But if we intentionally set aside time to regularly feed our soul by reading God’s Word, we will grow.

For me the best time to read is in the still of the morning

while having a cup of coffee with God. For other people it may be just before bed. I read slowly and ask the Holy Spirit to bring out truths. I've learned over the years that the only way I can know God is by taking the time to hear what He says through His Word. And as I get to know Him, I can't help but fall deeper and deeper in love with Him. ☯

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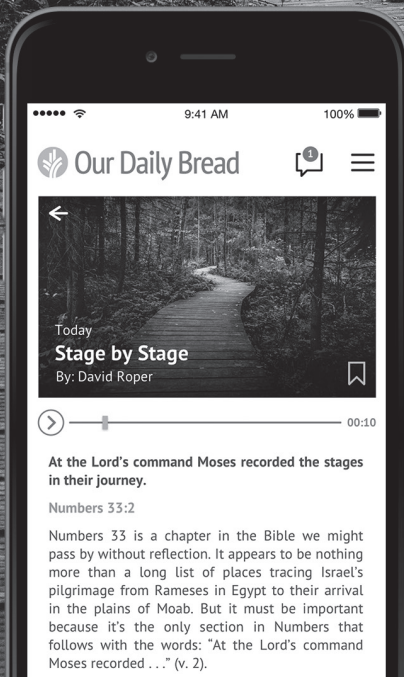
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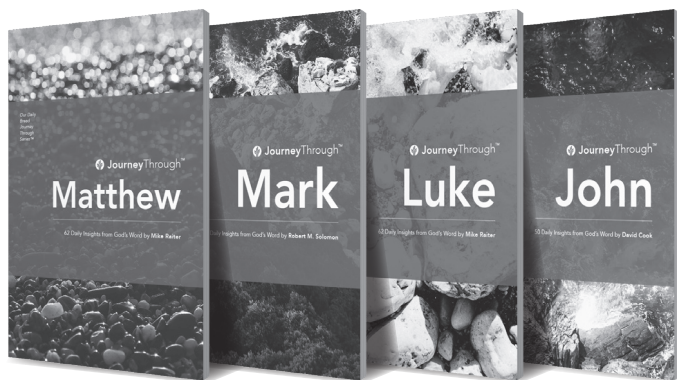
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