

Josh McDowell

#truth

365 Devotions for Teens
Connecting LIFE *and* FAITH

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JANUARY

An Awesome God

January 1

First Things First

My Bible Reading:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

How about those New Year's resolutions? At the beginning of the year some students might resolve to make better grades, work out more, eat healthier, play less video games, etc. The idea of a new year naturally leads to thinking of a fresh start, a new beginning.

The first verse of the Bible starts off with a new beginning when it says "In the beginning God. . ." (Genesis 1:1). Everything in the universe had its beginning with God. That's the best way to start a new year—beginning with God first.

Jesus talked about putting God first and how everything else would be taken care of in your life. He said not to worry about material things like what you're going to eat or drink or wear. He said, "Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God [first] above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need" (Matthew 6:32-33).

Truth is, that's an awesome New Year's promise: put God first in your life and God will take care of you. And you can count on it, because "the LORD always keeps his promises; he is gracious in all he does" (Psalm 145:13).

My Prayer: *God, You are the new beginning to everything. Thank You for all that You created and all that You provide. Help me put You first and keep You first in my life this year, starting today. You are an awesome God! Amen.*

Totally Awesome

My Bible Reading:

“Do not forget the things I have done throughout history. For I am God—I alone! I am God, and there is no one else like me.” (Isaiah 46:9 NLT)

What does “totally awesome” mean? Words like *truly impressive*, *absolutely astonishing*, *incredibly amazing*, *mind-blowing*, *breath-taking*, *magnificent*, *stunning*—those are some words that define totally awesome.

Yet the meaning of the word *awesome* goes deeper than thinking of something being terrific. The idea of awesome can also represent a feeling of fear and wonder; it is that sense of awe and amazement of the truly extraordinary. And it is this total sense of awesomeness that best expresses the view of the Almighty God of the universe.

Truth is, the prophet Isaiah went on to explain that God never had a beginning nor will He have an ending. He is all-powerful, everywhere-present, all-knowing, and unchanging. That is really a totally awesome God!

My Prayer: *I am in awe of You, God. You are beyond awesome. And what is so mind-blowing and beyond my comprehension is that even though You are so great and beyond me—You have chosen to love the likes of me. Thank You! That is awesome! Amen.*

January 3

Who Is Forever?

My Bible Reading:

Before the mountains were born,
before you gave birth to the earth and the world,
from beginning to end, you are God. (Psalm 90:2)

Did you have a goldfish when you were really young? Where is it now? What's your first memory of the car your parents owned? What happened to that car? Remember the burning candles on your last birthday cake? How long did the flames last?

If you had a goldfish, it has long passed away. The car your parents had when you were born is probably on the junk heap. And the burning candles on your birthday cake? They have long been snuffed out. Everything in this world and everything you experience has an end. But not so of God. He has no beginning and has no end. "You are always the same"—the Bible says of God—"you will live forever" (Psalm 102:27).

Truth is, the idea of a forever—someone who had no beginning and has no ending—stretches the mind. But that is part of who God is, an everlasting, eternal, and forever God. But as difficult as that is to grasp, here is the amazing thing. You are a forever person too if you have placed your trust in Jesus.

My Prayer: *I am so thankful that You are forever. While I can't comprehend the idea of a never-ending life, I am so glad You offer me life eternal with You. You are an awesome God. I love that You are forever, and I am thankful I know You as my eternal God. Amen.*

A Real Superhero

My Bible Reading:

“O Sovereign LORD! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!” (Jeremiah 32:17)

Superheroes: Superman, Superwoman, Iron Man, Wonder Woman, Wolverine, Storm, Batman, Raven, the list goes on. Wouldn't it be great to personally know one of these characters? What would it be like to hang out with Superman, Wolverine, Storm, or Raven? Having a superhero as a friend could feel quite prestigious and would pretty much guarantee you a lot of “friends.”

Superheroes are fictional, of course. But in their world they all have some weaknesses or limitations. Not so with the God of the Bible. “I know that you [God] can do anything,” Job said, “‘and no one can stop you’” (Job 42:2). God doesn't tire out. There is no limit to His power. No one can defeat Him. He may give people freedom to do what they want for a time, but eventually, in the end, God wins out. Think of the advantage of knowing a superhero winner like that.

Truth is, God is a powerful God who is there to strengthen and guide you. He wants you to rely on Him every day as your friend and superhero.

My Prayer: *You are the Almighty God who can accomplish anything. Help me today to rely on You and tap into Your strength for what I need. Thank You that You are powerful and that You love me. Amen.*

January 5

Your Image

My Bible Reading:

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.” (Genesis 1:26)

Before the sun ever shone, before the rain ever fell, before there was air to breathe. . .there was relationship. Think about it. The eternal God of the universe has always existed as relationship. God the Father has always loved His Son; God the Son has always loved His Father; and God the Holy Spirit has always loved both the Father and the Son. In this cycle of perfect relationship God created you. Why? He created you in His relational image so you could experience and enjoy all the benefits relationships offer.

Truth is, God didn't create you because He needed relationships—He already existed as relationship. He created you because by nature He has a relational heart and He wants you to enjoy the goodness of life in relationship with Him and others. That's a great image to live out!

My Prayer: *Thank You for creating me in Your relational image.*

I want to experience relationship like You. In this New Year teach me to have a compassionate and loving heart like You.

Help me express that to someone today. Amen.

Hide & Seek

My Bible Reading:

“If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you,” says the LORD. (Jeremiah 29:13-14)

Who hasn't played hide-and-peek at one time or another? “1, 2, 3, 4. . .10. Ready or not, here I come!” The idea, of course, was to find your friends and tag them before they touched home base and became safe. You may have outgrown the hide-and-peek game, but God still wants you to “play” a version of that game with Him.

In many respects God is hidden from you because He is not a *material* being. The Bible says, “God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Even though He is invisible to you, He wants you to seek Him so you will experience His spiritual presence every day in your life.

Truth is, Jesus said to seek and “keep on seeking, and you will find” (Matthew 7:7). He really wants to be found so you can feel Him close to you, like a best friend. Keep seeking Him because He's the best thing in life!

My Prayer: *Thank You that You want me to find You and know You as my best friend. Give me more of a desire to seek You out in Your Word and in prayer. And let me find all that I need in You today. Amen.*

January 7

Count on It

My Bible Reading:

“Be sure of this: I am with you always,
even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

There aren't a lot of things you can count on in life. But there are some. Try this out on a friend. Ask someone to:

1. Choose a number—any number.
2. Double it.
3. Add twelve to that number.
4. Divide the new number by two, then subtract the original number.
5. Now add one.

Then tell the person the number he or she has is seven! It will surprise your friend because you will be right. The answer will always be seven. Test it out yourself. If you followed the instructions exactly, your answer will always come out to seven. Whether you start with five or fifty billion, the final number will be seven. That is a mathematical truth you can count on.

Truth is, at times people and situations in life can be disappointing and you may wish you could have someone to count on. And you do! Jesus will always be there for you—always, every time. It is in God's nature to always be true. He never changes. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

My Prayer: *Thank You that You were there for me yesterday, that I can count on You to be there for me today, and that You will be there for me for the rest of my life and beyond. Help me share this truth with a friend today. Amen.*

Worries?

My Bible Reading:

Give all your worries and cares to God,
for he cares about you. (1 Peter 5:7)

Do you ever worry? Do you sometimes worry you won't make a good enough score on a test? What about sports? There are always worries about not doing enough to win or helping the team win. There are relationship worries like, "Am I likable enough or will the people I care about remain my friends for very long?" There are home-life worries like, "Will my family always be a safe and peaceful place where I can relax and be accepted for just being myself?"

Now use your imagination. Imagine Jesus materializing and visiting you in a quiet place. He places a hand on your shoulder and in a soft voice says, "I really care what is happening to you right now. It hurts Me that you hurt. I want you to know that I'm here for you, no matter what."

You begin to open up and share with Jesus the details of your struggle. He leans forward and says in a caring voice, "I'm really sorry you're going through all this." You look closer and see tears of compassion filling His eyes.

Then just as you are about to get up, Jesus reaches out and touches your arm. In a tender voice, He says, "I want you to know that I'm your safe place. You can always come to Me without fear of rejection or ridicule. I'll be your closest friend."

Truth is, Jesus isn't an imaginary friend. He is real and He cares about everything that is happening to you. He says, "'Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matthew 28:20).

My Prayer: *Thank You, Jesus, that You care about me and all that is happening in my life. Help me accept that and bring my worries and cares to You each day. I know You are with me and You do care. Amen.*

January 9

Ultimate Goodness

My Bible Reading:

“He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!” (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Think about your happiest moment in life. What was your best meal ever? Where was your best vacation? Remember the most beautiful sight you ever saw? As you think about those, you are recalling moments of joy, contentment, beauty, and goodness. Now, where did all those good things come from?

The Bible says, “Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father” (James 1:17). He is the originator of all that is good. It’s not that God just does things that are perfectly good. He is perfectly good by His very nature. He is “‘the one who is holy and true’” (Revelation 3:7). “‘The LORD is just! He is my rock! There is no evil in him!’” (Psalm 92:15).

Truth is, the reason you can count on God to do good and honor what He says He will do is that, by His very nature, He is true and holy and right. God will not and cannot go against His goodness and do wrong. There is absolutely no evil in His character and “it is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18). “He remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is” (2 Timothy 2:13).

My Prayer: *Thank You, God, for Your goodness. I want to reflect Your goodness in my own life. Help me show some goodness to others today. Maybe as a result, someone will see a little of Your goodness in me. Amen.*

He Knows It All!

My Bible Reading:

O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. . . . Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand! (Psalm 139:1-6)

God knows a lot! He knows everything about your past. He knows everything about who you are right now. And He knows every thought, motive, and deed you'll ever have and do in your future. That may seem a little scary at first, but since God is all-knowing it means He has all the answers to life as well.

Truth is, relying on such an all-knowing God would make sense, and that is precisely what He wants you to do. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

My Prayer: *I am so thankful that You are all-knowing. I don't want to rely on my own knowledge to plan my today or tomorrows. Help me know Your will for my life. Show me the paths I should take. You are an awesome God who cares about me and my future. I want to follow Your ways. Amen.*

January 11

Faith Plus

My Bible Reading:

It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Doesn't everything we believe about God, the Bible, and the Christian religion boil down to faith—sincerely believing? A lot of people will say that, but that's not what the Bible says or what God expects. The Bible says, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1 NASB). So where do the *assurance* and *conviction* of your faith come from? They actually come from a "faith plus"—a faith plus evidence or knowledge of the things not seen.

Have you ever flown in a plane? You exercise faith when you do. You believe the pilot can fly the plane safely even though you don't generally see him. You probably have never seen the expert engineers and machinists who built the plane, but you believe the aircraft is safe. Your assurance of safety comes from your knowledge that the airline company has a good track record and the evidence of expert pilots. You put your faith in the plane and pilot plus the evidence that airplanes are a safe form of travel. It's faith plus evidence that gives assurance and conviction to your belief.

Truth is, Jesus doesn't want you to blindly believe in Him and His Word. He wants you to explore the evidence that God is real, that His Word is reliable, that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died and rose from the dead to purchase your salvation. Jesus wants you to have a faith plus—a belief that is backed up with evidence. That will give your faith assurance and conviction.

My Prayer: *Jesus, thank You that You want me to examine who You are, how Your Word is reliable, and why Your truths are in my best interest to follow. You want my faith to be full of assurance and confidence and I want that too. Help me grow each day in my faith in You. Amen.*

Faith & Doubt

My Bible Reading:

When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and the raging waves. Suddenly the storm stopped and all was calm. Then he asked them, “Where is your faith?” (Luke 8:24-25)

Jesus was once taking a nap on a boat that was crossing the Sea of Galilee. His disciples were with Him. It wasn't uncommon in the area for storm clouds to gather quickly and make boating hazardous. That's what happened. The storm was so fierce that the disciples thought they were going to drown. They yelled to Jesus that the boat was about to go down.

After Jesus stopped the storm with His mere words, He asked the disciples, “Where is your faith?” (Luke 8:25). Instead of trusting in what Jesus could do, Jesus' followers had doubts. Jesus' followers had doubts because they concentrated more on their problems than looking to the Problem-Solver.

Truth is, doubts seem to melt away when you focus on God's caring heart to protect you. The Bible says, “God's way is perfect. All the LORD's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection” (Psalm 18:30).

My Prayer: *Help me look to You, O God, as my caring protector when times get tough. I don't want to doubt Your caring heart. I want to get to know You better and understand how much You really care about me and everything that is going on in my life. Help me trust You more today. Amen.*

January 13

Proud of It

My Bible Reading:

I know the greatness of the LORD—that our Lord is greater than any other god. The LORD does whatever pleases him throughout all heaven and earth, and on the seas and in their depths. (Psalm 135:5–6)

How do you feel when you ace a test? What about when you win at a sporting event or even win at a video game—how does that make you feel? It's natural to have a sense of pride when you accomplish something. You inherited that quality from God Himself.

After each creative act God sort of stepped back, looked at it, stuck out His chest and said, "That's good!" He declared His creative work "good" seven times in Genesis. He was proud of what He had done. But He was really proud on the day He created humans. Because on that day the Bible says, "He saw that it was very good" (Genesis 1:31, emphasis mine).

Truth is, on the seventh day God ceased His creative work. He declared it holy as a way to endorse and celebrate His masterful accomplishment. He called it His day of rest or you could say, His day of satisfaction of accomplishment. That means every seventh day is a reminder to worship the God who is so very proud of you and all of creation that He has given you.

My Prayer: *Thank You for giving me a special day each week to celebrate and worship You and all Your accomplishments. I'm glad You created me, and I want You always to be proud of me. Help me say or do something today that will make us both proud. Amen.*

Here and Everywhere

My Bible Reading:

“Am I a God who is only close at hand?” says the LORD.

“No, I am far away at the same time. Can anyone hide from me in a secret place? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?” says the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:23-24)

You’re at your school’s championship game. Your team is leading by a slim margin with only minutes left in the game. Suddenly you feel the vibration of your phone. It’s a text from your friend who is headed to the hospital due to a car accident. You don’t want to leave the game, but you want to be with your injured friend too.

The problem is that you are limited by time and space. You can’t humanly be in more than one physical place at a time. That’s not the case with God. He can be everywhere at the same time.

Truth is, your God is so awesome that He can be with you at your game and with your friend at the hospital at the same time. Because God is here with you, and yet everywhere, you can know He is available all the time for all who call upon Him.

My Prayer: *You are an awesome God who is ever-present to be there for all who call upon You for help. Thank You for always being there for me. And while I do not have the power to be ever-present, help me be there for a friend today who is in need. Amen.*

January 15

Know Me

My Bible Reading:

Jesus prayed to his Father, “This is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.” (John 17:3)

What does it take to have a close relationship with another person? One teenager wrote that being close to someone “is to be real with another person. . .no facade, no barriers.” That’s pretty good. A close relationship is about really knowing another person and letting that person really know you.

That’s what God wants. Jesus said the way to eternal life was to know Him and His Father God. He told the children of Israel He wanted them to know and love Him. God said, “I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6).

Truth is, if God had a sign hung around His neck it would read: PLEASE KNOW ME. Because He made you in His relational likeness and image, you have that same sign hung around your neck. God wants you to learn to know Him, and He wants you to open up to let Him know everything that is going on in your life too.

My Prayer: *God, even though You sometimes seem far away, I want to learn to know You better. And I want to learn to be open to You by sharing what’s happening to me. Help me do that, even today. Amen.*

His Greatest Joy

My Bible Reading:

Jesus said, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:11 NIV)

Can you imagine God laughing? How about a God who smiles? A lot of people see a stern, authoritarian God with no sense of humor. You may have run across some people that are that way. But that’s not what God is like.

God told his children that “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). The fruit or expressions of God the Holy Spirit in your life should be “joy” (Galatians 5:22). The Bible says you are to live a life of “joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). And Jesus said that when His followers enter into heaven each of them will hear His Father say, “Enter into the joy of your Master’” (Matthew 25:23 NASB).

Truth is, God is the originator of joy. And since you were made in His relational image, He wants you to experience joy too. God’s greatest joy is to have a close relationship with you so your joy can be made complete. Isn’t it great that your Creator is the source of joy and that He wants you to be happy and full of His joy?

My Prayer: *Thank You that You’re the God of joy and that You want me to experience the deep sense of joy and happiness that You experience. I want to sense Your smile today. And help me express the “joy of the Lord” to someone before this day is over. Amen.*

January 17

A Good Anger

My Bible Reading:

Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones! Praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! (Psalm 30:4-5)

Have you ever been ticked—really angry? Your anger may have been a result of someone hurting you, doing something against you, or maybe you didn't get your way on something and you really got ticked. Many times anger is self-centered and vindictive. But God's anger isn't like that.

God's anger is holy, with a pure purpose. God gets angry when the innocent suffer. That probably angers you too. His anger is at times measured out to protect the innocent and bring the guilty to justice. The Bible says, "He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with his truth" (Psalm 96:13). In anger God will discipline and cause pain on people for a short time so they will turn back to Him. He did this a lot to the children of Israel.

Truth is, God is "slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love" (Psalm 103:8). God's anger is always holy and comes out of a motivation of love. All of God's actions toward you are always in your best interest, because He loves you.

My Prayer: *I'm glad, God, that You are angry at all the evil in the world and that You are at work to see justice prevail. Help me love the good and hate what evil does to this world just like You do. Amen.*

When Anger Isn't Good

My Bible Reading:

Don't sin by letting anger control you.
Think about it overnight and remain silent. (Psalm 4:4)

God's holy anger is always good. That isn't the case for a lot of people. Has your anger ever caused you to do some crazy things, even wrong things? That may be, but sheer anger isn't really the problem. Anger becomes a problem when it overpowers and controls you.

Truth is, it's not always easy to control anger. Yet scripture gives you clear direction on what to do with anger. It says to sleep on it and don't talk. When you control your anger you win all the way around. You keep from hurting yourself and others. Wise Solomon said, "Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs" (Proverbs 19:11). Try it the next time you get steamed. Seal your lips and sleep on it. Keeping your anger under control really pays off.

My Prayer: *Thank You for the wisdom of Your Word. Give me the strength to be sensible. When I begin to get angry help me keep my lips zipped until I can respond in a way that honors You. Give me the strength to control my anger today. Amen.*

A Footprint

My Bible Reading:

“The heavens proclaim the glory of God. . . . Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard. Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world.” (Psalm 19:1-4)

Some say the universe and everything in it had a naturalistic cause. They claim there was no Creator God who spoke the world into existence; rather this planet and life as we know it is a product of a natural billion-year evolutionary process. Given enough time and matter, they say, anything can be formed by mere chance. But that doesn't mean God is not the Creator of the universe.

Look at your watch. Glance at your smartphone. Take note of what you are holding—a book with printed words in it. Did your watch, smartphone, or even this book get assembled by chance with no outside help? Your reason probably tells you there was someone—an intelligent being—who put them together. There is a footprint of intelligent design behind this book, your watch, and phone.

Truth is, this planet and all its vastly complex life-forms point to a masterful Intelligent Designer too. The Bible contends that people really do “know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities [his footprint]—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God” (Romans 1:19-20). God as the Intelligent Designer has left His footprint so we can conclude with confidence He is the great Creator.

My Prayer: *Thank You for creating me and all that exists. Help me be more thankful for Your creativity each time I gaze up at the stars at night or see a newborn child. You are an awesome God! Amen.*

Sadder than Sad

My Bible Reading:

The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. (Genesis 6:5-6)

Have you ever had a broken heart? It's that overwhelming sadness or emotional pain from the loss of someone or something. God felt it repeatedly as humans rejected Him and refused a relationship with Him. Feeling heartache isn't a weakness. You inherited the capacity to painfully feel rejection and loss from a God who created you in His relational image.

Jesus, God's Son, was about to take the weight of the world's sins to the cross, and He pulled three of His disciples aside. The Bible says Jesus "became anguished and distressed. He told them, 'My soul [heart] is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me'" (Matthew 26:37-38).

Truth is, your God is the One who can relate to any heartache you may ever feel and He is there to help. "The LORD is close to the broken-hearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed" (Psalm 34:18).

My Prayer: *Thank You that You are a God who knows how I feel when I'm brokenhearted. And thank You that You are especially close to me then. Help me take my cares and burdens to You and openly share them with You rather than keeping them to myself. You are an awesome, caring God. Amen.*

January 21

Seeing Is Not Always Believing

My Bible Reading:

It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:27)

Moses had numerous encounters with God but never really saw Him. One time when he was talking to God, he asked Him to become visible to him. But God said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you. . . . But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:19-20).

Truth is, Moses never really did see God directly, yet he believed in Him. He "kept his eyes on the one who is invisible." It didn't take seeing God directly for Moses to allow God to direct him through life. You don't have to see Him visibly either to believe He is there guiding you every day. God's goodness is evident all around you in creation (Romans 1:19-21), in your moral conscience (Romans 2:14-15), in His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17), in history (1 Samuel 17:46-47). Visibly seeing is not always believing. But there is plenty of evidence to give you good reason to keep your eyes on the invisible One to guide you every day.

My Prayer: *You are the invisible God full of goodness and love. And even though I haven't seen You with my physical eyes, I have seen You with my spiritual eyes. Thank You for being there for me. Help me be a visible reflection of You to my friends today. Amen.*

Wonderfully Complex

My Bible Reading:

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! (Psalm 139:13-14)

The more scientists learn how the body functions, the more mind-blowing their discoveries. Advanced imaging technology is able to magnify a human cell a billion times. And it reveals nano-engineering so sophisticated that they liken the cell to a technologically advanced automated city.

Your body contains about one hundred trillion cells with molecular robotic systems that do thousands of precise and accurate operations per second. These operations are controlled by a computerlike system that stores terabytes of data in compressed molecules. When you cut your finger, for example, millions of microscopic nanotech-like robots go into action to rebuild and heal your wounded finger at the molecular level.

The emerging response system notifies your cells by a central control system and reprograms them to divert molecules to your wound. Within seconds the mechanical activities of your cells begin to clot your blood, clear away debris, and destroy harmful bacteria. Soon the development of new cells begins rebuilding tissue.

Truth is, the human cell is a technological wonder with perhaps more sophistication and complexity than anything on earth. God made you wonderfully complex! He is an awesome God!

My Prayer: *Thank You, God, that You created me with such wonderful complexity to enjoy life and the world You have given me. Help me always be grateful for all You have given me. Amen.*

January 23

The Origin of Morals Proves Something

My Bible Reading:

For the truth about God is known to them instinctively [those people who push God away]. God has put this knowledge in their hearts. (Romans 1:19 NLT)

There is no argument that some things are just wrong. Instinctively you and everyone else know, for example, that abusing innocent children is wrong. No one has to pass a law protecting children to tell you it's wrong—you just know it is.

You and everyone else accept the objective moral value that harming the innocent is not right. But where did that value come from? Scripture says God, the great Value Giver, planted His knowledge of morality inside you. And that in itself is another piece of evidence that God exists.

The reasoning goes like this:

- If objective morals exist, a Value Giver (God) must exist.
- Objective morals do exist.
- Therefore, a Value Giver (God) must exist.

Truth is, you possess a “morality center” that wasn't put there by your parents, school, or society. God the Value Giver hardwired you to know instinctively that certain things are flat-out wrong.

My Prayer: *You, O God, exist above me and beyond me as the great Value Giver. Thank You that You are the very origin of morality—of what is right and wrong. And thank You for planting a sense of morality within me. Help me detect right from wrong today and follow the right and avoid the wrong. Amen.*

How Big Is Big?

My Bible Reading:

“I am the one who made the earth and created people to live on it. With my hands I stretched out the heavens. All the stars are at my command.” (Isaiah 45:12)

You are on planet Earth, which is suspended in a vastness of space. That space stretches on and on and on sprinkled with stars that seem endless. The size of the known universe is really impossible to comprehend, but let’s take a stab at it.

The universe is so immense that it is measured using light-years. That’s the distance light travels in 365 days. Traveling at 186,282 miles per second, light will go almost 6 trillion miles in a year!

You live in the Milky Way galaxy, which is more than 100,000 light-years in diameter. Your nearest sister galaxy is the Andromeda galaxy. It’s about 2.5 million light-years away. And how many galaxies are there in the universe, with how many stars? Scientists say there are probably more than 100 billion other galaxies spread over a space of at least 93 billion light-years that contain over a septillion stars! That’s a one followed by twenty-four zeros.

Truth is, that’s a big universe with a lot of stars. And God commands them all!

My Prayer: *You are a big God who created a big universe. I can’t comprehend how truly big You are and all that You created. But I thank You that even though You are Almighty God that oversees a big universe, You take thought of small me. Thank You for that. Amen.*

January 25

Before God?

My Bible Reading:

The LORD, your Redeemer and Creator, says: “I am the LORD, who made all things. I alone stretched out the heavens. By myself I made the earth and everything in it.” (Isaiah 44:24 NLT)

If God was the Master Creator and caused everything to come into being, then who or what caused God? The short answer is, since God is eternal and has always existed, He doesn't need a cause. Ancient philosopher Thomas Aquinas made an argument that anything in motion, like the universe, could not have been brought into motion by itself. Rather, he said, things in motion must be caused to move. That may be a little hard to follow, but the conclusion is that there had to be an Unmoved Mover, and that Mover's name is God.

Some say the creation of the universe, which began to exist at some point, didn't need a cause. But that doesn't make sense because everything that begins to exist must logically have a cause.

Truth is, God is the Mover outside the universe that caused everything to begin. “Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The LORD is the everlasting God” (Isaiah 40:28). Since He has always existed He didn't need to begin in order to be caused.

My Prayer: *While my mind, O God, cannot fathom how You have always existed, it doesn't mean it is illogical to believe that You are eternal. You are the everlasting God, the Creator of all that exists. I praise You for being who You are and that You are my hope for an eternal life with You. Amen.*

How Do You Know?

My Bible Reading:

“I don’t know whether he [Jesus] is a sinner,” the man replied. “But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!” “But what did he do?” they asked. “How did he heal you?” (John 9:25–26)

Jesus had healed the man who was born blind. The skeptics of that day didn’t want to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and give him credit for the healing. They didn’t want the man to acknowledge Jesus had that kind of power either. So they asked him, “How did He (Jesus) do it?”

Truth is, the man couldn’t explain how Jesus could perform such a powerful miracle. He just knew it was so because he had experienced it. You may not be able to explain to people how God created the universe, or how He has always existed, or how He is a real God that people can know personally. But if you have personally experienced His forgiveness and He has made you His child, you know He is real. Like the blind man who experienced Jesus’ eye-opening power, you can say, “I know God is real because I too have experienced Him!”

My Prayer: *God, I may not have all the answers to the questions people ask me about how You created the universe. But I know You are real by the fact that You have changed my life from a lost child in sin to a forgiven child who knows You as Savior and Friend. Thank You for being a personal God. Help me let people see a little of You in my life today. Amen.*

January 27

The Origin of Love

My Bible Reading:

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. (1 John 4:16-17)

It feels good to have someone love you. It feels pretty good to love someone in return too. And it really feels good not to be judged, criticized, rejected, or disrespected in any way. That all feels good because real love is accepting, caring, patient, and kind. That's what love does and doesn't do, but that doesn't tell us what love really is.

Love is more than an emotion or feeling. Love, original love, is actually a person—the person of God. He defines everything that love is and ever will be. Jesus said the motivating factor behind a real love is to “do to others whatever you would like them to do to you” (Matthew 7:12). In other words, Godlike love is always other-focused. It looks out for the interests of others and isn't selfish.

Truth is, it's not always easy to give out that kind of unselfish love. But as you accept God loving you in that way, your ability to love others “grows more perfect.”

My Prayer: *Thank You that You are the very definition of unselfish love. You love me unconditionally and I want to love others that same way. Help me say or do things to those around me with an other-focused love. Amen.*

When Intolerance Is a Beautiful Thing

My Bible Reading:

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil;
you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. (Habakkuk 1:13 NIV)

Generally you think of being intolerant as a bad thing and being tolerant of people as the loving thing to do. Well God has certainly shown tolerance to a world of wrongdoers with His expression of love, acceptance, and mercy. That's a beautiful thing. But think of this. What is more beautiful than God's intolerance expressed in His moral outrage toward the tragedies of child abuse, poverty, racism, slavery, AIDS, bigotry, and other such evils?

I was so struck by the beautiful nature of intolerance that I created a T-shirt that read on the front "Intolerance Is a Beautiful Idea." On the back it read:

Mother Teresa was intolerant of poverty.

Bono was intolerant of AIDS.

Nelson Mandela was intolerant of apartheid.

Martin Luther King was intolerant of racism.

Jesus was intolerant of bigotry.

Truth is, God's hatred toward sin that so hurts His children reflects God's holy intolerance—that's a beautiful thing.

My Prayer: *Thank You that Your holy character gives tolerance and intolerance their proper definition and understanding.*

I want to more clearly see how wrong hurts others and be intolerant of it by helping to alleviate the heartache and pain from people's lives. Help me do some of that today. Amen.

January 29

The Infinite Source of Light

My Bible Reading:

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." (John 8:12)

Jesus, God's Son, is the light of the world and He has always been in existence. Some believe when God created the universe He let His light penetrate the known world. But the light you are able to see is just a small part of the entire spectrum of what is called electromagnetic radiation (EMR).

The visible light range or wavelength of the EMR is from about 380 nanometers to about 740 nanometers. But the EMR spectrum is much, much broader than that. It actually extends from thousands of miles down to a fraction of the size of an atom. This includes low frequencies like radio waves to high frequencies like gamma rays, none of which can be seen by the naked eye. Scientists say that in principle the EMR spectrum is infinite and continuous. While time, space, and mass can all change, the speed of EMR is always constant in all frames of reference.

Truth is, Jesus is the light of the world and He is constant, infinite, and continuous too. And Jesus is the One who brings His pure light, seen or unseen, to every dimension of the universe, from the distant stars to a fraction of the diameter of a proton. His spiritual light dispels the darkness and "leads to life!"

My Prayer: *Your light is eternal and extends everywhere.*

I am so glad that You have shed Your light on me and given me eternal life. Help me reflect Your light today so my friends can also know about You. Amen.

Crowned With

My Bible Reading:

What are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? You made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. (Psalm 8:4-5)

God created you in His image, and even though you and everyone else, past and present, has tarnished that image, He wants you to regain your crown of glory and honor. If you have trusted in Christ as your Savior, scripture says a lot about the honorable position you now hold with God. Here are six of them:

- You are God's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10).
- You are His child (John 1:12).
- You are where His Spirit lives (1 Corinthians 3:16).
- You are His ambassador or representative (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- You are His chosen people, a royal priest, and His very own possession (1 Peter 2:9-10).
- You are an heir that will inherit His kingdom (Romans 8:17).

Truth is, because you have a relationship with God through Christ, you are crowned with a meaningful life now and a marvelous future that will last forever!

My Prayer: *Even though I don't deserve a crown of glory and honor, because of Your sacrifice and love I have one. Thank You for that and for the reality that I can live with You for all eternity. Help me show my gratefulness by being a good representative of You—maybe by befriending someone who needs some encouragement today. Amen.*

January 31

What's in a Name?

My Bible Reading:

Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD,
do not abandon those who search for you. (Psalm 9:10)

Those who know God's name—what He is really like—trust in Him. This month you have learned more about who God is and that you can know He really exists. And when you know Him (His name) you can really trust Him. Here are a few names or titles of God:

- “In the beginning God [*élohim*] created” (Genesis 1:1). God's name means the all-powerful supreme one who has no equal.
- “I AM WHO I AM [*Yahweh*]” (Exodus 3:14–15). He is the self-existent one with no beginning and no end.
- “Blessed be Abram by God Most High [*El-Elyon* or *El-Shaddai*]” (Genesis 14:19). God's name here means the Almighty one who is sovereign or controller over all things.
- “Abraham named the place *Yahweh-Yireh* (which means ‘the LORD will provide’)” (Genesis 22:14).
- “The LORD is my shepherd [*Jehovah-Rohi*]; I have all that I need” (Psalm 23:1). As shepherd, He is my perfect guide in life.
- “The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’)” (Isaiah 7:14).
- “And he [*Jesus*] will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Truth is, you can trust a God whose name is all-powerful, self-existent, sovereign—a God who is in control, a provider, shepherd and guide—who is always with you as a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and a Prince of Peace.

My Prayer: *I am so thankful that Your name tells me You are worthy of my trust. You will never abandon me because You are faithful and true. I seek after You. Thank You for allowing me to find You. Amen.*