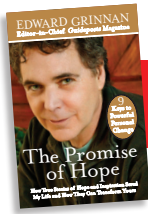


**Edward Grinnan, Editor-in-Chief of  
*Guideposts* magazine and the author of  
*The Promise of Hope* shares**

# **20** ***Unforgettable*** **Devotionals**



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

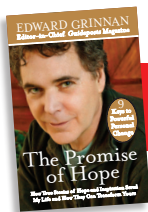
I'D BEEN WORKING at Guideposts for several years before then editor-in-chief Van Varner finally got me to agree to try my hand at devotional writing. I was completely lost, though, when it came to figuring out how to write one. Van suggested that I study some of my favorite *Daily Guideposts* writers. Of course the first author I turned to was Van himself. Van's devotionals seemed so natural and effortless, though I was well aware of how hard he worked to get them that way. I had trouble unlocking the secret to that kind of natural, spiritual writing.

I moved on to some of my other favorite authors...Rick Hamlin, Tibby Sherrill, Marion Bond West. Again, their writing seemed so natural and beautiful. Finally I beseeched Van for advice.

"It's not so much the writing that comes naturally to them, Edward. You yourself are a natural writer. It's the way they view their daily life through a spiritual lens. Do that first and the writing will follow."

So I reread all my favorites, this time with an eye for something deeper than the tricks of the writing trade. And that's when it came clear. Writers for *Daily Guideposts* are able to interpret daily events through the powerful lens of faith. It wasn't just the writing that made these devotionals beautiful and meaningful—it was the context.

Writing for *Daily Guideposts* became a spiritual exercise for me, not a literary one. It got me to look at my life through new eyes, and in so doing it deepened my faith. What follows are devotionals from some of the writers that had an impact on me. Funny how that works: You start out trying to learn from your friends and you end up being inspired by them as well.



# UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

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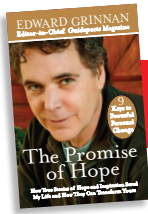
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## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# The Gift of Love

*Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud. — Corinthians 13:4*



**EDWARD GRINNAN** is Editor-in-Chief and Vice President of Guideposts Publications. He joined the staff in 1986 after exploring a number of career paths. Edward lives in New York City with his wife, Julee, and young golden retriever, Millie, who has been featured in his blog and popular videos. Edward loves cycling, hiking with Millie at his house in the Berkshire Hills and Wolverines that hail from Michigan.

“LOOK,” I SAID, nudging Julee, “there she goes.” We watched out the window as Millie trotted purposefully toward the far end of the yard that bordered against our neighbors’ When she reached the boundary invisibly demarcated by the electric fence wire that ran underneath the lawn, she sat down almost demurely, her tail swishing slowly in the grass, and waited.

If anyone tells you that animals don’t have feelings, especially dogs, they’ve never seen Millie and Simon. Millie met Simon, our neighbors’ smallish black Lab, a couple of years ago, when she was just one and he was about five. Millie fell head over tail in love. There was no doubt about it. You could barely keep her from jumping out a window when Simon was around. She chased him through the yard, whimpering and yipping in a way she only did for him. If Simon disappeared into the woods where Millie could not venture, she waited patiently for his return.

And waited. And waited. Simon was a bit of a wild boy and was known to range far and wide, and even get into a little trouble. I think that made Millie like him all the more.

Like us, the neighbors kept a weekend place in the Berkshires. They weren’t always there when we were. But when they were, Millie sought out her first love. Like today.

“They must be in town,” I said.

“Just got here, I bet,” Julee said.

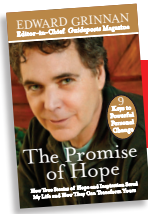
I wonder what goes through a dog’s mind when she’s in love? Probably the same thing that goes through ours. An intense longing that is part pleasure and part pain, a crazy joy as powerful as any feeling we’re likely to ever have, and a contentment we cannot find with anyone else.

An hour passed. No Simon.

“It breaks my heart to see her wait like that,” Julee said.

I said nothing, except a silent prayer that Simon appear. Julee and I both went about our business while Millie kept her solitary vigil. Love can make us as patient as it can passionate. Then, a little bit later while I was carrying up firewood, I caught a black streak out of the corner of my eye, a white streak right behind it, and that familiar happy whimper.

*Thank you, God, for making us feeling creatures, for giving us the gift of love, patient and passionate, which runs through all creation, if Millie and Simon are any indication. ©*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# Angels Among Us

*Angels came and ministered unto him. —Matthew 4:11*



**RICK HAMLIN** joined Guideposts in 1984, bringing with him a diverse background of editorial, entertainment and publishing expertise. He is now the magazine's Executive Editor. Rick and his wife, novelist Carol Wallace, live in Manhattan. They have two sons: William and Timothy.

■ WAS RUSHING TO the airport on a business trip, afraid I'd miss my plane. You never know how long the line at security is going to be. I hurried through the terminal but was hungry. No food on this flight. I passed a stand. "Frozen yogurt," it advertised. The perfect thing. "One chocolate," I said. "In a cup."

I ate and walked, sat down to eat some more, got up to keep hurrying. To my relief, the line at security was short. I took my laptop out of its case, took the change out of my pocket, took off my belt. My shoes would be okay. But what was I going to do with my melting yogurt?

"Here," said the security guard, "let me take your yogurt." She put it in a plastic carton with the napkins so nothing would spill in the X-ray machine.

At the other end of security, I put on my belt, placed the laptop in its case, pocketed my change, picked up the yogurt, sticky in my hands, and turned to go.

"You forgot your napkins," the guard said.

I looked at her. She didn't look a whole lot like my wife Carol. The hair was the wrong color and the age wasn't right, but there was a certain similarity.

"You know, that's just the kind of thing my wife would remind me of," I said, picking up the napkins.

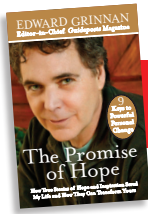
She smiled. "We wives are all alike."

"At least someone is looking out for me."

I'm glad to say that I arrived home without a spot of melted yogurt on my shirt, pants or shoes. Business trips have their own angels, you know.

*Dear Lord, thank You for those who remember what I forget. ©*





## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# The Way Home

*I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it....  
—Revelation 3:8*



**MARION BOND WEST** won the Guideposts writers workshop contest in 1976 and currently blogs on [guideposts.org](http://guideposts.org). Sharing honestly about widowhood resulted in a four-month long distance courtship and marriage for Marion and Gene Acuff in 1987.

**M**Y MOTHER DIED eight years ago at the age of ninety-two. Some days I miss her more than others, but truth be told, the thing I really have a hard time with is the fact that I can't go home again. I've ridden by the old house three times; I no longer belong there. Still, some part of me can't accept that.

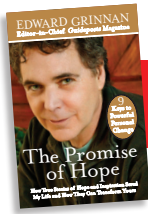
While shopping for a greeting card, I was drawn to the section marked Mothers. My heart thumped wildly, tears filled my eyes and I blinked rapidly. Unexpectedly, a smile brightened my face, for I was suddenly home again, about to run up the three steps to the open door and be welcomed by my mother, probably wearing her red apron. We'd hug at the door and she'd light up like a Christmas tree because I was home.

I picked up a card hesitantly. The bungalow house was amazingly like Mother's, but the thing that stole my heart was the open front door and the amber glow from inside the house—the unmistakable love that spilled through it and the curtained windows. The front porch beckoned me. Twilight approached; lightning bugs would be out. Pink camellias bloomed near the porch. The lawn was Easter-basket-grass green.

Carefully, I read the words on the front of the card: "For me, home will always be an open door." Almost reverently, I opened it. "And you'll be standing in it with a welcoming smile. Happy Birthday, Mom."

The card's been sitting on my desk for several years now. Whenever I feel the need, I go home again through that open door, if only for a few precious seconds.

*Father, bless Your holy name for doors You keep open forever. ©*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# A Moment of Wonder

*Tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope. —Romans 5:3-4*



**VAN VARNER** came to Guideposts as an assistant editor in 1954. As a roving editor, he helped establish the Guideposts booth at the 1964 World's Fair, and then became the Editor-in-Chief in the 1980s. He launched such favorites as "Mysterious Ways." He was a long-time contributor to *Daily Guideposts*. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, he made his home in New York City for most of his life.

**“A**T LEAST WE’LL get dinner,” I said rather petulantly. Marcia was driving me fifty-some miles out of New York on a rainy March afternoon to do some bird-watching. “It’s a rare event,” she reminded me. “It’s the whir of the woodcock.”

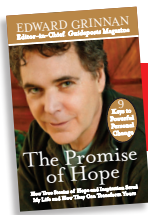
“I know, I know,” I replied, but clearly I wasn’t impressed. Her friends had invited us and several others to come stand and wait in their icebox of a meadow just before dark, just before, you might say, we caught our death from the cold. There was no assurance that the bird would even appear to do his whirring, which, I understood, was part of his mating, but whirring or no, we were promised a warm supper afterward.

Hushed into silence, we stood and waited. And waited. I was becoming increasingly aware of the chill when, suddenly, a plump bird, mottled brown, with a very long bill, rose up out of the distant brush. With a fluttering of wings it flew straight upward, up, up, two hundred, three hundred feet in the air, then it began a zigzag course, spiraling downward, singing all the while, whistling, calling, until it landed close to its expectant mate.

I watched, transfixed by what I had seen. What was this strange emotion I was feeling? The woodcock had flown up until it touched, it seemed, the very fringe of heaven. Then the downward spinning and its strange music, intended, not for me, but for the female below. I felt almost embarrassed that I should hear it.

“You were right, Marcia,” I said, humbled, on the drive back. “It was a rare event. Rare and wonderful.”

*Let me be open, Father, to the many experiences in which I find You. ©*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# A Prayer for the Children

*O my Strength, I watch for You; You, O God, are my fortress, my loving God. —Psalm 59:9–10*



**ANDREW ATTAWAY** is a senior editor at GuidepostsBooks, where he has edited and written for the annual devotional *Daily Guideposts* since 1995. His more than 30 years in publishing have included stints at Simon and Schuster, Oxford University Press, G.P. Putnam, and Macmillan. He lives in Manhattan with his wife Julia, also a *Daily Guideposts* contributor, and their five children.


**M**OST OF THE time I'm the one who puts three-year-old John and five-year-old Elizabeth to bed. After prayers, I brush their teeth, give them a drink of water, tell them stories and tuck them in. Actually, I tuck Elizabeth in. Then I pick up John and take him to the blue chair. We bought the blue chair for my dad when he lived with us. It's an overstuffed velour-covered recliner that now sits in our bedroom next to the window.

Cradling John in my arms, I sit down in the chair. In the light from the hallway, I watch him, eyes closing and breathing slowing, as he settles down. *He's such a big boy now, I think, such a guy.* In my mind's eye I can see him at sixteen months, lying on a hospital gurney as an anesthesiologist gets him ready for surgery. I close my eyes and pray: *Thank You for bringing him through the surgery, Lord. Keep him well, help him grow up strong.*

I open my eyes and look at my son. In repose, his face is sweet, innocent. A couple of hours ago, though, there was mischief in it as he teased his little sister. I put my head back and close my eyes again. *Keep his soul as healthy as his body, Lord. Don't let his mischief turn to meanness.*

Carefully, slowly, I get up, lifting my sleeping son. I carry him to his room, put him gently in his bed and give him a good-night kiss.

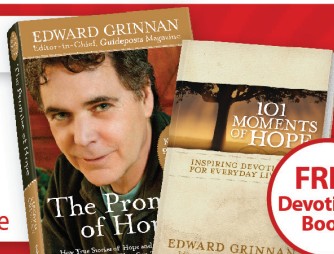
I know I could easily get John to go to sleep by himself. But for as long as he lets me, I'll be happy to sit in the blue chair and hold my son in my arms.

*Lord, thank You for the children who teach me to know the power of Your love.* 

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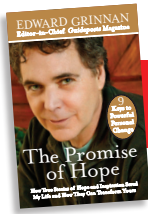
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# UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

## Face to Face

*Do not hide your face from me....*  
—Psalm 27:9



**ELIZABETH SHERRILL** has published some 1,500 articles and authored more than 30 books. Book titles—many co-written with her husband, John—include *The Hiding Place*, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, *God's Smuggler*, *They Speak with Other Tongues* and *Return from Tomorrow*. Her most recent book, *All the Way to Heaven*, recounts for the first time her own journey from atheism to profound commitment. Elizabeth has been writing for *Guideposts* for 60 years.

I'D BROUGHT MY three-year-old granddaughter to the beach. Lugging blanket, umbrella, plastic pail and shovel, a thermos of lemonade and a picnic basket, I found an inviting stretch of sand and gratefully laid down our gear. For me it was a welcome break from weeks of pressure, finishing one demanding assignment and launching another.

For a blissful hour we were absorbed in constructing an improbable castle with an elaborate canal conducting seawater to our moat. We ate our lunch and were collecting shells to beautify the castle walls when I noticed one of our sandwich wrappers blowing away.

"We don't want to mess up the pretty beach," I said as I started after it. This will be a little environmental lesson for her.

I hadn't gone thirty yards when a wail stopped me. "What's the matter, honey?" I called back.

"I couldn't see you!"

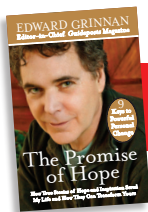
"But...I'm right here!"

"I couldn't see your face."

Wrapper and ecological education abandoned, I went back to where a little girl stood with a bucketful of shells and eyes full of tears. *My face!* I thought. She'd seen what I was doing, but that wasn't enough. She needed my face turned toward her, telling her, "I see you. I'm attending to you. I care."

*Maybe*, I thought as we alternated slipper shells with scallop shells on the grand gateway to our castle, *that's my trouble, too. Maybe I've been so busy asking what God wants me to do that I've failed first of all to seek His face, to start each day with a relationship, to ask to hear not His orders, but just that He loves me.*

*Your face, Lord, I will seek (Psalm 27:8).* ©



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# In Plain Sight

*Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." —Luke 5:26*



**JEFF JAPINGA** became McCormick Theological Seminary's associate dean for doctor of ministry programs in 2008. He was Managing Editor and Publisher for the *Church Herald*, the RCA's magazine, and was twice honored by the Evangelical Press Association for editorial writing. Jeff and his wife, Rev. Dr. Lynn Winkels Japinga, an associate professor of religion at Hope College, have two children.

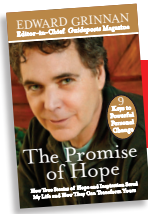
**C**OMMUTE ABOUT THIRTY-FIVE miles each way to work. For years, it was the same each day. It got to the point where I could tell exactly where I was by the tree or house or turnoff I was passing at the time. I knew every inch of that road.

Maybe that's why I was so startled one morning by a sign that had appeared overnight on the side of the landfill. **PREPARE TO BE AMAZED**, it said. Nothing else, just that, in white letters on a blue background. A couple of miles down the road, another sign. Then another and another—six identical signs in a stretch of about ten miles. **PREPARE TO BE AMAZED**.

All day long I couldn't get those mysterious signs out of my head. Their message had me noticing other things too. Did the sun always reflect off that barn? Were the trunks of those trees always such a beautiful shade of brown? Did that colleague always have such a broad smile? Did I always get this excited about my work? When I drove home, the road signs were gone. But they'd already done their work.

Now I commute to work every day along a new highway. When everything starts looking the same, I put a sticky note on the dashboard: **PREPARE TO BE AMAZED**. On those days I see signs of God's presence that I have either missed or simply not appreciated. And that, I think, is pretty amazing.

*Give me eyes to see this day, God, Your work and presence in the people and places of my life, especially those I may have overlooked. ④*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# Free Me from My Fears

*For He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. —Psalm 91:11*



**SABRA CIANCANELLI** is a writer and editor living in Tivoli, New York. Her work has appeared in *Guideposts*, *Brain, Child: The Magazine for Thinking Mothers*, *The Mom Egg*, *How to Fit a Car Seat on a Camel* and other publications. Read more from Sabra in her blog on [OurPrayer.org](http://OurPrayer.org).

I'M A WORRIER; I always have been. Unfortunately, I seem to have passed on this trait to my three-year-old son. Solomon fears monsters. Scary things live in his closet, and gorillas lurk in the attic, behind the couch or in his bedroom.

“They’re in there, Mom,” he says, pointing to his room. “Gorillas.” The first time he announced the arrival of the primates, his big eyes were so intense, his tone so serious that I checked his room as much for myself as for him.

Each night we go through the same ritual. “Come with me,” I say, entering his room. “See. There’s nothing here. Just us.”

Together we look in the closet. “Nope, no monsters.” I look under the bed, behind the dresser. No gorillas.

His little head nods in agreement. “Nope, Mama. No gorillas in here.”

One night I said, “See, Solomon, you’re safe. There’s no one in the house, but Mommy and Daddy and you.”

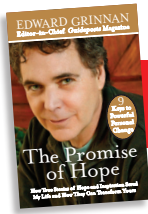
“And the angels,” he said.

“The angels?” I asked.

“The angels who keep the monsters and gorillas away.”

Often when I’m in bed, my thoughts shift to the usual worries about things at the office, finances and the future, but then I find myself thinking about Solomon’s monsters. Aren’t my worries the same? Fear of things that are for the most part figments of my imagination? As I close my eyes, I can feel the angels taking away the weight of my anxiety.

*Lord, when worries are lurking in the dark corners of my mind, remind me that You are always with me—and so are Your angels. 🕊*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# Their Love, His Love

*Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. —I Peter 5:7*



**LINDA NEUKRUG** lives in Walnut Creek, California. She works in a bookstore and also does some substitute teaching, requiring a lot of prayer and some hardy nerves. Linda has two cats, Prince and Junior.

**W**AS LEAVING MY parents' apartment after a daylong visit with them before heading on to my sister's house. "We'll walk you to the bus stop," my mother said.

"Oh, that's not necessary," I began. "I'm sure I can find—"

They were already putting on their coats. We walked the few blocks, the snow crunching under our feet. But louder than the snow came the list of instructions. "Now, be extra careful that you get on the right bus. Both the N-20 and the N-21 stop here, and you don't want to get on the wrong one."

*I'm sure I can figure that out*, I thought. Then my mother held up her MetroCard—it was a new development since I'd last been in New York City, when I'd used a token. "Here," she said, "take my MetroCard. Just slide it in the money changer on the bus. Make sure you put it in with the arrow facing down."

"Thanks, Ma," I muttered, thinking, *Next, they'll tell me to look both ways before I cross the street!*

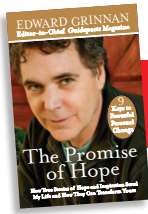
Sure enough, "And this is a busy intersection," my stepfather Joe instructed me. "Make sure to look both ways."

As soon as I was settled into a place in the line, I gave a sheepish smile to the lady in front of me, a stranger, who was cuddling a baby swathed in a yellow crocheted blanket. "Everybody was somebody's baby once," she said, looking lovingly at her own child.

Suddenly, I felt the love and caring that my parents' instructions conveyed. All they wanted was for me to be safe. I turned to look for them. I didn't have to look far—they were waiting to see that I got on the bus safely.

"Thanks!" I mouthed. "Thanks for caring about me."

*God, today let me be grateful for, not grumpy about, the concern of those who love me. They are extensions of Your love. G*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# When the Time Is Right

*If we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. —Romans 8:25*



**MARY LOU CARNEY** of Chesterton, Indiana, writes devotionals for *Daily Guideposts* and has also written for *Guideposts* magazine. She is the author of more than 20 books, including *Absolutely Angels: Poems for Children and Other Believers*; *The Power of Positive Thinking for Teens*; *Tyler Timothy Bradford and the Birthday Surprise*; and *Dr. Welch and the Great Grape Story*.

**M**Y FIVE-YEAR-OLD GRANDSON Drake is allergic to peanuts. We found this out a few years ago when his first peanut butter sandwich was followed by his first trip to the emergency room. The doctor told us that there was a small chance Drake might outgrow this allergy. We've all prayed that might be the case, but we've also educated Drake about his "problem" and taught him that he cannot eat everything others may be eating.

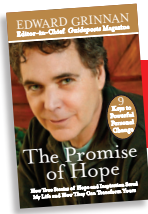
Last month Drake was retested. His three-year-old brother Brock was tested for nut allergies too. The week before the procedure, Drake was smiling and wiggling with excitement. "Nina, I'm going to have a test and I might not be allergic. If I'm not allergic, I'm coming to your house to eat peanut butter!" But when the nurse called with the results, Drake was still allergic to nuts. Brock, however, was not.

A few days ago, the boys and I were heading home from preschool. From the backseat, Drake said, "Nina, can you guess who's not allergic to nuts? No, it's not me. It's Brock!" I glanced in the rearview mirror to see Drake pointing to Brock, a big smile on his face. We drove in silence for a few minutes before Drake continued. "I will be tested again when I am six. Maybe I will not be allergic that time. And then, Nina, I will come to your house and eat peanut butter." Hope—pure, unadulterated hope. Drake was happy knowing that his desire could still come to pass. He would wait expectantly. And in the meantime, he'd celebrate his brother's good fortune.

I'm going to try (again) this year to do as the Apostle Paul admonishes: to hope, to believe and to wait patiently. It shouldn't be too hard. After all, I have Drake to show me how it's done.

*Father, I wait for Your perfect timing in my life. ☪*





## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# Our Tree

*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. —I Timothy 6:17*



**VAN VARNER**

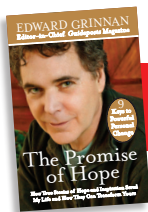
**J**UST ACROSS THE street from where I live in New York City lies Central Park. I go into the park about four times a day to walk my dog Shep, and I've come to know it in each of its seasons. We've wandered far afield to Belvedere Castle and to Strawberry Fields, to the Ramble, the Dairy, the Sheep Meadow, the Mall and more.

The one walk that is a constant with us is the one around Summit Rock. It's the highest point in the park, 137 feet. We go there early every morning, sometimes in darkness, when few, if any, people are there. Down below, I remove Shep's leash, and she runs while I huff and puff my way up. I sit on a bench, and eventually Shep comes along for me to refasten her leash. We move down and around, the squirrels scurrying out of our way, until we come to the memorable part of the walk, Our Tree.

It isn't much, considering the twenty-six thousand trees in the park, some grand and of great age. It's a simple spruce pine, conical, sitting all alone, with a three-foot fence surrounding it for protection. Of course it isn't ours—how could it be?—it's just that we have silently adopted it ever since it was planted several years ago. We were there at a distance when we saw people gather, and we watched as someone read from a Bible while the people stood reverently. When they had gone, Shep and I went up to the tree. There was no marker for it, nor has there ever been. Who the person was it memorializes doesn't matter; what better way to remember than with a living thing. We silently pay our respects every morning.

We have watched Our Tree grow and prosper. One day soon they will remove the wire fence and it will be on its own, just one more object in the cosmos called Central Park.

*Another wondrous thing You have given me, Lord. Let me protect it. ④*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# My Troubled Mind

*Their strength is to sit still. – Isaiah 30:7*



**MARION BOND WEST**

**F**OR DAYS I'D suffered with what I call "a rushing spirit." No matter how fast I thought or hurried, a nasty inner voice insisted, *You're still behind.*

My list of things to do that spring Wednesday included going to our church at ten-thirty in the morning for one hour of solitary prayer. I entered the small, simple room in our church wishing I felt spiritual—like a real prayer warrior. I sat down in a metal folding chair and leaned hard against the heavy wooden table. "You know my heart and mind are rushed," I told God. "I don't even know how to slow down and try to hear You, but I desperately need to." I didn't really believe God would honor such a half-hearted prayer, but then thoughts began to glide into my troubled mind.

*Remember the woman sitting alone on the bench outside the grocery store yesterday? You slowed down because she was reading from a small New Testament. You saw her defeated face, and I even allowed you to peek into her lonely heart. You understood that she was hurting. You almost stopped, but then you hurried on with your groceries to the car. I had placed her there just for you.*

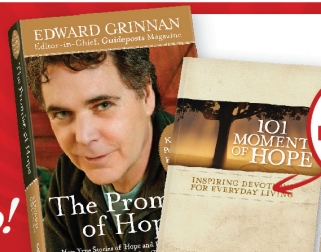
"Oh, Lord, Lord! Forgive me. Yes, of course I remember. I saw her all the way home in my mind. I still see her! It wouldn't have taken long. I... I..."

*She was My plan to help you slow down and learn to be still, child. I often reach you through unlikely people. Just sit here for a bit now while I comfort you.*

*My Comforter, when my life is speeding up, make me attentive to the means You give me to slow it down. Amen. ☺*

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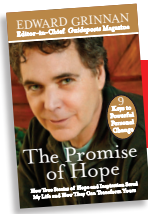


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## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# Before I Take Action

*The prudent see danger and take refuge.... – Proverbs 27:12 (NIV)*



LINDA NEUKRUG

**W**EARY FROM A day of substitute-teaching a large group of rambunctious teenagers, I settled into my seat on the bus, praying, *God, I could use a boost*. Just then I overheard two teenage girls talking about how they used Kool-Aid to highlight their hair. Cherry, they agreed, gave the best red highlights, while blueberry... I was intrigued. Kool-Aid was a lot cheaper than Clairol. Maybe this was the lift I'd prayed about—a new fashion twist.

As soon as I got home, I phoned Kool-Aid's information number. "This really sounds weird, but is it okay for me to use cherry Kool-Aid to color my hair?"

Apparently, this was not the first time the customer service rep had been asked this question. She began reading through a prepared statement that went something like: "We do not recommend using Kool-Aid for anything other than ingestion as a beverage."

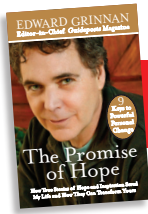
I persisted. "Have you ever heard of anyone using it on her hair?"

There was a pause, and then she lowered her voice and said, "Frankly, we get a lot more callers asking how to get Kool-Aid out of their hair than about how to put it on."

I laughed—which turned out to be the lift I needed—and hung up, deciding to stick with Clairol. But then I soberly considered the larger truth in her comment: how much easier it is to get into things than out of them. When I told my co-worker that I couldn't come to her bridal shower because I was "having out-of-town visitors that weekend," I had to invite people over so I wouldn't be a liar. And it was a lot easier for me to put those two pairs of high-heeled black pumps on my credit card than it was to work the seven hours at a substitute job to pay for them.

Over a tall glass of cherry Kool-Aid, I prayed:

*God, let me look ahead a bit today and not "put the Kool-Aid in" before I think about how difficult it may be to "get the Kool-Aid out."* ©



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# In My Weakest Moments

*When I am weak, then am I strong. —II Corinthians 12:10*



**SABRA CIANCANELLI**

**M**Y MOTHER DRINKS from the same Alice-in-Wonderland teacup every morning. She bought it many years ago when we were on vacation in Florida. My parents had just divorced, and the trip was planned so that we could get away and begin our new lives.

Unfortunately, the entire time we were at Disney World it rained. At first we tried to do indoor things, but on the third and final day, we put on raincoats and tried to tough it out. But the wet got the better of us, and after a huge argument over what to do, we decided to leave.

On the way out, we collected gifts for everyone back home. As Mom piled T-shirts and hats onto the counter, she added a half-priced Alice-in-Wonderland teacup as an afterthought.

That evening we drove to the ocean for one last look. The rain had let up and the mosquitoes were brutal, but the water was warm and we stayed to watch the sunset.

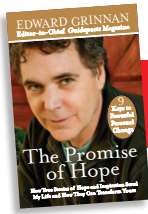
“I’m sorry,” Mom said. “I guess this vacation wasn’t such a good idea.”

I looked off into the distance and pretended not to hear. It seemed lately all we had was disappointment, and I needed something to be all right.

“We tried,” she said. “That’s the important thing.”

When we got home, instead of giving away the cup as she had planned, Mom put it in our cabinet. Soon it became a special part of her morning. Since then, the gold rim around the edge has worn off and the Cheshire cat is missing teeth, yet the cup grows more precious every day.

*Lord, so often my weakest moments become my strengths. Thank You for the little things that help me to remember to push on. ☺*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# I'm Listening

*A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children....*  
—Proverbs 13:22



**MARY LOU CARNEY**

**A**LADY I KNEW casually stopped by my office the other day. “Oh, I see you love purple! So do I!” After she left, I looked around my office. Purple had been my mother’s favorite color, but I’d never been particularly fond of it—until Mother’s death. Now I surrounded myself with it. A purple vase. A picture of an iris. The lavender border on a piece of stained glass.


Loving the color purple was one way I’d become like Mother. But what else had her legacy to me included? Was I as filled with laughter as she had been, always ready with a witty comment? Was I as eager to study the Word of God as she was, rising early to spend quiet time before the day’s work began?

And what about my own daughter? What would be my legacy to Amy Jo? Fast-food meals? Hurried phone calls? An inflated sense of my own importance?

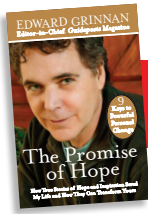
Perhaps I could incorporate another “hallmark” of Mother, too. Her ability to listen. That unhurried way she would sit and listen to folks who stopped by, even though she had a stack of ironing to do or a dozen rows of corn to hoe. I’d inherited Mother’s favorite color. Had I inherited her talent for listening, too?

I picked up the phone to call Amy Jo. We’d have a leisurely dinner. I’d listen to what’s going on in her world. I’d work on leaving her a legacy worth inheriting.

Maybe I’d pick up some irises for her, too.

*Remind me, Lord, that listening to each other is good practice for listening to You.* 





## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# The Love Within

*But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” –I Samuel 16:7*



**JEFF JAPINGA**

**I**N OUR HOUSEHOLD I’m the go-to guy on laundry day. And, truth be told, I’m pretty much a wiz. Grass stains? Can do. Mud, lasagna—does anyone know how a teenager gets lasagna on the back of a T-shirt?—no problem. There’s only one thing about the laundry that week-in, week-out would send me around the bend: clothes coming out of the dryer inside out.

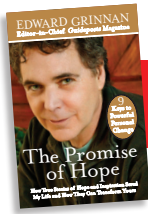
No big deal, you say? For whatever reason, it was to me. Until I went back to school.

Not laundry school but third grade. A teacher-friend of mine had invited me to visit her classroom whenever I wanted and, Curious George that I am, I dropped in unannounced one day. Frankly, the room looked like every third-grade classroom you’ve ever seen, with one notable exception: All the children, absolutely every one of them, had their clothes on inside out. Shirts, pants, caps—I didn’t ask about their underwear! But I did ask what was going on.

Here’s what one of those third-grade students told me: Occasionally, they wear their clothes inside out to remind themselves that with people it’s what’s on the inside that counts the most.

You won’t find me at work today with my clothes reversed, but every time I do the laundry now and clothes come out of the dryer inside out, I don’t grumble. I remember it’s what’s on the inside that counts most.

*Lord, whatever my outward circumstances may be today, let Your love shine from my heart. 🇺🇸*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# The Lord's Assistant

*"I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener." —John 15:1*



**ELIZABETH SHERRILL**

**A** MILE FROM OUR house is a roadside restaurant in a spectacular garden setting. For years, on my morning walk, I've stopped to gaze over the hedge at beds of roses, peonies, asters, an acre and more of color changing with the seasons. *Who couldn't have a beautiful garden, I've thought, with the gardening staff they must have here!*

I'd always gone by too early to see any of them at work. Then one day, when I had to handle a big mailing project single-handedly, I didn't get out to walk till afternoon. As I passed the garden, a stocky middle-aged man came from the restaurant basement carrying a tray of begonias. Seeing me stop, he waved me inside the hedge. He had to spell his last name before I caught it: Joseph Csomor.

"Are you the head gardener?" I asked.

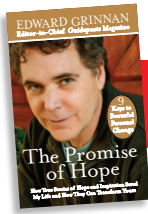
Mr. Csomor shook his head. "Just the assistant."

He'd come here from Hungary twenty-seven years ago, he went on. The restaurant had hired him as a cleaning man, but when he was through sweeping and scrubbing, he'd spent his free time digging around the roots of the potted geraniums that were the only flowers on the place. Seeing the geraniums thrive, the owner had let him plant some rosebushes out back.

My puzzlement grew as Mr. Csomor told how year after year he'd planted a lilac bush here, a marigold border there, until the garden became the showplace it is today. If he'd done all this... "Then what does the head gardener do?"

Mr. Csomor pointed a stubby finger skyward. "He makes the flowers grow."

*When the job is a big one, Lord, remind me again that I'm "just the assistant." ©*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# Body and Soul

*Give us this day our daily bread. –Matthew 6:11*



**ANDREW ATTAWAY**

“**Y**OUR BLOOD PRESSURE is a little high,” my doctor said as he made notes on my chart. “Losing a few pounds should take care of it.”

I’d first gained weight when I was eleven and now I was approaching sixty. So for nearly half a century I’d struggled to “lose a few pounds,” trying one fad diet after another, taking up elaborate exercise plans that never lasted more than a week, and always returning to the high-calorie comfort of chocolate chip cookies and peanut butter sandwiches.

“I give you good, nutritious food at home,” my wife would say. “Where is all that weight coming from?”

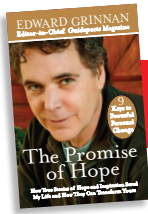
I knew the answer well enough: from donut and muffin breakfasts, fast-food lunches and junk food snacks. When it came to bad eating, I was an undisputed champion. But now I was paying a price, and I didn’t want to pass that price on to Julia and the children.

The doctor’s assistant gave me a piece of paper with a name. “Marilyn is a nutritionist,” she said. “She’ll help you lose the weight.”

It’s been more than a year since I started seeing Marilyn, and some things have happened to me that I could never have expected: I’ve grown fond of salads and fresh fruit and fat-free yogurt; I’ve become a regular on the two-mile walking route through the parks of upper Manhattan; I’ve lost fifty pounds; and, yes, my blood pressure has gone down.

But most important, I’ve learned that whether it’s prayer and Bible reading to grow my soul or diet and exercise to slim down my body, being faithful—one day at a time—to a simple regimen can do more for me than I could ever have imagined.

*Lord, if I rely on my willpower, I know I’ll only go backward. Give me Your grace today to grow in health of body and spirit. ☺*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# A Precious Gift

*Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. – Psalm 150:3*



**RICK HAMLIN**

**O**UR SON TIM has a rock band. Four sixteen-year-old boys who write their own songs, make recordings to post on their website and practice whenever they can. This being New York City, where garages are hard to come by, they have to pool their babysitting money to rehearse in rented studio space. It's a little easier on our ears, but it means we didn't get a chance to hear them until they played their first gig at a club downtown with some other aspiring bands.

"What are we supposed to do?" I asked Carol. "Won't they be embarrassed if we show up?" I couldn't imagine anything less cool than a couple of proud parents in the back taking pictures. How would it look, this gray-haired intrusion?

"I'm not missing this for the world," Carol replied.

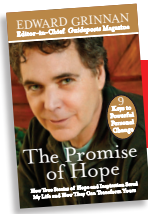
I felt pretty conspicuous in my blazer and buttoned-down shirt among the T-shirts and jeans. And I could have used a good pair of earplugs when the other bands played (it was loud, *really* loud). But when Tim's band performed, Carol and I hooted and hollered and clapped like the wildest of fans.

"You guys were awesome!" I told Tim. Their songs were clever—at least the lyrics I could understand—and their sound was great. And who knew that Tim could dance like Mick Jagger?

"Thanks for coming," he said in between a few high fives.

"Wouldn't have missed it for the world." That's what parents do. They show up...even in the most unlikely places.

*I praise You, Lord, as I thank You for the gift of parenthood. Let my enthusiasm show! ©*



## UNFORGETTABLE DEVOTIONALS

# A Little Goes a Long Way

*My mouth praises thee with joyful lips, when I...meditate on thee.... —Psalm 63:5-6*



**EDWARD GRINNAN**

**W**AS GENTLY MINCING the onion on the chopping board for guacamole—gently because I didn’t want to disturb Julee, my wife. I try never to bother her during her daily quiet time.

I had made a paste of one garlic clove and two teaspoons of salt, and set it aside in a small dish. Now I added the onion to a big bowl of ripe, peeled avocados and various spices. I’m not the chef in the family, but I can follow recipe instructions.

Julee’s profession can be stressful and draining, as it had been this afternoon, and she went into the bedroom for her quiet time as an antidote to the daily tumult. What puzzled me, though, was how these relatively few minutes of spiritual solitude amidst all the hours of chaos in the day seemed to make such a dramatic difference for her. Julee explained that it was a simple matter of “getting back into rhythm with God.” Still, I wondered.

The guacamole was done. I dredged a finger through it for a quick taste. Something was wrong. I added a shake of hot sauce. Then a frantic dash of cilantro. Just then Julee emerged from her room, stretching. “I ruined it,” I announced. Julee smiled and pointed to the garlic and salt paste, which I’d forgotten to add. “That’s not going to do it!” I snapped. My wife took the dollop of paste, whipped it through the guacamole and held out a finger full. The guacamole was transformed.

“Powerful stuff,” she said. “A little goes a long way.”

I dutifully thanked Julee for revealing the secret of guacamole. And of her quiet time with God.

*God, a little of Your peace goes a long way. Teach me to stay in rhythm with You throughout the day. ☺*