



**SNEAK
PEEK!**

Take a look
inside

Every Day
with
Jesus

DAILY JOY
for the JOURNEY

365 Devotions to Draw You Closer to Him

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Introduction

Growing up in my family, the teachings of Jesus were the foundation of our faith walk. The stories in the Bible taught me about His love and compassion for all people. It doesn't matter what gender, race, or social class a person is; Jesus loves everyone. This unconditional love is what drew me to Him. In my early teens, I decided to follow Jesus and live by His teachings. I learned early on that without Jesus's grace, it would be impossible to live for Him. Forty plus years later, I still continue to deepen my relationship with Jesus and experience the power of His love. And what better way to do so than to spend a few minutes each and every day with Him.

Every Day with Jesus consists of 365 devotionals, one for each day of the year, which will draw you closer to Jesus and deepen your faith. Through heartfelt stories of hope and grace, the writers share their personal walk with Jesus. In reading these devotionals, you will be encouraged by the Bible verses that affirm His love and presence in your life. Each prayer will give you the strength to live out your faith with boldness, humility, and the courage needed in times of doubt. Be renewed by Jesus's life changing words; discover what it means to be Jesus's disciple and learn how to shine His light, especially for those in despair and darkness.

Making Jesus our first priority in life takes discipline and a daily commitment. *Every Day with Jesus* will deepen your passion for Him; there is a word of wisdom for you within every devotional. When your faith is tested, doubts overrun your thoughts, and fear overwhelms you, Jesus is with you. As Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus's daily presence reminds us that in following Him, we will find peace and an abundant life in return.

Faithfully Yours,

Rev. Dr. Pablo R. Diaz

Love Letter from Jesus

NEW BEGINNINGS

My Precious One,

As the new year begins, I want to invite you into a new and better life with Me. I am your Messiah—the One Who came to save you from the old life and deliver you into the new. Because you belong to Me, you are a new creation. You became new the moment you accepted Me into your life, and in Me you are also becoming new every day. It's a process, being conformed to My image. Be patient in hope and be kind to yourself as you grow and change. Like the snow that falls, flake by flake, I make all things beautiful in My time. When you feel discouraged just remember: My mercies are new for you every morning; every moment is a fresh start.

No matter what, you will never hear Me say that you are out of chances. There's no conclusion to my compassion, no limit to My love for you. With Me you can always begin again.

I see you, where you are at this very moment. I know the unique challenges you are facing this year, the old things you want to leave behind. Nothing is hidden from Me. I understand your smallest concerns and the deepest desires of your heart. I have come to you to help you. I will meet you where you are. You don't have to wait until things are different before you accept my invitation. Take My hand. Trust in Me with all of your heart, and let Me lead you. I will make your path straight. Let's walk together through this year in newness of life.

I love you forever.

Anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new.
The old life is gone. —2 Corinthians 5:17 (MSG)

I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. —Revelation 3:8 (NIV)

On New Year's Day, we celebrate with family and dear friends over a good-luck meal that consists of savory pork and black-eyed peas, a dish I cook every year. Knowing who is coming, I prepare the meal with a little extra TLC. I anticipate that first knock on the front door. It always makes my heart leap with joy. After all, these are the most special people in my life coming to dinner. It makes me grateful for this time to start fresh, begin anew, and welcome in a new year with the people dearest to me.

As each loved one arrives, we exchange hugs and smiles. Delightful aromas of what I've prepared waft through the air. The anticipation of a good meal mingles with love and happiness as we all join hands and pray, "Lord, make us thankful for these and all our many blessings," followed by, "God is great! God is good!"

Our gathering is a simple reminder that Jesus's front door is always open. Through Him are new possibilities and new prospects for the year to come. It fills me with such joyful anticipation. I welcome and embrace it. And I expect to walk through the new year upholding His glorious name. What a great way to start the new year!

—Mary E. Williams

"Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right."

—Oprah Winfrey



JESUS, please be my strength and guide my every step through this new year. Amen.

Jesus answered, “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.” —Luke 5:34–35 (NIV)

Can you imagine going to a wedding where the bride and groom say, “Sorry, no food or drink—and don’t even think about a moist slice of vanilla-cream wedding cake!?” That’s a gathering I’d rather not attend. Weddings are supposed to be parties full of life, plates of good food, and laughter—not restrictive fasts. Here’s the rub: Life has rhythms of both fasting and feasting. Christmas holidays, Thanksgiving dinners, summers at the lake on Fourth of July—these are not times to fast. The events and food are part of the celebration. I can actually smell the months of November and December—cheddar-cheese biscuits, sticky pecan pie, and homemade syrup spilling over thick slices of my Skier’s French Toast on Christmas morning. I don’t want to spend those months eating lettuce!

But come January it’s time to hunker down. I focus and fast so I can take care of this body that I love. When Jesus walked the earth, it wasn’t time to fast. His years on earth were to be enjoyed with bread, wine, figs, and honey. The time for fasting would come. The cross made sure of that. When we adapt to the rhythms of feasting and fasting, intentionality sets in and we know we’re living as He intended.

—Gari Meacham

“There has to be a way to live with health and maturity and intention while still honoring the part of me that loves to eat, that sees food as a way to nurture and nourish both my body and my spirit.”

—Shauna Niequist



JESUS, I need to live in a healthy balance of fasting and feasting. Please show me how. Amen.

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. —Matthew 6:24 (NIV)

As a twentysomething, I became part of a team that formed a small corporation. Our shared goal was to build a successful business and reap a huge profit. The business plan was solid, but it demanded every bit of my time and money to get it off the ground.

The first eight months were the hardest, but the allure of success kept me going. I devoted sixteen-hour workdays without earning any income, often giving up weekends and personal time to achieve my dream. Finally, my sacrifices began to pay off.

Within two years, I was flush with the thrill of driving a sporty new car, living in a new home in the suburbs, and taking luxury vacations. But it didn't take long before lunch dates at trendy restaurants lost their allure and relationships with my business partners began to crumble. We were all groveling at the altar of money.

During that same time, I met a family that lived on a very modest income but had more joy and more faith in God than anyone I knew. I wanted that for myself. Their influence led me to put my faith in Christ. I decided to sell my share of the business and focus on Him. I soon discovered that following Jesus is the richest way to live.

—Barb Howe

“A life is either all spiritual or not spiritual at all. No man can serve two masters. Your life is shaped by the end you live for. You are made in the image of what you desire.”

—Thomas Merton



JESUS, may I never forget that Your loving presence in my life is a far greater prize than any of the things money can buy. Amen.

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” —John 20:29 (NIV)

I have the mind of a skeptic, and I sometimes doubt both the truth of the Scriptures and that still, small voice that would have me obey God. I ask myself, *On what then do I place my trust? My own reason? My limited experiences? The press? Scientists?*

It’s a question of trust of the unseen. I say that because I do trust that my car’s brakes will work when I need them to, and I have faith that a chair will hold my weight. I exercise faith in doing all the mundane things involved with living my daily life. Why, then, is God’s Word the object of my skepticism? Yes, the Bible is filled with miracles, and yes, it claims to be the foundation of life itself, so it should be held to a high standard—and it is! Generations of scholars, translators, and archaeologists have meticulously worked to bring me the eyewitness accounts of Jesus, as all these men and women were carried along by the same Spirit that had the power to raise Jesus from the dead.

I recognize that my faith isn’t in the scholars, archaeologists, translators, publishers or printers. My faith is in Jesus. Doubt and skepticism remain issues I must overcome, as they are often reserved for what the Word of God says about me and my faith more than about the truth of Who He is or what He’s done. But acknowledging that truth is a step toward righteousness, which ultimately brings me closer to Him.

—Michael Berrier

*“A little faith will bring your soul to heaven,
but a lot of faith will bring heaven to your soul.”*

—Dwight L. Moody



I BELIEVE in You, Lord Jesus, though I have not yet seen the scars on Your body. And I believe that in the end I will see You face to face, because You have told me so. Amen.

Then 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 (NIV)

When I was a child, my mom made cheese toast when I didn’t feel well or simply needed a snack. It wasn’t fancy. She took a piece of bread, topped it with cheddar cheese, and warmed it in the oven—the basic ingredients of bread and cheese melted into something delightful. I make it in my own kitchen now, but it never tastes as good as my mother’s version.

I still equate cheese toast with comfort and home. To me, it represents more than food. Cheese toast means someone is taking care of me. It reminds me of being loved by my mother.

When Jesus says, “I am the Bread of Life,” He means more than a physical loaf of bread. We require physical food to survive, but Jesus is essential for our spiritual survival. By providing the bread analogy, Jesus used a term we easily understand. Our bodies need food and water, but our souls hunger and thirst for Jesus. Only He can provide the type of bread and water that will satisfy our spirits.

We were created to be in a relationship with Jesus. Just as we need to eat food each day to keep our bodies healthy and strong, we need to spend time with Jesus every day to receive spiritual nourishment.

—Allison K. Flexer

“When you eat, I want you to think of God, of the holiness of hands that feed us, of the provision we are given every time we eat.”

—Shauna Niequist



JESUS, just like bread, you are essential to our lives. Nourish us with Your eternal bread and water. Amen.

I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark. —John 12:46 (NLT)

There's something absolutely breathtaking about a full moon. Its soft glow shines through the night sky. Moonlight is used in ballads, romance novels, and even romantic movies. It's appealing. It's easy to look upon and yet gives enough light to see in the darkest of night. It can guide you if you're lost and help you find your way home. It's truly a beauty to be marveled at.

When I think about Jesus being the Light to shine in the dark, I don't see the bright sun—though He's brilliant like the sun—because the sun can be scorching, blinding, and harsh. But the moon reflects the sun's light, absorbing its harshness, and draws people in. And with all the smaller stars surrounding it, it's a painting waiting to be captured.

At night, when I sit on my dock over the pond, I like to imagine all of Jesus's followers as stars and Jesus, like the moon, as the brightest light—the most radiant—front and center. Sitting there, gazing up at all that wonder, is a perfect reminder to me that we can draw more people to a soft light that shines beautifully than we can with harsh light that burns and withers. People need kindness that leads to repentance—not sharp words of condemnation. How I shine matters.

—Jessica R. Patch

“There are two kinds of light—the glow that illuminates, and the glare that obscures.”

—James Thurber



JESUS, let my light be a thing of beauty that attracts and points people in darkness straight to You. Amen.

I pray they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they also will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me.
—John 17:21 (CEB)

It was part of a conversation I had decades ago—just a few words, but they ended up changing my life. I’d gone to a minister for some spiritual advice. I told him how I’d grown up in a good church, had gone to Sunday school, and read lots of spiritual books, but something was missing. That’s when he asked me a question: “Do you know God?”

I hesitated. “I don’t know,” I said. It occurred to me that I knew God the way I knew my best friends’ parents. They might ask me to call them by their first names, and I would say, “Sure, Mr. and Mrs. Johns.” These were formal relationships, nothing personal.

“How do you get to know God?” I asked.

“You spend time with God every day,” this good man said. “That means sitting quietly in prayer. It might be only for five minutes, but it’s five minutes dedicated to listening to Jesus and learning Who Jesus is to you. You should do it every day.”

So I began a spiritual practice that hasn’t stopped since. Sometimes it’s on a subway train, sometimes on the sofa, and sometimes in a busy office. To know someone you must spend time with them, listening, learning, and loving.

—Rick Hamlin

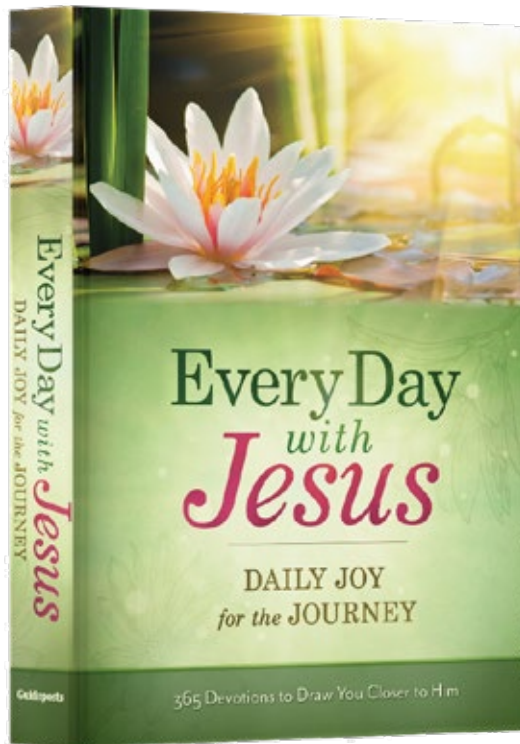
“The irony is that while God doesn’t need us but still wants us, we desperately need God but don’t really want Him most of the time.”

—Francis Chan



JESUS, every day is another day to get to know You, and knowing You is knowing the Father. Amen.

Feel the Power and Peace of Jesus' Words



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