



100 Nighttime Devotions to
Soothe Your Mind and Rest Your Spirit

Evenings *with* Jesus

FREE
Sampler!

Editors of Guideposts

EVENING

1

Rest



A Peaceful Night

BOB HOSTETLER

*Return to your rest, my soul, for the
LORD has been good to you.*

PSALM 116:7 (NIV)

I checked into the monastery guest house following a long, taxing season of ministry. I knew I would be entering into a world that was very different from the trappings and rhythms of my usual life. I found my simple room sparely furnished with just a bed, chair, desk, and lamp. I immediately felt the calm of the place, its peaceful quiet. The monks observed the Rule of Saint Benedict and valued contemplative silence, a new experience for me. I knew that the self-guided prayer retreat would last five days and four nights, and I hoped and expected that it might be a restorative time for me. But what I didn't know is that this visit would truly change my life.

I worshiped and ministered in a non-liturgical faith community, but I had also nurtured an appreciation for liturgy. So, on this first visit to a monastery, I decided that I would go to prayer in the sanctuary every time the monks did. They observe the *Opus Dei* (or “work of God”) that constitutes the rhythm of their lives. Their day begins with Vigils at 3 a.m. and ends with Compline at 8:45 p.m. They gather for prayer, too, at 5 a.m., 9 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 2:45 p.m., and 6:45 p.m.

Seven times a day.

Every day.

Most of those prayer times lasted no more than fifteen minutes, but I still wasn't sure if I could do it—or if it would do anything for me.

I did. And it did.

During the first couple of days, I discovered how exhausted I was. I'd always worked hard and had taken some healthy *and* unhealthy pride in that fact. But my hard work filled not only my waking hours but also my nights. I would lay my head on my pillow each evening only to toss and turn, my mind racing, my muscles tense. I would eventually fall asleep but would never wake refreshed. Even my “day off” was a whirlwind of activity.

At the monastery, however, I felt my mind and body slowing down, changing tempo. My usual frenzy of activity had ceased. I had no appointments, no meetings, no responsibilities. I didn't even need a watch or clock; I would simply know by the ringing of the tower bell when it was time to eat or go to prayer. Between those times, I took walks, read, or napped. At home I never napped, but at the monastery I found it possible to nap twice a day without these breaks affecting my ability to fall asleep at night. At first it all felt strange, but I began to realize that I was experiencing something new or at least long forgotten: I was experiencing *rest*.

I quickly discovered the differences in the various types of prayer times. For example, the early morning Vigils interrupted the night and Lauds at 5 a.m. greeted the morning. I wouldn't continue these practices once I returned home, but the one “divine office” I learned I couldn't do without was Compline. Compline, from the Latin *completorium*, is the prayer time that “completes” the day. It's a set of prayers that purposefully and

effectively prepares the heart, soul, and mind for restful sleep. And in the years since that first visit to the monastery, observing Compline has become an indispensable habit that has repeatedly ushered me into restful, recuperative sleep.

The opening words of Compline—“May the Lord Almighty grant me and those I love a peaceful night and a perfect end”—became precious to me. It cues my spirit that rest is coming soon and that I can confidently “lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8, NIV). The confession and plea for forgiveness that soon follows affords the blessing of falling asleep with a clear conscience.

The evening psalm (which I sometimes chant in the Gregorian fashion that I learned at the monastery) slows my racing mind and helps me to welcome the Word of God into my head and heart in the last moments of the day.

Other prayers, such as, “Into your hands do I commend my spirit . . . keep me as the apple of your eye and hide me under the shadow of your wings” and the *Nunc Dimittis* (“Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace”), fill my mind with better images and ideas than anxiously going over the previous day’s unfinished tasks or the coming day’s to-do list. And the wonderful words of Augustine’s prayer enable me to commit my loved ones and others—and the world, in fact—to God’s care before I close my eyes in sleep: “Watch, dear Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend to your sick ones, Lord Christ. Rest your weary ones, bless your dying ones, soothe your

In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.

PSALM 4:8 (NIV)

suffering ones, shield your joyous ones, and all for your love's sake." It's a critical and complete exercise in intercession and trust before I go to bed.

Praying the Compline prayers soothes my mind and spirit, like a loving parent tucking me under the covers and planting a gentle kiss on my forehead. These prayers draw the curtains and turn out the lights on all the activity of the day and hold at bay any concerns for tomorrow. Most of all, they draw me into the arms of God each night.



*Jesus, I give thanks this night that
You are with me, wrapping Your loving
arms around me. Set me free tonight
to go peacefully to sleep. I thank You for the
comfort and calm You bring.*

EVENING
2
Connection



Friendship Restores My Soul

SUSANNA FOTH AUGHTMON

*Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

ECCLESIASTES 4:12 (NIV)

Some of my most solid friendships were born during my college years. I went to a small Christian liberal arts college in the heart of the redwood forest, ten minutes from the ocean. Each school year felt like nine months of summer camp. My friends and I had a lot in common: We loved Jesus, we liked cute boys, and we loved to laugh. We somehow managed to achieve a good education, and our friendships wove us together for a lifetime.

I have three college friends who I still connect with almost daily. We all lived on the same hall during our senior year. Marie France has boundless energy, is passionate about Jesus, and loves to laugh. We became prayer partners during my senior year. She is always up for an adventure. Jane was my go-to in discussing guys and navigating work life. We both worked at the same after-school children's program. I love her no-nonsense take on life and her grounded love of Jesus. She is smart and funny and calls it like it is. Tina and I grew close after we graduated from college.

Both of our husbands were youth pastors. We bonded over the trials and joys of being in ministry. Tina has the best laugh in the world, hands down. Her honesty and her love of nurturing others in their relationship with Jesus shape everything she does. These three make me laugh hard, challenge me, and inspire me in my walk with Jesus.

Following graduation, we attended each other's weddings. We celebrated the arrival of each other's babies—nine boys and three girls in all. Life was busy, but the love stayed strong. We spent the decades after college slipping in and out of each other's lives, connecting when we could.

Five years ago, Jane invited us all to her house for a Christmas party. It was the first time all four of our families had been together in years. It felt like a mini-college reunion. We couldn't stop laughing and reliving memories of dorm life. We could have stayed up all night talking about the good times, life's struggles, and our hopes for the future. There is nothing quite like being in the presence of friends. Sharing laughter, the love of Jesus, and the knowledge that you are deeply and absolutely loved is a beautiful thing.

Over the last few years, our friendship has been galvanized in a new way. With our kids moving into adulthood, we have realized how much we need each other. We went from connecting every few years to texting every few days. Our text thread has been ongoing for six years. It's truly a lifeline. We need each other's wisdom and the connection of deep friendship when life's struggles take us out at the knees. We also like to make each other laugh. We share bits of parenting wisdom and encourage each other over our parenting fails. We cheer on our kids' wins and losses in sports. We rejoice over their college acceptance

letters. We empathize with each other over their struggles as they learn and grow. We text each other pictures of home renovation projects. We send each other funny memes and GIFs. We share sermons and song links. Mostly, we pray for each other. Our prayers for each other and our families have solidified our friendship.

Two years ago, before my family moved to Idaho, Jane hosted a going-away party for all of us to get together. It was bittersweet. I was excited for our move but felt the loss of moving far away from my friends. We laughed a lot that night, and I cried a little. In spite of the distance between us, the text thread is still running strong. Their friendship is life-giving.

The most life-giving friendship of all is my friendship with Jesus. His love for me is solid and deep. He reveals the beauty of true friendship on a whole other level. The power of His forgiveness saved me. His Holy Spirit encourages me. His Word offers guidance and wisdom on a daily basis—words of love and truth reaching across the ages. He nurtures me on a daily basis. I don't want to slip in and out of His presence, I want to weave my life into His. In the midst of life's struggles, He is faithful. In my most difficult hours, Jesus offers me light and hope. In my moments of weakness, He shores me up with His mighty strength. Jesus has promised me that I will never be alone. My past is anchored in His grace. He holds my future in His hands. In Him, I am becoming the person I am created to be.

*Oil and perfume make
the heart glad, and
A person's advice is
sweet to his friend.*

PROVERBS 27:9 (NASB)

Connection to Her Past

Angela Erdmann never met her grandfather. He'd died in 1946, six years before she was born. She rarely thought of him, until the International Maritime Museum in Hamburg, Germany came calling. "It was very surprising," Angela told *The Guardian*. "A man stood at my door and told me he had post from my grandfather."

Apparently, Angela's grandfather, Richard Platz, had thrown a bottle in the sea in 1913. He was twenty years old at the time. Although much of the postcard in the bottle is indecipherable, Richard's address in Berlin was legible. The bottle, which had been at sea for 101 years, was found by a fisherman in the Baltic and taken to the International Maritime Museum.

"I knew very little about my grandfather, but I found out that he was a writer who was openminded, believed in freedom, and had respect for others," she said. "It was wonderful because I could see where my roots came from."



*Jesus, thank You for Your friendship.
As I close my eyes tonight, I know that You will
never leave me or forsake me. I am grateful for
Your faithfulness and love.*

A Grateful Heart

JEANETTE LEVELLIE

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks
in all circumstances; for this is God's will
for you in Christ Jesus.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16–18 (NIV)

It was a frosty evening here in southern Illinois, the roads icy and the air biting cold. It was the kind of night that compels you to drive very carefully and slowly so that you won't lose control of the car. As I turned the heater up and crept along, I spied an elderly man walking in the frozen grass by the side of the highway. Hunched shoulders and gray head bent, his slight frame struggled against the wind.

"I've seen him walking here before, Jesus," I said aloud.
"Should I offer him a ride?"

It wasn't a habit of mine to pick up strangers, especially at night. But I had peace in my heart about this guy. And I knew that wind must be knifing right through his thin jacket.

I pulled up beside him and rolled down my window.

"Do you need a ride?" I asked.

He hesitated, then said, “I live two miles that way.” He pointed up the road. His beard was unkempt. Most of his teeth were missing. But his eyes were clear and unclouded.

“That’s the direction I’m headed,” I said. “Come on in!”

*He is a wise man who
does not grieve for the
things which he has not,
but rejoices for those
which he has.*

EPICTETUS

The old man moved slowly, finally climbing into the passenger seat, setting his grocery bag on the floor, and arranging his skinny legs in front of him.

“My name is Jeanette,” I told him as he buckled his seatbelt.

“I’m Helmut,” he said. On the short drive, he explained how he’d

lost his job as a pizza deliveryman a few months earlier when the local Italian restaurant closed. He’d used their truck, but now had no form of transportation—except walking.

When I asked about his European accent, Helmut said he’d emigrated here from Austria as a young man. After saving every spare schilling for years, he’d traveled to the U.S., intent on personally thanking the UCLA professor who’d sponsored him as a young student in Salzburg. Once he arrived in Los Angeles, he discovered the professor had moved to New York. Helmut worked for six months at minimum wage to earn enough money for a bus ticket across the country. As he told me the story, there wasn’t a hint of struggle or resentment. He sounded happy to share this history with me.

I looked into those blue eyes, my own moist with wonder.

“Wait! So you came all the way to the U.S.,” I asked, my voice trembling, “and then traveled from L.A. to New York City just to say ‘Thank you?’”

“Yes, of course!” Helmut said, smiling. His voice was warm with gratitude, and he continued, “He had sent my family money for years so I could attend school and have clothes and food. If it were not for him, I’d be a poor man.”

We approached a shambles of a house I’d often noticed many times as I passed it. I’d often wondered who lived there and noticed that it needed paint, a new roof, and a very energetic gardener.

“Right here, this is where I live,” Helmut said, pointing at that dilapidated house.

“Do you own this home?” I asked.

“*Ja*. Believe it or not, the previous owner gave it to me when he couldn’t keep up with the repairs,” Helmut said, shrugging. “That was ten years ago.”

I looked at the sagging roof, the dead trees, and the boarded-up windows, and I wondered how Helmut viewed his home. He’d just said in so many words that he was grateful for his life and regarded himself as a wealthy man.

As Helmut thanked me for the ride, stepped out into the bitter cold night, and waved goodbye, I thought about my full closet, my lovely home, and all the material things I enjoyed. I knew all of these good things were blessings from Jesus, and I knew I

About Gratitude

Gratitude is social. It is about, says Pastor Jason Micheli, “presence, participation, and partnership.” It is about being *with* one another, *in* life together. It is the thread of nature and neighbor, the seemingly fragile strands of gifts and goodness that weave our lives together.

often took them for granted. Helmut's gratitude convicted me of doing so.

"Lord, forgive me," I whispered. "Thank you for teaching me tonight about true gratitude."

I saw that although I have more possessions than Helmut has, my new friend had just shown me the true riches of a grateful heart.



*Jesus, thank You for all the good things
you have given me. And thank You for
bringing people into my life who remind me
to see the world with fresh, grateful eyes
and help me to grow in wisdom.*

EVENING
4
Positivity



Keep the Music Flowing

NORM STOLPE

*Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said,
rivers of living water will flow from within them.*

JOHN 7:38 (NIV)

Except for me, everyone in my family is musical. My wife, Candy, spontaneously injects songs into conversations. Whether chatting with people in the checkout line at the grocery store or gathering with a small group Bible study, she doesn't just quote the song, she sings it! Even since her diagnosis with Alzheimer's about five years ago, she readily recalls songs of both recent and distant vintage. When we moved from Texas to Wisconsin to share a duplex with our son David and his family a year after her diagnosis, we bought a smart TV that connects to the internet. Candy's gifts and love of music have been transmitted to the next generation in beautiful ways.

Our youngest son, Erik, is also a musician, specializing in keyboards and bass. He has been active in the music ministry of his church in Dallas, and he's the Director of Music at Dallas's "School of Rock." Erik teaches music classes for students from six years old into their sixties.

David, our middle son, is a schoolteacher and has formed “garage band” clubs that meet after school. These have been especially helpful for students who struggle to fit into their school’s social life. David is a self-taught guitarist and songwriter while his son, our grandson Sam, plays cello and mandolin and is a music major in college.

Our oldest, Jon, plays sax and guitar for fun. He loves swapping ideas with his brothers. His son Isaac is a music education major at school, specializing in trumpet and piano.

All three of my sons report that they cannot sit next to me when singing hymns in church because I switch keys unpre-

*The peace of Christ
makes fresh my heart, a
fountain ever springing!*

ROBERT LOWRY

dictably mid-line, not just mid-song. Nevertheless, I not only love music but draw on it as spiritual fuel. Almost every morning, I sing a praise hymn before I shower and eat breakfast. I am careful to sing only loud enough for God

and me to hear. I joke that I make sure Candy is still sleeping, so no human ears are harmed by my singing. For me, giving voice to praise for God to hear is the best way to get the day off to a good start. Often monks and other men and women in religious life spend an hour singing “lauds,” or praises, early in the day. When I begin the day in song, the flow of the rest of the day heads in a positive direction, regardless of what challenges may come.

Yes, the flow of every day will have many turns and eddies, rapids and smooth stretches. Certain songs echo in those rhythms, guiding my maneuvers through what may be unfamiliar to me. I can follow the tune from others who have gone ahead

of me, weaving it into my own song. Jesus sings with joy and hope in these melodies.

Whatever may have filled our days, every evening Candy and I wrap up with time focused on each other and Jesus. Our evenings intentionally engage with Jesus before we head to bed for a good night's sleep. We recall how He has been with us through the flow of the day. Most evenings we read from a devotional book, and often these readings will prompt us to go to a hymnal to find a related hymn. If it's familiar to Candy, she will sing the hymn. Though I keep my drone well below her lovely melody, I do enter in. Often the hymn conveys Jesus's presence with more vibrancy than the prose we read. The melody flows into our evening prayers and drifts into our sleep.

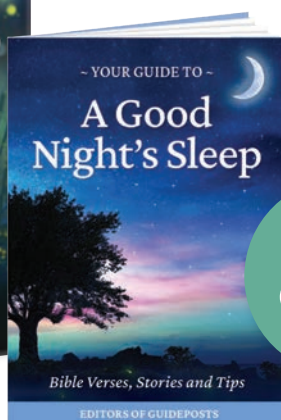
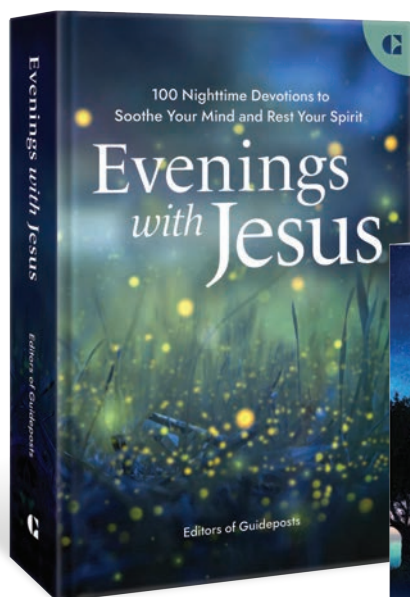


*Dear Jesus, thank You for being the
Rock I cling to, my Living Water, the One
who keeps me safe and calm. Thank You
for the gift of song and for hearing my
songs of praise. Tonight, I thank
You for Your presence.*

We hope these sample selections brought you comfort, joy and peace.

To fill your evenings with more blessings, send for *Evenings with Jesus* right now.

Evenings *with* Jesus



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