



**SNEAK
PEEK!**
Take a look
inside



All God's Creatures

DAILY DEVOTIONS

for ANIMAL LOVERS

2025



January



Hope Unfurling

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food."

—GENESIS 1:29 (NIV)

WALKING ALONG THE creek by my home, movement flashed in my peripheral vision. I turned to find a bird amid the branches of a Russian olive tree. It was January, and most birds were enjoying the tropics. I didn't expect to find many new-to-me species this time of year. Yet I had never seen this bird. And it wasn't his colors or markings that caught my attention, as he was a rather unassuming bird. Rather, it was his antics.

I stood and watched the gray bird perform an acrobatic feat among the branches. He stood on one branch before swooping down, plucking an olive from the stem mid-flight, then landing on another branch before eating it. He repeated this several times. With help from a bird identification app, I found his name: a Townsend's solitaire.

His behavior inspired a personal research project I continued throughout the winter. Each time I saw birds in our olive trees, I noted how they ate the fruit. These birds were braving a harsh Colorado winter, and I wanted to closely observe how they foraged. I discovered that the Townsend's solitaire, along with the European starlings and American robins, gulped the fruit whole. Smaller birds, such as house and Cassin's finches, squeezed the olive to get the seed inside before spitting the fruit to the ground. Evening grosbeaks seemed to dislike the olives and chose them as a last resort, chewing them to a pulp before finally swallowing them.

Several months later, in early June, many of these bird species had left for the summer. Walking along the creek, I noticed delicate yellow flowers erupting from the olive tree branches. On fruiting trees, flowers always precede the fruit. I gently touched the yellow flowers and was filled with hope. Each blossom represented future fruit for my birds upon their return. I thought of God, at the beginning of time, designing entire ecosystems to support these amazing creatures and how He plans even more carefully for my provision. In perfect time, His hope unfolds like a flower at the height of its bloom, promising fruit to come. —Eryn Lynum

*But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.
I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.*

—Psalm 52:8 (ESV)

JANUARY 2

Challenges of Life

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous hand.

—ISAIAH 41:10 (NIV)

WE ALL KNOW life is challenging. No question about that. But would we want it any other way? According to my pets, maybe not.

My husband and I always spend a month or two in Florida during the winter, and this year we would bring our dog along but leave our cat at home with a friend. Would Rocky, our cat, miss us, or would he be happy for the peace and quiet? When both pets were together, much of the day was spent in what I term controlled chaos. Lucy, our dog, would chase Rocky endlessly. Rocky did have his hiding places, and when he'd had enough of Lucy, he would retreat to one of them. I wasn't sure whether Rocky enjoyed the sport or whether he tolerated each day's chase. It was no use telling Lucy to stop; she just couldn't.

Messages from my friend on the home front conveyed that Rocky was fine but seemed a little bored. Once we returned home, Lucy and Rocky took off right where they left off, chasing, jumping, fighting. I wondered whether Rocky missed those quiet days. The silent answer to my question happened in front of the fireplace that night. As Lucy finally lay spent in front of the fireplace in nap mode, Rocky tenderly licked her head. He'd missed Lucy. He'd missed the challenge of being chased and outsmarting danger.

And so it is for us humans. It's in the challenges of life that we grow. God promises never to give us more than we can handle. He allows us to stumble and pick ourselves up to gain wisdom. Just like Rocky, who faces a new chase each day, we encounter new challenges, but God also gives us the skill and means to conquer them with His help. —Linda Bartlett

*Heavenly Father, help me to remember that the difficulties of life strengthen me. I know You will guide me through them.
Thank You for peace and joy along the way. Amen.*

A Cleansing Flight

One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

—PHILIPPIANS 3:13–14 (NIV)

WHAT STRANGE WEATHER. It is January, but the sun is shining and the temperature is in the high 40s. Winter in Michigan usually means pewter-gray skies and frigid temperatures, but today icicles are weeping in the winter sunshine, and melting snow is trickling down the drainpipe.

I bundle up and go outside, tramping through the snow to check on my beehives. As I approach them, I see tiny brown spots on the snow, hundreds of them. Warm weather triggers in honeybees an urge to get outside for what's known as a cleansing flight. The bees have been hunkered down for weeks and have had to keep the hive clean and sanitary. When an opportunity arises for a bathroom break, they take advantage of it. In one quick trip they eliminate all the gunk and impurities they have been storing up.

I have stored up some things I'd like be rid of. Painful memories, hurtful thoughts, self-pity because life did not accommodate my every wish—a lot of emotional and spiritual gunk. Watching the bees return to the hive from their cleansing flights, I silently resolve to copy Philippians 3:13–14 onto a sticky note and tape it to my desktop, where I'll see it every day: "One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Nothing hinders my spiritual growth quite like being mired in the past. I'm not always successful in my resolve to forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead, to what God has in store for me. But I am not discouraged. I'll keep trying. The bull's-eye is always the last part of the target to wear out. —Louis Lotz

*Teach me, O God, that the past is a place to learn from,
not a place to live in. Amen.*

JANUARY 4

Pancake

*In the beginning was the one who is called the Word.
The Word was with God and was truly God.*

—JOHN 1:1 (CEV)

MY FRIEND CAROL'S cockapoo was so small that she was easily held in one hand. Because her coloring was identical to their morning griddle cakes, the family agreed that her name should be Pancake.

Pancake liked to try to mimic human words, and even if she was not always successful, it was still easy to know what was on her mind. "I could read her like a book," was an appropriate description of this tiny canine.

One day Carol's husband brought Pancake to the groomer, dropped her off, and left to run some errands. This was not typically Pancake's favorite adventure, but it was far worse when she was left alone with the stylist. Even though she came home with the cutest haircut and lovely bows in her hair, she wanted it known that she was unhappy. She wouldn't move from the top of the entryway stairs until Carol returned home from work. Carol entered the hallway to hear the insistent scolding that only an angry cockapoo could deliver. Once Pancake had voiced her displeasure (whether it was for being left alone or just having to endure the haircut), she left her sentry post and pranced into the family room to recline in peace.

If Carol happened to stay up too far past her bedtime, cooking and baking, Pancake would come into the kitchen huffing and puffing as if to say, "Go to bed!" Carol would respond, "Pancake, you can go to bed without me." Only when Carol headed toward her bedroom would this loving watchdog nestle into her own bed.

Words, attitudes, and actions speak loudly. I love it that God speaks to me through His written Word and through His Son, Jesus. I also love it that He is willing to show me who He is and what He thinks. I want to be so close to Him that I can read Him like a book. —Liz Kimmel

Thank You, Lord, that You don't make me guess at what You are saying to me. Help me to be as open and transparent with You as You are with me.

JANUARY 5

Hummingbird Help

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

—PSALM 150:6 (NIV)

THAT WINTER DAY when I saw the hummingbird, the morning seemed grayer than usual. Getting out of bed felt like a chore, and there was a feeling of malaise I couldn't shake. There are highs and lows to life, but that day everything seemed tedious, worn, and old—including me. I got up anyway and began my day as if I felt normal, hoping my mind would follow.

While I was at the kitchen sink washing dishes and thinking about my current circumstances, I glanced out the window and noticed that a hummingbird had appeared. After several minutes, he continued to hover, watching me while I continued to wash dishes and think. The bird was beautiful and happy, and he seemed to be full of energy and color, the very things I wanted in my life.

I remember saying to the hummingbird, "Well, this gray morning sure isn't a problem for you." And that's when I realized that this sweet bird was a message for me. His fluttering wings, his bobbing head—it was all like a dance, a way to praise the One who made him and to be the beautiful thing amid the gray.

Maybe I was going about this day all wrong.

The hummingbird continued to move, darting to the left and right, but returned to face me every few seconds, as if to say, "See, this is how you do it! Just keep praising and keep on going." I finished the dishes with a smile on my lips and praise in my heart. If the birds of the air could praise God during this gray day, then so could I.

That hummingbird changed my entire outlook. When I focused on what was most important—looking for the good, expecting the best, and praising God through it all—everything fell into place, and that gray day turned bright and beautiful. —Heather Spiva

Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me to take my eyes off my circumstances and to focus on praising You instead. Amen.

Unexpected Gifts

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

—MATTHEW 7:11 (NIV)

MY YOUNG ADULT son, Jordan, was out of town and I'd promised to feed his cat, Rocket. On my way, I grabbed our mail and immediately felt my heart drop. The mail contained the medical bill for my husband's recent surgery. We'd been dreading its arrival. I decided not to open the envelope until I got home, but I couldn't stop worrying about it. *God, we're going to need Your help with this, I prayed.*

I let myself into Jordan's house. Rocket was waiting by the door and immediately started rubbing against my legs. "Are you hungry, Buddy?" I asked him. I went to grab the cat food and nearly tripped over Rocket, who was determined to stay close to me. I filled his dish, then sat down at the breakfast bar. Instead of eating, Rocket jumped onto the counter and rubbed his face against mine, purring loudly. I couldn't help laughing. "You want attention more than you want food," I said. I gave in and petted him. He angled his body so I'd scratch his favorite spot. He purred even louder.

I'd come over to feed the cat, but he didn't care about food. He just wanted my attention. It was like I'd given him a gift just by visiting him. But he gave me a gift too—his love took away my anxiety over that bill for a bit.

After playing with Rocket, I headed back home, still anxious about the bill. I handed it to my husband, Eric, and he could see the worry on my face. "No matter how much this is, God is going to help us take care of it," he said. He took a deep breath and opened the envelope. His eyes scanned the page and he smiled. "Insurance covered a lot more than I thought they would," he said. "God was helping us. This bill actually feels like a gift."

Two unexpected gifts in one day. Through them both, I saw God's provision and faithfulness. —Diane Stark

Walk of Faith: Make a list of the gifts God has given you today and then thank Him.

JANUARY 7

Lacking Nothing

I have all that I need.

—PSALM 23:1 (NLT)

COME ON, SCUPPERS. Find your spot.” I was jumping up and down in place trying to stay warm as I waited for our dog to relieve himself.

It was a bitterly cold day with wind and frigid air seeping into any crack in my clothing and lingering in my bones. I wore multiple layers, from my thermal underwear and glove liners to the hat-and-hood combination of my heaviest and longest coat. Even with all those layers I still hurried the dog along as we walked beside the river.

I looked out upon the water and saw a half-dozen Canada geese gliding along, stopping every now and then to dip their heads and long necks in deep to find something to eat. The bitter cold didn’t seem to bother them at all. If I had only seen their movements and not felt the air temperature, I would’ve thought that it was the height of summer.

I was once again awed by how God prepares His creation for whatever they might encounter. He made the geese with dense insulating feathers and a waterproof outer plumage to protect them from the cold and to equip them for life on the water.

I was reminded of how God had prepared my husband and me for a recent move to another state—our ability to work from home naturally evolving from COVID restrictions, the technology enabling us to keep in touch with our dearest friends, and the blessing of finding a home during a difficult housing market.

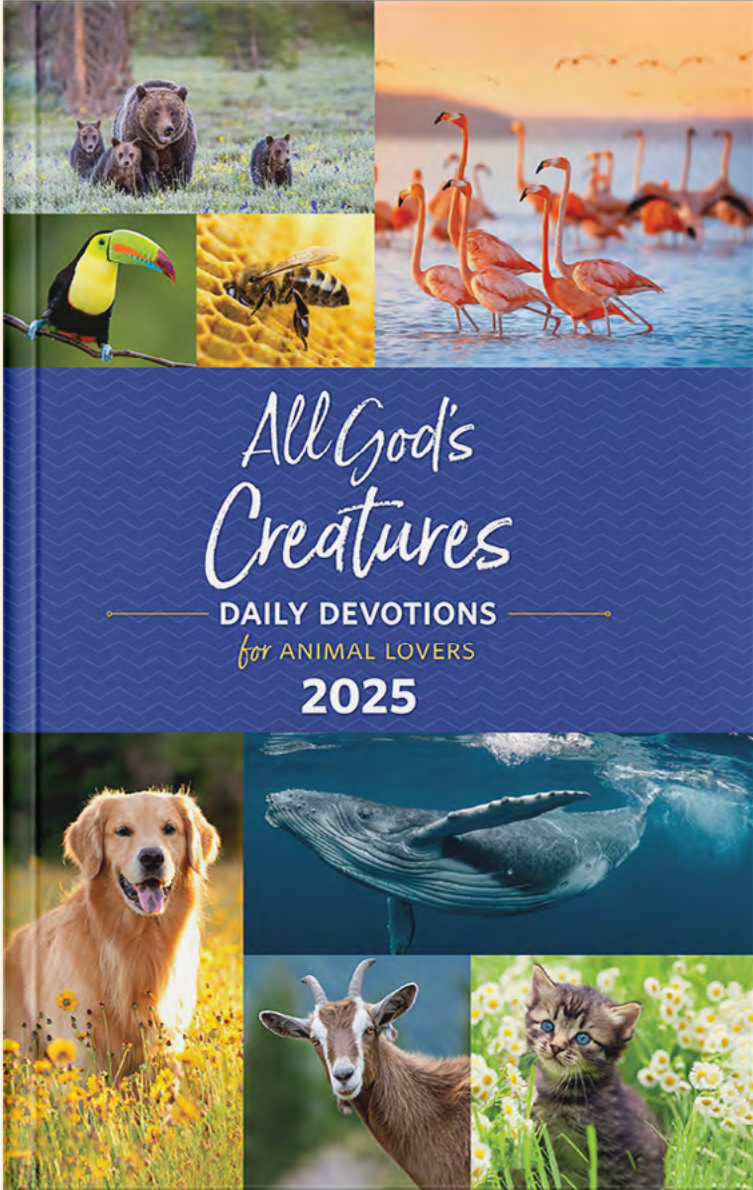
Some days I forget how well prepared God made us for this move. All I focused on were the difficulties, things like establishing friends, finding a church home, and working with contractors. Yet when I looked closely, I saw that God had everything covered.

When I remember that God provides all that I need, I, too, can glide on icy waters and not be bothered by my circumstances. —Virginia Ruth

Creator of all things, thank You for providing all that we need.

If only we would pay attention. Amen.

Daily Devotions for Animal Lovers



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