

**SNEAK
PEEK!**
*Take a
look
inside*

Walking *in* Grace

2027 Daily devotions
to draw you
closer to God

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January

The LORD has done
it this very day; let
us rejoice today
and be glad.

—Psalm 118:24 (NIV)

New Year's Day, Friday, January 1

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. —Philippians 4:4 (ESV)

How many of us start the year buoyant with resolutions and determined to reach self-improvement goals only to stumble before the month is out? In fact, I was amazed to learn that this tendency to stumble has an official day. The second Friday in January is called Quitters Day. Researchers claim that 80 percent of the people who made resolutions abandon them by then.

Some years I didn't even make it that far. Like when I did my version of "dry January" by shutting off social media for the month. That lasted until I got a notification I was powerless to resist: "How dogs are secretly reading our minds." Same result when I vowed to stop wasting time watching *Law & Order* reruns. As soon as I had a bad day, I was checking the cable guide for my go-to escapist addiction. Then there was the year I swore off swearing, an easy one since I rarely swear. Still, I faltered the first time someone cut me off in traffic.

I finally realized my resolutions had two flaws. First, they were all about stopping a bad habit instead of starting a good one. And second, they didn't include God. How can I possibly hope to change anything meaningful about myself without His help?

This year I have given myself one simple resolution with endless variations: *Lord, help me rejoice in [fill in the blank]*. With His help, each day I will find something big or small to rejoice in—the more unexpected the better—and write it down. For all that I rejoice in, God is present. The daily awareness of that presence is the greatest resolution of all, one that I will never quit.

*Father, this year help me find You in all things
and rejoice in Your loving presence.*

—Edward Grinnan

Digging Deeper: Psalms 16:11, 118:24; 1 Peter 1:8

FIFTY YEARS OF WALKING IN GRACE: A Breathtaking Tapestry

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. —Philippians 2:13 (NIV)

I have had good intentions for many years, to write this note,” the email began.

The writer went on to thank me for my Guideposts devotions. She described recovering from a devastating accident and how her daily readings had helped her along the way.

She marveled at the ways God had worked when she was discouraged. Unbelievably, she cited my words as a way God had spoken to her.

I was humbled by her message.

How could I have been important to someone I had never seen, never spoken to, never met?

The email was describing God’s presence in our lives in a way I hadn’t fully contemplated. It spoke of God working purposely, through you and me, to fulfill His work.

I found myself remembering a visit our family had made to a local craft fair. We were drawn to a large wooden loom where a woman was weaving cloth as our ancestors had done. We watched as one thread and then another was interwoven to make a whole cloth. The colors of the thread served to make its pattern unique.

Now I imagined God’s great handiwork being like a breathtaking tapestry. Is He weaving you and me into His pattern for good? Does He put us in the right place, at the right time, to serve His children’s needs?

Unknowingly, are we the threads that, one by one, will heal His hurting world?

Lord, use me for Your good purpose. Amen.

—Brock Kidd

Digging Deeper: Psalm 37:5; 2 Corinthians 9:8;
Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10

Sunday, January 3

The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. —Isaiah 35:1–2 (KJV)

Though my birthday was on a Friday, I envisioned the whole weekend as a celebration. I eagerly anticipated a Saturday commitment—buying and arranging altar flowers for the church. A friend calls the task the “ministry of flowers” with a personal touch as we set the beauty of creation before the congregation.

I found deep-pink long-stemmed roses and a few complementary whites. What pleasure it was to align the stems and greens into two symmetrical bouquets and then add a final accent with large pine cones. I felt specially graced that on Sunday morning I awoke to picture-perfect blossoms. Arriving early for the service, I placed the tall vases—sixteen full-orbed roses—behind the altar. Was my handiwork a gift to the church? A birthday present to myself? I wasn’t sure.

After the church service, the week’s flower steward usually sends the bouquets home to two households. I’d never heard a rule against naming oneself as recipient. *Maybe I’ll slip out the side door with one vaseful for myself.* But just then I impulsively pulled one big rose from a vase and handed it to Carol, an older woman who hangs on the sidelines. Her smile nudged me to spread the day’s ministry across a larger lot. I spontaneously gave individual flowers away to others—from toddlers to elders—until only one blossom remained.

Saint Clement of Alexandria said, “If I give you a rose, you will not doubt God.” Though the sentiment may be overstated, it sheds a spotlight on photos and captions I received days later. Thursday: “One of your roses still bringing joy!” Saturday, from someone else: “Still looking good!” The blossom I’d kept for myself? In a crystal vase on my desk, it inspires a birthday week of praise.

Lord, show me little ways to increase my ministry.

—Evelyn Bence

Digging Deeper: 2 Corinthians 9:6–15

Please follow their instructions and do everything you can to help them as well as all others like them who work hard at your side with such real devotion. —1 Corinthians 16:16 (TLB)

I've only purchased two brand-new cars in my life. The others were all secondhand, older models. The one I still drive, purchased new in 2016, is a bright-blue, boxy-looking Kia Soul, a basic car without many bells and whistles.

I really like my car because it's very easy to get in and out of, which is great for my lady friends, who are all eight or more years older than I am. I pick them up for every adventure we can think of. Lunches. Movies. Art shows. Parties. Tours. Trips to the airport. Events around town. These octogenarian friends (and one in her early nineties) have lovingly nicknamed my car the BOLT (Blue Old Lady Taxi).

Every day I thank God for the BOLT and the fact that it's paid for and that its seats are filled so often with the joy and laughter of my friends.

The BOLT is a lot like my faith. Not fancy, just basic, easy to navigate. Tried, true, dependable. When my friends ask what time the BOLT will be arriving, I feel my faith growing, especially when I pull into one of their driveways and feel so much happiness that the BOLT and I can be there for them.

I may not bake for the church social, donate blood, or volunteer to be on the board at my condo building anymore, but I sure can show up in the BOLT to whisk my friends to whatever adventure one of us comes up with.

Lord, I know You're riding with me each time I drive my friends anywhere. I'm counting on You to be the best backseat driver ever.

—Patricia Lorenz

Digging Deeper: Psalms 16:11, 115:9–11; Philippians 4:1–3

Tuesday, January 5

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.” —Isaiah 43:18 (NIV)

The year after my cancer diagnosis, my husband and I were totally exhausted, so naturally we decided to renovate our house. As we moved out, I used the opportunity to take stock of the things we had.

In the dozen or so years we’d lived in our home, I thought we were getting rid of most things we didn’t use; I was wrong. I found myself with three pizza cutters, sixteen mixing bowls, and more outgrown pants than I care to discuss, frankly.

If I couldn’t sell it, I would gift it to a friend. If I couldn’t gift it, I would donate it.

Years ago, this process would’ve undone me. I would have felt wasteful; I would’ve held onto things because I had spent money on them. These days, I understand that they’re better off with people who will use them, and I’m better off with the space and being more judicious about what I purchase going forward.

As I went through the cleaning-and-sorting process, I asked myself many questions. Do I need this? Does this bring me joy? If this got dog poop on it, would I clean it? But the main thing I asked was, *What am I holding on to?* As I sorted out baby socks from the ones that actually fit my children’s feet, I thought about my mental closets, loaded with guilt, grief, and unused good intentions.

So this is the year, my friends. Together, let’s let go of the things we don’t use, we don’t need, and that don’t benefit us. That includes broken toasters, hurtful words said long ago by friends, and ill-conceived ideas of who God is. Let’s regroup and focus on who God is calling us to be.

*Lord, let the grievances and frustrations of yesterday
stay there. Let me begin anew today.*

—Ashley Kappel

Digging Deeper: John 14:27; Ephesians 4:31–32; 1 Peter 5:7

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people.

—Ephesians 6:7 (NIV)

When I looked out our kitchen window, my heart nearly stopped. Two feet of snow covered our long driveway. I didn't know what to do, except to pray. When my wife and I moved to this two-acre homestead at the edge of Moberly, Missouri, I was naive about managing this much property.

As I stared out the window, a former college student of mine suddenly showed up with his tractor and began blading out our driveway. Tony lives just down the road from us. A lifelong roofer, he is strong and smart, and he owns a lot of equipment.

“It's so neat to have a tractor,” he says. “It's something everybody needs when it snows.”

After fueling up his tractor, he rides down the road, clearing driveways and church parking lots, then, like the Lone Ranger, vanishing before he can even be thanked.

Over the years he has “showed up” many times. He mows our lawn when I am incapacitated.

With his truck, he has helped me bring home furniture and trees I purchased that were too large for my vehicle. When my wife was ill, he and his wife, Tami, brought us a table-full of food that fed us for three weeks. When our roof leaked, he scrambled up on it and patched the leak.

I am deeply in Tony's debt, but he never sends a bill.

“If you paid me,” he says, “then you would deprive me of my blessing in serving. Besides, I'm in debt to you, for being my teacher.”

I don't know how much Tony learned in my classes, but I know what I have learned from him. In a word, *humility*. He is serving God by taking care of His helpless children.

*Thank You, Father, for providing the help that I didn't
know I needed, until I did.*

—Daniel Schantz

Digging Deeper: Isaiah 58:10; Matthew 25:40

Thursday, January 7

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory. —Ephesians 3:20–21 (NIV)

My husband, Wayne, and I have our savings and checking accounts with a local small-town bank. I'd recently deposited \$40,000 to set aside for taxes. The teller inadvertently placed the deposit in our son's account, seeing that Dale and Debbie both start with *D*.

About a week later, our son announced over dinner that there was more money in his savings account than he remembered. My husband, proud to know that fifteen-year-old Dale had made use of his savings account, went to great lengths to explain this was what happened when we chose to save instead of frittering away our funds. When we save, interest accrues. Dale listened intently. This was amazing. Far and away above any expectations.

It wasn't until later that the mistake was discovered. Wayne and I had a good laugh over the error. For his part, Dale wasn't nearly as amused as he watched his windfall diminish to his original investment.

Yet what Wayne told our son was true. When we invest, rewards follow. Three fish and a loaf of bread become enough to feed five thousand. So often God takes our meager offerings, and they become life-changing in ways we could never have imagined. This is what the Lord asks of each of us—to make an investment in others. Our investment in His Kingdom reaps rewards far and away beyond all our expectations. And that's the best interest we can ever hope to accrue.

*Dear Lord, show me ways every day to make
investments in Your Kingdom.*

—Debbie Macomber

Digging Deeper: Deuteronomy 15:10; Proverbs 11:25;
2 Corinthians 9:6

He answered, "Because you have such little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith as tiny as a mustard seed, you will be able to say to this mountain: 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." —Matthew 17:20 (NCB)

I've written down a list of intentions for the new year. I want to be more playful, show more appreciation toward my mom. I'd like to improve my sleeping habits. I want to deepen my relationship with my beloved. And, yes, I want to snack less and exercise more, just like most everyone who has the audacity to make these lists.

It is audacious to set intentions. It takes courage to move beyond our habits. A therapist once said to me, "The good news about undergoing therapy is that you'll change. The bad news is you won't change very much."

A mentor of mine, an editor who has been a writing coach to me, taught me the value of what she calls the "baby turtle step." It's a micro-movement toward a goal. She gave me weekly steps. The first week, I was to buy a notebook. The next week, I was to write page numbers in the corners. I laughed. The baby turtle wasn't even walking; it was nosing its way out of its shell.

But guess what? With each teeny-tiny achievable goal, my confidence and conviction to write grew. By the time my friend finally told me to write, I was ready.

My mustard seed actions had slowly moved the mountain of doubt that had been standing in my way. I use this technique now with every writing project, and I'll apply it to my resolutions.

God, there's so much I want to do and be.

What baby turtle step can I take today?

—Amy Eddings

Digging Deeper: Mark 11:22–24