

MORNINGS *with* JESUS 2027

DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT *for Your* SOUL

365 DEVOTIONS

**SNEAK
PEEK!**

*Take a look
inside*

NEW YEAR'S DAY, FRIDAY, JANUARY 1

*This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice
and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24 (NKJV)*

I MEANDERED DOWN THE SIDEWALK, collecting remnants of my grandkids' sparklers from last night's New Year's Eve celebration. They had begged to stay up until midnight to usher in the new year, but sleep overtook us all. Even without our salutation, the new year dawned. Ribbons of pink streaked the sky in the east, while the moon still lingered overhead. The world smelled deliciously new.

I made a slow 360-degree turn, absorbing familiar sights and sounds as though experiencing them for the first time. The grass glistened as with diamonds. A flock of grackles who had slept in the old oak tree flapped off, voicing their disapproval at my intrusion. My bed of purple pansies turned their sweet faces toward me. As I marveled at the Lord's precious gifts, it came to me. Every day, rain or shine, I would do a gratitude spin.

I'd always looked forward to the new year, either because the prior year hadn't been wonderful or because it had been and I hoped to repeat it. But truly, what is this new year but 365 spanking new days? Each dawn offers me a new start—to be kind, to forgive a hurt, to help someone, to do better. Lord, I promise I will begin each new day with a gratitude spin. I'd made and broken many New Year's resolutions. But this one was different. It was a promise I couldn't renege on. —PAT BUTLER DYSON

FAITH STEP: *Instead of a New Year's resolution you'll be unlikely to keep, consider making one promise to God. Write it down and place it where you will see it every day. Honor Jesus by keeping that promise.*

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Colossians 3:2 (NIV)

EACH NEW YEAR, I SELECT a word to focus on, but this year I chose two: *heavenly mindset*. Since 2022, I've focused on earthly things because we lost our home and everything we owned in the Marshall fire. As I concentrated on rebuilding, beginning with creating an exhaustive list for our insurance company of every item we lost, my mind was focused on remembering our possessions. It was a tedious, time-consuming process.

Then the rebuilding began. I made thousands of decisions for the design and construction of our home. What type of knobs and pulls do we want on our cabinets? Where do all the light switches go throughout the house? What color couch, rugs, and bedding should we buy? What pots and pans fit our budget and lifestyle? How many spatulas do I need? Another endless, thought-consuming process.

Finally, we finished and moved into our new home. I no longer needed to prioritize decision-making around all we'd lost. Facing each day, I found freedom from my previous focus of decisions regarding worldly things and was able to give my mind a rest. The final area that needed renovation was my mindset.

This year, I will turn my thoughts and heart to pondering Jesus and "things above." I'm looking forward to a year of shifting my thoughts and building a heavenly mindset as I get to know Jesus better. —JEANNIE BLACKMER

FAITH STEP: *What earthly thing is on your mind today? Ask Jesus to show you how you can let it go and create a heavenly mindset.*

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3

God blessed the seventh day and made it special, because on that day he rested from his work. Genesis 2:3 (CEV)

IN THE BOOK *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*, author Wayne Muller writes the following: “Sabbath is not dependent upon our readiness to stop. We do not stop when we are finished. . . . We stop because it is time to stop. Sabbath requires surrender.”

Oof! When I first encountered these words, it was as if the Spirit nudged me in the ribs so I wouldn’t miss that message. I need to stop when it’s time to stop. It’s like when I took placement tests in school. When the timer went off, the proctor told the class to stop and put our pencils down. I always wanted a few more seconds to fill in another circle or write out my last thought, but time was up. I had to hand over my test.

Stopping is still a challenge for me. Finishing the work I planned to complete by the end of the day, or week, is often more important to me than stopping when the day is done. When Jesus reached the end of his three-and-a-half-year ministry, some sick people still needed healing, and some lost folks still needed saving, but Jesus stopped and surrendered His work to God’s timing.

In a world that pushes me to do more, work harder, and go faster, I would do well to ignore those messages and instead surrender to Jesus and rest as He did on the Sabbath. —ERICKA LOYNES

FAITH STEP: *Are you honoring Jesus with the Sabbath and keeping it holy? If possible, determine how you will truly rest on this Sabbath day.*

MONDAY, JANUARY 4

For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. John 1:16 (ESV)

THE CONCEPT OF GOD'S GRACE is unfathomable to me. I did nothing to deserve Jesus's sacrifice for me, yet because of Him, I have the promise of heaven. I can't fully comprehend it, but I'm unceasingly grateful. Recently, I experienced an example of unexpected grace that touched my heart.

My daughter Melissa came across a lovely personalized letter necklace she knew I'd love. My husband, Jeff, had already bought me something for Christmas but told Melissa to order it anyway, saying he'd give it to me for my birthday. Melissa designed the necklace, featuring initials for each of my children, arranged in the order of their births. *S* for Scott, *B* for Brent, *M* for Melissa, and *B* for Brooke. In the center, representing Blake, my son who died, was a delicate angel's wing.

On my birthday, Jeff presented me with a beautifully wrapped package inside of which was a small envelope. Excitedly, I cut the top of the envelope and, in doing so, severed the delicate gold chain of the beautiful necklace.

I was heartbroken, but Melissa said she'd send it back to be fixed. I emailed the company to invoice me for repairing the chain, but to my surprise, they replaced the chain free of charge. As with Jesus's gift to me, I did nothing to deserve this grace. A week later, my treasured necklace arrived. It's a reminder of my precious children and the grace Jesus so freely gives me. —PAT BUTLER DYSON

FAITH STEP: *Write in your journal about a time when unexpected grace was bestowed upon you. Relive that blessed time.*

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5

This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. Ezekiel 37:5 (NIV)

RETURNING HOME FROM A RECENT road trip, I lugged my suitcase into the house and immediately wrinkled my nose.

While the air wasn't exactly rank, it did not smell fresh and clean. Subtle aromas lingered of wet dog, stinky shoes, and area rugs in need of a vacuum.

I was glad for an excuse to crack open a couple windows despite the winter temperature outside. Fresh air in my home infuses life into everything, including me, and I love to open windows for a few minutes even in the winter to chase away dead air and doldrums.

I love fresh air so much that, if I were more disciplined and had the time, I'd hang all my family's comforters outside for an hour or two each morning. I saw this trick on an Instagram reel and think it's brilliant. Imagine going to sleep each night with crisp, air-infused coverings.

Knowing that God's Spirit similarly breathes fresh life into me draws me to Him on a daily basis. When responsibilities and stress lock up staleness in my thoughts, attitudes, emotions, motivations, and faith, God's life-infusing breath of freshness is readily available to clear out my spirit, even more so than a thorough house cleaning ever could. —ERIN KEELEY MARSHALL

FAITH STEP: *Open a couple of windows in your home for several minutes today, longer if weather and allergies allow. Find a comfortable place near one and invite God to breathe freshness into your spirit.*

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6

For we work together with God. 1 Corinthians 3:9 (NIV)

ONE OF MY HUSBAND'S AND my favorite hobbies is working jigsaw puzzles. Especially during our Midwestern winters, when snow piles halfway up the mailbox post and swirls in the frosty air.

We have a special puzzle table we tote into the kitchen, where the lighting is brightest. Our ways to sort puzzle pieces vary. Occasionally Kevin plays “hog the box,” when he scrutinizes the picture longer than I'd like. And I often reach over Kev's line of sight to fetch a piece I need.

But we always agree on one point—we never work puzzles alone.

If one of us gets tired and needs to take a break, we cover the unfinished puzzle with our green-checked tablecloth. Puzzling is a cooperative effort that gives us a sweet feeling of camaraderie during the process and great joy at the end, when we see a lovely final picture.

Of course, navigating life on this planet is more complicated and dangerous than assembling a jigsaw puzzle. I've discovered that trying to do life alone just doesn't work. I choose to cooperate with God and His plan. Or I fail.

When I ask God to lead me through each day, and sometimes each minute, I feel a sense of satisfaction and serenity from working alongside Him. My hope is that the final picture of my life will be lovely and pleasing to Him. —JEANETTE LEVELLIE

FAITH STEP: *Don't try to go it alone. Tell God you want to work with Him today to sort out the pieces of your life that have you puzzled. At the end of the day, reflect on the creative ways He helped you.*

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7

I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. Psalm 119:15–16 (NIV)

THIS WINTER WHEN WE WERE visiting my mom and dad in Colorado, a group of us cousins, aunts, and uncles decided to go ice-skating. We drove to an outdoor rink surrounded by fir trees and ringed with lights. Half of our crew lined up for skates. The other half decided to visit the Italian coffee shop across from the rink. My husband, Scott, opted for skates. I, on the other hand, ran through all the ways I could injure myself on the ice. It was the coffee crew for me.

But I was filled with girlish pride when Scott whizzed by me on his skates. Skating backward didn't even look like a challenge. The new skaters were following his lead. He said it was muscle memory from all those years of ice-skating all-nighters when he was a youth pastor. His skating reflexes were sharp. He had no trouble reacting or keeping his balance. It made me consider my spiritual muscle memory. What kind of recurring loops and habits have I built into my life? How are my reflexes?

The more time I spend in Jesus's presence, the more I react as He does. The more I dive into His Word, the more His words come out of my mouth. And the more I listen to His voice, the easier it will be for me to recognize Him and follow His lead. With strong spiritual muscle memory, I can effortlessly skate through life with Jesus. —SUSANNA FOTH AUGHTMON

FAITH STEP: *Memorize Psalm 119:15–16 today. Work it into your spiritual muscle memory.*

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

MANY LOCALS RIDE THE SKYTRAIN into Vancouver every day and think nothing of it, but I find the experience intimidating because I ride it so rarely. The entire process—buying tickets, boarding the right train, finding a seat or having to stand in a crowded space for an hour, and getting off at the correct stop—leaves me on edge. My imagination goes wild with questions. What if I board the wrong train? What if I disembark at the wrong station? Hearing news reports about strangers harming commuters on this route adds to my uncertainty.

The last time I rode the SkyTrain, something unusual happened to calm my worries. At a station several minutes into my ride, a visually impaired man, perhaps in his late twenties, boarded with a loud, cheery hello. He wore a tattered backpack and a Canadian flag draped across his shoulders. He seated himself about three feet from me and pulled out his cell phone. Within seconds, his phone began playing a familiar worship song.

Jesus has always used praise and worship music to turn my focus toward Him, especially when I’m tired, discouraged, or anxious. That day was no exception. He used the lyrics to remind me of His presence, and I experienced peace in that moment. Jesus took it a step further when the man began singing the song with a voice strong and beautiful. I smiled as I sensed Jesus say, “This concert is for you. Relax and enjoy the ride with Me.” —GRACE FOX

FAITH STEP: *Recall a situation in which Jesus reminded you of His presence and you experienced peace.*