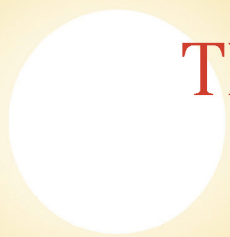


WALKING *with* JESUS

Devotions for
Autumn &
Thanksgiving



Editors of *Mornings with Jesus*

A GUIDEPOSTS DEVOTIONAL

OCTOBER 1

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

PSALM 19:1 (NIV)

I SIT ON MY FRONT PORCH, which is adorned with pumpkins and dried corncobs, and watch the late afternoon soften to dusk. My old wooden rocker creaks a slow, satisfying rhythm, a metronome to the music of another day's passing. This quiet time spent alone with Jesus fills me with serenity. I reach for the steamy mug at my side, and heat emanates through the ceramic, warming my fingers and palms. When I raise the cup, my eyeglass lenses steam, and for a moment my vision is clouded, forcing me to focus on what I cannot see. I breathe in the scents of cinnamon and apples, true symbols of the season. I smell the earthy aroma of our maple's fallen leaves, and as I sip the cider, I'm reminded of the sweetness of autumn. I smile. Sitting here in creation, I feel the presence of the Creator.

As my vision clears, I see gold, red, brown, and orange leaves dance on the breeze. Moment by moment, almost too slowly for me to catch its subtle nuances, the sky transforms.

The radiance of a vibrant sunset fills the heavens, and I gaze, transfixed by this masterpiece. I consider the bold shades Jesus selected to paint this season, perfectly mirroring the glorious hues of His eternal flame. I realize He's given me a picture—a self-portrait of sorts—where power meets peace, passion meets calm, and everlasting beauty is captured in an instant. I am in awe.

HEIDI GAUL

FAITH STEP

Take a seat outdoors, or near a window, during sunset. As you admire the bold masterpiece Jesus created, feel His presence and thank Him for His beautiful world.

OCTOBER 2

Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!

PSALM 27:14 (NKJV)

BEFORE I MARRIED A FOOTBALL coach, I had no idea the game was such a science. In the early days of our marriage, when it was just us, I learned this by watching recordings with him, breaking it down play by play, and taking note of what each player did in order to strategize. Little did I know this skill would serve me well one day as the mom of a quarterback. Now most of the time, though not all, I have at least a clue what's going on when a certain play is called.

One of the most interesting things about football, I think, is the waiting. When both teams are on the scrimmage line, they're waiting for my son, Harper, to give the snap count. If someone can't wait and jumps offside, that person's team gets a penalty. So Harper acts sneakily sometimes and tries to make them jump by using a different cadence for the snap count. It takes intense concentration for the teams to wait for the perfect timing. Sometimes a penalty makes the difference between winning and losing the game.

Unfortunately, the culture we live in discourages waiting. Fast food, video on demand, overnight shipping—these have become our way of life. Yet the Bible seems to suggest it's in the waiting that we reap the best. Often that's when Jesus comes to us. And as He will come in clouds of glory when He returns.

GWEN FORD FAULKENBERRY

FAITH STEP

Instead of pining for the thing you want, set your heart today to look for Jesus as you wait.

OCTOBER 3

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is
God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:18 (NIV)

ONE MORNING RECENTLY WE NOTICED a puddle of water on the guest bathroom floor. And no one had used the shower. *Uh-oh.*

We grabbed towels, blotting the dampness to protect the nearby carpet. We finally located a leak somewhere around the base of the toilet. A few minutes later, we heard a gurgling sound from the shower as water bubbled up like an underground spring. Not good. Then I remembered another incident a year or two earlier when the plumbing backed up through our master bathtub. Surely not! I raced to the other bathroom, and you can guess what I found. An inch of anything but spring-looking water. *Yuck!*

The leakage eventually drained, and the problem didn't require an expert this time. For that we were extremely grateful. However, the mess left behind did necessitate a thorough cleaning of both tubs, one of which I had neglected for some time. I wasn't too pleased about the interruption

in an otherwise productive day, as I completed the procrastinated job of scouring weeks of scummy buildup.

Later I felt Jesus's gentle nudge when I looked at the shiny surface of my clean tub. I actually heard myself uttering a prayer: "Thank You, Jesus, for that unwelcome interruption. It forced me to do an unpleasant task I had avoided far too long."

Giving thanks in everything is never easy. Some circumstances test us severely. That incident hardly mattered when compared to crises like illness, betrayal, unemployment, or a loved one's death. But the principle is the same.

Sometimes we need a heavenly prod to exercise gratitude, even to give thanks for a leaky toilet.

REBECCA BARLOW JORDAN

FAITH STEP

If you've never done so, begin a gratitude journal. Write down a recent circumstance for which you can give thanks.

And every day, add something new—even if it seems unpleasant at the time.

OCTOBER 4

This is why he can completely save those who are approaching God through him, because he always lives to speak with God for them.

HEBREWS 7:25 (CEB)

I'VE DRIFTED AWAY FROM A ministry I'm now determined to reinstate: Mug-of-the-Day.

My day starts with coffee but soon moves to tea. A self-confessed mug snob, I consider the vessel for the beverage almost as important as the drink. Significant size. Interesting shape. Ability to keep the beverage hot. And the mug must, must, must have a handle that fits four fingers comfortably. The grip is key.

My collection of pottery mugs includes souvenirs from vacations and speaking event locations, mugs with messages—*Hope Always*, *Write Anyway*, *A Mom Is . . .*, *Inspire*—and gifts from friends. I bought a look-alike mug for a friend of mine so we'd each think of the other while drinking our tea.

For a season, I used whatever mug I'd chosen as a prayer reminder that day. If the mug was a gift from a friend, I'd pray for that friend throughout the day. If the mug sported

a camp logo, I prayed for the camp's ministry and staff. My Hope Always mug reminded me to pray for those struggling to keep their hold on hope. Even a souvenir mug could remind me to pray for those who live in that area.

I regret having let up on that practice. It's been too long since I looked at my tea mug as more than a container for a beverage. Jesus would never neglect an idea like Mug-of-the-Day. The Bible tells us He "ever lives to make intercession" for us. *Lives* for it! Unceasingly praying for His children. Constantly talking to God the Father about us and our needs.

The thought fills me with awe. He needs no reminders. He doesn't have a prayer list. He has a heart that remembers.

CYNTHIA RUCHTI

FAITH STEP

Our humanity makes us susceptible to forgetting. Consider your own Mug-of-the-Day reminders to pray for the people, topics, and ministries that matter to you . . . and to Him.

OCTOBER 5

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.”

JOHN 15:1–2 (NLT)

TEN YEARS AGO, MY MOM planted a rosebush in our backyard. Each spring its old-fashioned roses overtake the side of the gardening shed. They are light yellow, edged in apricot and crimson. The blooms are fragrant and as big as my hand. The bush itself towers over the top of the eight-foot shed. I love everything about it. But it didn’t get that way on its own. My mom shared the secret of pruning with me.

Every autumn when the last bloom drops to the ground, I go to town with the pruning shears. I deadhead all the old blooms. I trim off shriveled branches. And then I pare the bush way back. It looks pretty sad after I trim it up. Shorn. Spindly. Empty.

Pruning isn’t my favorite gardening practice. I don’t love getting pricked by thorns or hacking away at tough

branches, but I know if I let it go, then new growth can't take place. I actually stunt its potential if I don't cut off the dead portions.

Jesus feels the same way about our lives. He wants to trim out all the old growth. He is persistent when it comes to trimming the "dead" areas of our lives. The diseased parts of our souls, the unhealthy thinking, the areas of our lives that are limiting us? Those have to go. He wants to unleash the potential for growth in our lives. He wants to do a new work in our hearts and our minds. And I think we should let Him.

SUSANNA FOTH AUGHTMON

FAITH STEP

Take a walk outside and study the plants and trees.
Growth is what Jesus is all about. Ask Him what areas
He would like to prune out of your life.