



THE ONE YEAR®



NANCY S. HILL



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The One Year Did You Know Devotions

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*For my family—past sustenance,
present encouragement, and future inspiration—I love you all.
And for Zack, Maryn, Stacia, Kelsey, and Mathew:
You are my treasured gifts.*

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1
January

What money mistake did America make?

ROMANS 12:2

The government thought of a new idea and manufactured a coin worth a dollar to replace the paper dollar bill. Called the Susan B. Anthony dollar, it had a picture of this woman on its face. She was well-known for her leadership in obtaining the right to vote for women. But the coin was very similar in weight, look, and size to a quarter. It was too easy to make the mistake of using the dollar coin to pay for something that should only cost twenty-five cents. Imagine the inconvenience of carrying twenty heavy, bulky coins instead of a twenty-dollar bill! People resisted using the coin, and finally the United States Department of the Treasury was stuck with 500 million unused Anthony dollars.

So what?

Sometimes changes are good, but sometimes they are not. The Susan B. Anthony dollar didn't make using money easier. Instead, it created more problems. But there's one change that is definitely worth it. The Bible tells us that our lives will change for the better when we become God's children.

It says:

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. ROMANS 12:2, NLT

There's no mistake involved in letting God change you! Ask him to show you some of the changes he wants to help you make this year.



When can you buy an antique by scratching your nose?

PROVERBS 15:4

At an auction there is no price tag on the items for sale. An auctioneer stands at the front of the room, and people compete to buy an object by making signals that the auctioneer can see. This keeps the auction from becoming too confusing, because the auctioneer doesn't have to listen to the yelling of many voices shouting out suggested prices. By silently signaling, people can also bid without everyone else in the room knowing that they're interested in a certain object. But how do you know what moves to make? The most common signals for bidding are touching the nose or earlobe, wiggling the nose, lifting a hat, winking, nodding, or holding up a card that has your identification number on it. Do you have to sit totally still while visiting an auction if you don't want to bid? No, because people talk privately with the auctioneer beforehand and tell him which signal they will use. The movements of those people are the ones recognized by the auctioneer during the auction.

So what?

Sometimes, if we're not getting what we want, we show "signals" to other people. We frown or cry or say mean words. But there is a better way. *The Bible advises:*

Gentle words cause life and health; griping brings discouragement.

PROVERBS 15:4, TLB

When people receive pleasant signals from you, they will be more likely to help you or give you what you need. How about gently asking for God's help to delete those gripe-type words from your vocabulary?


January

What's the background on "backlog"?

PSALM 94:16-19

People say they have a "backlog" when they're behind in the work they have to do. They're usually trying to catch up or get it all done. But you might be surprised to know that "backlog" isn't a modern word. Its story comes from long ago in the days when the only way to heat a house was to keep a fire constantly burning in the fireplace. Making sure the fire lasted all night while people slept was a problem. Before going to bed, someone would put an enormous log, maybe as large as two feet thick, at the back of the fireplace. Smaller logs would be placed in front. Eventually the big log would heat up from the flames of the smaller kindling. Instead of bursting into flames itself, the log in back would slowly smolder all night long, making heat. In the morning, that log would have enough embers left to relight the fire. That's why a "backlog" stands for something that's left over or not all used up.

So what?

Sometimes we carry around a backlog of guilty feelings or hurts for things that happened in the past. It seems as if our bad feelings will never leave us—as if we'll be stuck with them forever. But God doesn't want us to bear that burden. *The Bible says:*

Who will be my shield? I would have died unless the Lord had helped me. I screamed, "I'm slipping, Lord!" and he was kind and saved me. Lord, when doubts fill my mind, when my heart is in turmoil, quiet me and give me renewed hope and cheer. PSALM 94:16-19, TLB

When you are God's child, you are entitled to his protection against your backlog of hurt, guilt, and fear. Call out to God, and he will fill you with "hope and cheer."



4
January

When do you “let the cat out of the bag”?

1 PETER 2:1

Maybe you’re supposed to keep quiet about plans for a surprise birthday party, or your parents have asked you not to say anything yet about the new baby your family is expecting. But you forget (or ignore) what you’ve been told, and you share the news ahead of time. That’s when someone may say that you “let the cat out of the bag.” What does that mean? What cat? What bag? The answers come from history. It used to be the custom at county fairs for merchants to sell small pigs. After a sale, the merchants would tie up the animal and place it in a bag so the customer could carry it home. When he got the bag home, he would open it and release his purchase. Sometimes the customer would be surprised and dismayed to find that the merchant had been dishonest. Out of the bag would come the merchant’s “secret,” which had been hidden all the way home. He had not put an expensive pig in the bag, but—you guessed it—an ordinary cat. The customer paid a great deal of money, but the merchant kept the pig to sell again to someone else.

So what?

Keeping things hidden, whether an object or a fact about ourselves, almost always causes problems. It takes lots of energy to pretend to be calm when we’re anxious, to act cheerful when we’re sad, or to remember what gossip we whispered to whom. But how do you become a more honest person?

The Bible says:

Get rid of your feelings of hatred. Don’t just pretend to be good! Be done with dishonesty and jealousy and talking about others behind their backs. 1 PETER 2:1, TLB

We can stop pretending that we’re good and let Jesus Christ make it true! He has the power to release all of the bad tricks in our bags and set us free.


5
January

How did a bathtub help solve a mystery?

JAMES 1:12

Archimedes, an early Greek scientist, was given a mystery to solve by the king. The king was afraid that his crown-maker had cheated. What if the man had added a cheaper metal into the crown, so he could keep the real gold for himself? Archimedes was supposed to prove whether the crown was pure gold or not, without destroying the crown in the process. Archimedes thought hard about a solution for this problem, but nothing occurred to him until he was taking a bath one evening. As he lowered his body into the tub, the water rose up around him. Suddenly he had a way to solve the puzzle! Archimedes realized that when something heavy is put into water, the same weight of water moves aside. So he began his science experiment by figuring out what the crown should weigh if it was pure gold. Then he put that amount of pure gold into the water, and when the water moved, he measured how much the moving water weighed. Next, he dropped the king's crown into water. When the water moved, he weighed again. Oops! This time the water was heavier than the first time. The crown-maker must have added some other cheaper, heavier metal, because the water weights didn't match. The king was right—his crown wasn't pure gold, and Archimedes proved it.

So what?

You can have a crown for free that is much more valuable than gold. How do you get it? *The Bible tells us:*

Happy is the man who doesn't give in and do wrong when he is tempted, for afterwards he will get as his reward the crown of life that God has promised those who love him. JAMES 1:12, TLB

This crown means you have a place in heaven reserved just for you. No one can steal it or replace it with something less. Give your life to God and claim your crown!


January

How did cowboys get their meals “to go”?

EPHESIANS 4:31-32


There were no fast-food drive-ins for cowboys, so they had to figure out how to take their own food along. Some cowboys cut meat into strips, dried it in the sun, and then carried it in their saddlebags until they were hungry. Cowboys from Argentina, called *gauchos*, had a slightly different way of “cooking” on the go. They placed raw meat strips under their saddles. By the end of the day, the meat was cooked by the heat from the horse’s body and the friction of the saddle’s movement. The strips were also tenderized at the same time by the rocking of the saddle. These meat strips had a Spanish name—*charqui*, meaning “dried meat.” It might surprise you to know that we still eat this food. The beef “charqui” of yesterday is the beef “jerky” of today!

So what?

Meat is better when it’s tender instead of tough. People are too. *The Bible says:*

Stop being mean, bad-tempered and angry. Quarreling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ. EPHESIANS 4:31-32, TLB

We can ask Jesus to soften our hearts and make us sensitive to others. It will prepare us to do whatever he wants us to do, wherever he wants us to do it!



7
January

Why are girls' and boys' bikes different?

PSALM 95:4-5

Have you ever stopped to wonder why a girl's bike has the crossbar in a different place than a boy's? It has been proven that the ideal shape for a bicycle frame is a triangle or a diamond. Those shapes make the bike strong and able to support weight better. Boys' bicycles, with the crossbar parallel to the ground, are built for top efficiency. But girls' bikes are made differently for a historical reason. In the early 1890s, the crossbar was lowered for girls so that they could mount and pedal more easily while wearing their long skirts. Their bikes were called "safety bikes," and even though girls usually don't wear skirts when they ride bikes anymore (especially not long skirts), the design has never been changed. However, serious bikers, both male and female, use the male-frame bike when they are concerned about performance and durability.

So what?

Creating a way for girls to ride bikes comfortably was probably considered an impressive invention in its day. But what a tiny creation, compared to the works of the Master Inventor! *The Bible describes some of them:*

In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. PSALM 95:4-5, NIV

Anything and everything man can create is so little in comparison to what God has done. Thinking about his awesome powers reminds us of how mighty he is and was and always will be.



How did dead fish help improve frozen foods?

TITUS 2:7

The story of frozen foods begins with fish. When Eskimos fish in the Arctic, the fish they pull out of the water freezes solid soon after hitting the fifty-degrees-below-zero air. In the early 1900s, Clarence Birdseye, a biologist, watched this happen and realized that freezing food quickly was the secret to good taste. The slow freezing process being used at that time damaged food's cells, which caused juices to leak out and the food to turn mushy and spoil. Anyone who tried to eat these bad-tasting early frozen foods never wanted to try them again. Not only that, but stores were supposed to buy expensive refrigeration equipment to stock the foods that no customers wanted to buy! So Birdseye started his own frozen foods company in 1922. Even though he eventually sold his company, his ideas and name remain part of frozen foods.

The first thing that was done to boost sales was to label the foods "frosted" instead of "frozen," because "frozen" reminded people of bad tastes. Then free refrigeration units were installed in eighteen grocery stores. But consumers didn't have freezers at home, so they had to eat the frozen foods the same day they were purchased. What really made frozen foods popular was World War II. Women were working and didn't have time to cook. Since canned foods used so much metal, which was needed for the war, frozen foods were available at less cost. It was even possible to rent space at a food locker to store frozen foods until they were needed. The popularity of frozen foods has grown over the years, and today the Birds Eye brand can be found in almost every grocery store.

So what?

The Eskimos probably weren't even aware that Clarence Birdseye was watching them, yet what he saw influenced his entire life's work. You may not have noticed it, but other people may be watching you. If they are copying you, what will they learn? If you'd like to be a good influence but you're not really sure how to go about it, the Bible gives you a great tip. *It says:*

Let everything you do reflect your love of the truth and the fact that you are in dead earnest about it. TITUS 2:7, TLB

Telling people what they should do isn't very convincing. We have the power to really make a difference in someone's life by showing how Jesus has changed us.



January

What's up with eyebrows?

ISAIAH 2:11-12

What happens when we raise our eyebrows? Unlike animals that depend more on hearing or smell, humans depend most on seeing. While animals flare their nostrils or raise their ears to heighten their alertness, we widen our eyes, dilate our pupils, and raise our eyebrows to see more clearly. It's a way our body tries to protect itself better.

Lowering our eyebrows in concentration is also a protection device, because a wrinkled brow makes the eyes' openings smaller. Our eyebrows also move because we have learned to communicate by making expressions with our face. Raised eyebrows can show surprise, questioning, disapproval, or interest.

So what?

Almost all of us know someone we disapprove of. We don't like the way that person talks or acts or looks. But we shouldn't be too quick to "raise our eyebrows" at this person. When we think we're better than someone else, we can get into serious trouble. *The Bible tells us:*

The day is coming when your proud looks will be brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted. On that day the Lord of Hosts will move against the proud and haughty and bring them to the dust. ISAAH 2:11-12, TLB

If we don't enjoy having someone "look down" on us, we shouldn't look down on anyone else.



How do you build a skyscraper with matchsticks?

PROVERBS 18:10

The first skyscraper was built from matchsticks and playing cards—at least in the architect’s mind. In the late 1800s, William LeBaron Jenney finally solved the problem of how to build a structure with ten stories or more. Until then, builders had found that using brick walls would work only up to nine stories. The tenth story caused the whole building to crumble under its own weight. Jenney thought for months about how to overcome this puzzle, but without success. While relaxing, stacking matchsticks to make small boxes, he had an intriguing idea. Jenney covered his matchstick houses with playing cards and realized that this same process, using different materials, might be his answer. If he relied on steel beams for support and then added the bricks, the buildings might be strong enough to be built higher.

Following this blueprint, in 1885 Jenney oversaw construction in Chicago of the first skyscraper. The building, known as the Home Insurance Building, had only ten stories and was only 138 feet high, which is short compared to today’s 1,454-foot Sears Tower. But that ten-story building is considered to be the father of skyscrapers. It was the addition of the extra floor that allowed Jenney to prove he could take buildings to new heights.

So what?

If your apartment or your doctor’s office ended up being located in the first skyscraper, you would have to trust that the architect knew what he was doing. You would be going on faith that he hadn’t made any mistakes and it would be okay to visit the tenth floor. God wants you to treat him that way also. He doesn’t make mistakes, and he always knows what he’s doing. In addition, he loves you so much that he will only do what is good for you. So you can trust God and have faith in his grand design. *The Bible promises:*

The name of the LORD is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe. PROVERBS 18:10, NLT

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