
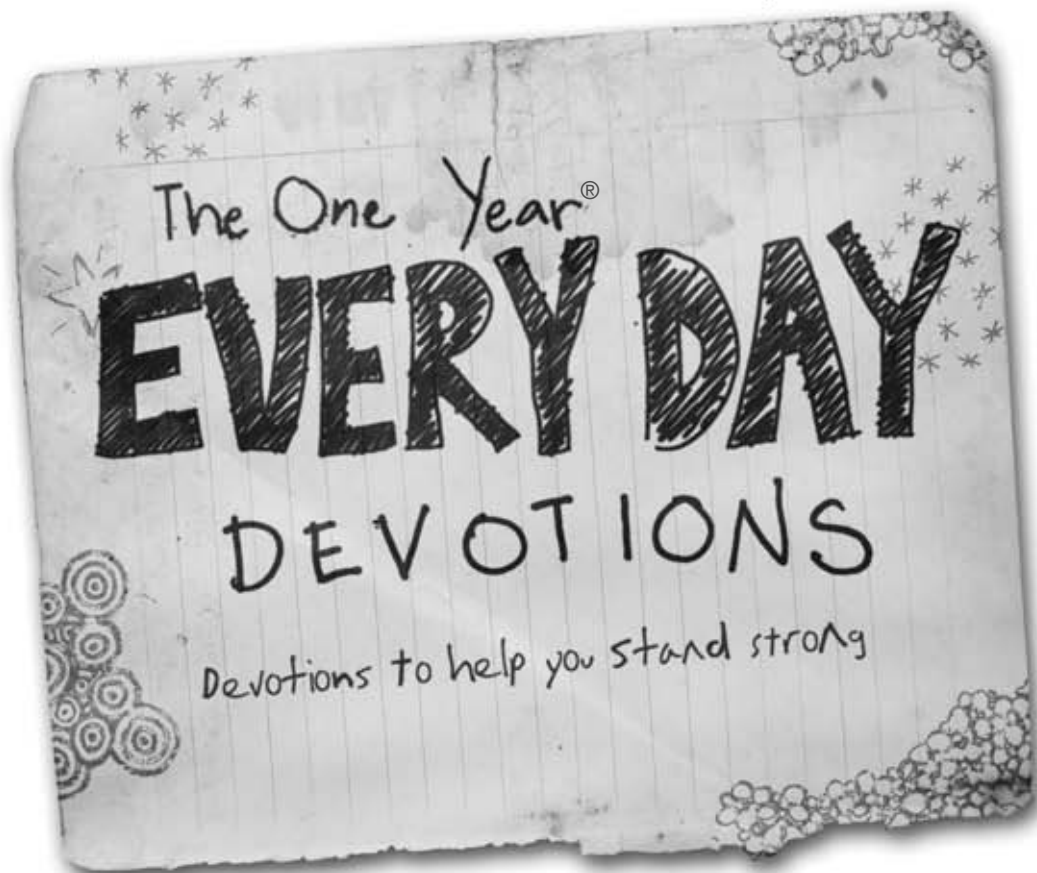


The One Year<sup>®</sup>  
Every Day Devotions



The  
**ONE**  
**YEAR**<sup>®</sup>



**STEPHEN ARTERBURN • JESSE FLOREA**



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Today is the start of something big. It's the first day of a new year, another step into the twenty-first century, a bold leap into your future. Isn't that great?! Aren't you totally excited?!?

Well, maybe you're not excited. Maybe you feel it's a little scary. And you're right. Getting ready for the first day of a new school year, moving to a different house, getting a new haircut, having a new baby brother or sister, trying a new food—any new beginning can be a bit frightening. You don't know what to expect. Your mind can race with questions. Is this the year I make first chair in the band? Is this the year I have to get braces? Is this the year I grow six inches? Is this the year I score big in soccer?

Only time will answer all of your questions. But you can answer one question today: Will you drift into the next 365 days timid and afraid about what's going to happen, or will you enter this year with a smile on your face expecting great things?

Check out 2 Timothy 1:7:

In this verse the apostle Paul encourages his friend Timothy to rely on God's Spirit to make him powerful. As a believer in Jesus Christ, you have that same Spirit inside of you to help you be strong instead of afraid.

\* \* \*

Did you know you were born with only two fears? The fear of falling and the fear of loud noises are all that scare babies. But as you grow, other fears enter your mind. Will you fit in at school? Will you be the best? What will happen tomorrow? A popular saying goes, "Let go and let God." It means don't worry about it. Trust God with your future. He wants to give you a life filled with his joy, power, and love. Will you step out in boldness and live for him?

Here are a couple of things I'm trusting God for boldness to accomplish this year:

- 1. ....
- 2. ....

PRAY:

Ask God to fill you with his spirit and make you bold as you begin a new year.



I BELIEVE...  
God wants me to be bold.

# JANUARY 2



## Creak! Crack! BANG!

You just heard a loud noise that woke you up in the middle of the night. You peek around the room but don't see anything. You strain your ears, but the sound is gone. What should you do next?

- Pull the covers over your head, curl up in a little ball, and try to sleep as scary thoughts race through your mind.
- Jump out of bed and shout, "I've got a baseball bat in here. Don't mess with me!"
- Sit up and holler for your mom or dad.
- Calm down, start thinking straight, and ask God to help you fall back to sleep and have good dreams.

Creaks and squeaks in the night can be freaky. But those things can seem like no big deal compared to bigger scares such as threats of terrorism or wondering if your parents will ever get divorced. Life is full of uncertainties. But the Bible says over and over that there's no need to be afraid because God is always near. He's the most wonderful protector and friend you could ever find. The answer is *d*.

## Check out Psalm 91:1-2:

Although we don't know who wrote this psalm, it's obvious that person had figured out that trusting God equals safety. Whether this writer fought lions, braved stormy seas, led armies into battle, or simply faced questions about the future, he recognized that God kept him safe when he ran to him.

\* \* \*

Have you ever had to run to God for safety? Maybe a bully was trying to pick a fight. Maybe you heard some noises at night. Maybe you were caught in a bad storm. God can comfort you in any situation—and better yet, he wants to. All you have to do is curl up in his loving arms. He will be a shelter in all of life's stormy situations.

Because I believe God keeps me safe, I'll memorize a couple of these verses so I can bring them to mind the next time I feel scared: Psalm 31:24, Psalm 56:11, and John 14:27.

## PRAY:

Thank God for being a safe place during scary times.



I BELIEVE...  
God keeps me safe.

You have a lot of important decisions to make every day. What clothes will you wear? Will you practice the piano? What will you eat for breakfast? Should you take a shower? Will you be nice to your brother? Do you have to clean up after the dog?

The answers to those questions determine what kind of day you'll have. Then when the next morning comes, you have to make all the same choices again.

But can you guess what is the most important decision you'll make during your lifetime? Should you wear purple and orange socks to school? No, that's not it. Should you eat that hamburger in the back of the fridge with green stuff growing on it? Uh-uh. The most important decision you'll ever make is the decision to believe that Jesus is God's Son, who died for your sins, and to accept him as your personal Savior. It will bring a joy and peace to your life that will start now and last forever. Have you made the decision to let Jesus take control of your life?

### Check out 1 John 1:8-9:

In these verses, one of Jesus' best friends, John, writes that everybody messes up. But the good news is if we ask Jesus to forgive us, he does. Plus he cleans us up and makes us right with God like he is.

\* \* \*

Do you know without a doubt that you'll go to heaven when you die? You can be sure of that. Jesus allows only perfect people in heaven with him. And since nobody is perfect, we all have a big problem. You, like everybody else, have messed up, whether it's been by lying, cheating, wanting your friends' stuff, disobeying your parents, or treating your friends badly. God calls those actions sin. God sees all of your sins, but he will forgive your sins through Jesus Christ. All you have to do is pray and ask Jesus into your life.

### PRAY:

"Dear God, please forgive me. I know I'm a sinner. I believe Jesus died and rose from the dead so I could be forgiven of my sins and live forever in heaven. Thank you for loving me and allowing me to have a personal relationship with you. Amen."

(If you just prayed that prayer for the first time, tell somebody—your parents, a children's pastor, the person who gave you this book. You just made the most important decision you'll ever make!)



I BELIEVE...  
God forgives my sins.



Imagine yourself standing at the starting line of a long race. You've trained hard and decided to run this race to the end. As you look at the runners around you, you notice you're in pretty good company. These athletes are fit and prepared to run. You do a couple of quick stretches to make sure you're ready. Right before the starter's pistol goes off, the kid next to you taps your shoulder.

You look over at him and see that he's wearing a bathrobe instead of shorts like everybody else. Not only that, he's wearing slippers instead of running shoes!

"I'm sure glad that's over," he says.

*Over?!?* you think. *It's not over. The race hasn't even begun!*

"Are you nutty?" you ask. "Don't you know the starter hasn't fired the gun yet?"

"Yeah, I don't care," the kid replies. "I decided to show up for the race, and that's enough for me. Boy, I'm tired. I think I'm going back to bed."

Just then the starter raises his hand. *BANG!*

You take off with the rest of the runners, leaving that kid in the dust.

*He was a little confused*, you think, as you race to the front.

## Check out Hebrews 12:1:

This verse tells you a lot about what it means to be a Christian. It says to get rid of the things that hold you back from living for God, learn from the actions of other Christians around you, and never give up as you run the race for Christ.

\* \* \*

Many people think that once they make the decision to accept Christ into their hearts that's it. They've reached the end. They've done all they can do. And that's kind of true. Once you have a personal relationship with Jesus, you're guaranteed to live with him forever in heaven.

But praying to accept Christ is not the end of your Christian life. It's just the beginning. God has amazing plans for you. If you sit around instead of running the race, you will miss some incredible things.

Here are some ideas that will help me run a good race for God. (Hint: What about reading the Bible and going to church? Anything else?)

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

### PRAY:

Ask God to help you in the training of becoming a great runner for him.



I BELIEVE...  
Living for God is a long, exciting race.

*Sarah was a solid student.* Her grades didn't all look like the first letter in the alphabet, but she paid attention in class, did her homework, studied hard, and tried her best. She had just one problem. Her grades didn't all look like the second letter in the alphabet, either. In fact, most of her marks were pretty average—could have been worse, but could have been much better.

Sarah's parents were disappointed because they knew she was smart enough to get better grades. Sarah was frustrated because she worked so hard. And Sarah's teachers didn't know what to do for her. Sarah couldn't figure out how to defeat her problem. Every time she got a test, her palms would start to sweat, her heart would beat faster, her eyes would get big, and her mind would go blank. She could barely remember her name, let alone the chief of the Incas. And asking her to multiply 10 by 12 was like telling her to figure out how many hamburgers McDonald's sells in a day—it was impossible. Sarah's test anxiety brought her brain to a halt.

### Check out Psalm 118:6-7:

These verses remind you that you have nothing to fear because you have the Lord with you. God will help you triumph over your enemies, whether those enemies are people, circumstances, or tests.

\* \* \*

Most test anxiety comes from one thing: the fear of failure. Think about this question: Who is disappointed in you if you fail? God isn't. Your worth in his eyes doesn't depend on good grades or how much you succeed in sports or music or anything else. But he does want you to do your best. And worrying only holds you back from doing your best.

Next time I'm worried about failing, I'll remember these three **Rs**:

1. Remember God loves me no matter what.
2. Relax.
3. Get ready to do my best.

### PRAY:

Tell God you're glad he loves you,  
no matter how you do in school.



I BELIEVE...

God helps me overcome my fears.





What is the strangest Christmas present you've ever received?

- a. A pink, full-body fluffy bunny suit
- b. A doll that speaks only French and says, "Maman" and "Où est mon croissant?"
- c. A football helmet without a face mask
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ .Other. (fill in the blank) . . . . .
- e. None of the above

The answer's certainly not e. You probably marked d and filled in the blank.

What is it that causes people to buy weird gifts? Their hearts are probably in the right place. They just want to do something nice for you. But the results can be quite odd, because they don't know you well enough to have a clue about the things you like.

Isn't it cool when relatives know what you want and get you the perfect gift? That's a lot more fun. Not only do you like the gift because it's something you wanted and it reflects your interests, but you also feel good because it shows that somebody knows you well.

### Check out Matthew 2:11:

The second part of this verse provides a list of what the wise men brought to Jesus. Their treasures included gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

\* \* \*

At first, the wise men's gifts seem like the eight-foot scarf and foot-long mittens your aunt knitted for you last year—they just don't fit. What's a kid supposed to do with gold, incense, and myrrh? But each of the treasures had a special meaning.

- Gold stands for wealth. It's a gift fit for a king. And Jesus is the King of kings.
- Incense was used in worship services. It's a gift fit for a priest. And nobody knew God's Word or lived according to his rules better than Jesus.
- Myrrh was used as a painkiller or to prepare a dead person's body for burial. It's a gift for someone who will experience pain and death.

When I think about the fact that Jesus died for me, this is how I feel:

.....

.....

.....

The reason Jesus was born in the first place was to suffer and die for everyone's sins.

### PRAY:

Thank Jesus for coming to the earth to suffer and die for you.



### I BELIEVE...

the gifts that the wise men gave Jesus tell me a lot about his life.

Scientists have been trying for years to figure out if aliens exist. Special satellite dishes point upward, listening for noises in outer space. The government has spent millions of dollars without finding a thing.

Hollywood also has a fascination with aliens. Lots of TV shows and movies feature extraterrestrial beings. Some aliens are pictured as friendly. Some of them try to take over the earth. And they all look a little different.

What do you think an alien would look like if one did exist? Do you think it would be green? In old movies most of them are. Maybe it would have a big head. Maybe it'd have several heads and lots of eyes. Cool! How about arms and hands? Perhaps it wouldn't need hands, because it would have big suctionlike tubes on the end of its arms that suck in everything it wanted. Would it walk on legs? float? fly through the air with a jet pack? The possibilities are endless.

Actually, if you want to figure out what an alien looks like, all you have to do is look in the mirror. It's no joke. The Bible calls you an alien.

### Check out 1 Peter 2:11:

In this verse Peter reminds us that as children of God we are aliens living in a strange land. Our true home is heaven. And because of this fact, we need to be careful to keep away from the harmful things of this world.

\* \* \*

Because the devil was cast out of heaven and down to earth, he has a lot of power here. As a believer in Jesus Christ, you know heaven is your final home. So you're really an alien here on earth. You live here, but this isn't your final destination. And with God's power you can overcome the devil and make a difference for God while you're on this planet.

Does that make sense? It's a tricky concept—one you may want to talk about more with a parent or a youth pastor. But know this: Being an alien is exciting. You can help God bring others into his Kingdom. You can set an example for others by living for God on earth.

### PRAY:

Ask God to help you be an effective "alien" on earth.



I BELIEVE...  
I'm an alien on earth.

# JANUARY 8



Whoever invented the drive-through window must've been a genius. You cruise up to it, babble a few words into the microphone, pull forward, and pick up your meal with the secret toy surprise. Anytime you're hungry, you can ask your parents to whip through the drive-through for a quick bite to eat.

It's fast. It's fun. It's easy.

But have you noticed how simple it is to start treating God like a drive-through window with your prayers? You have a test at school—so you pray to do well. You wreck on your bike—so you pray to feel better. Your cat runs away—so you pray it will come home.

Now there's nothing wrong with those prayers. God wants to hear from you and cares about everything that happens in your life. He's always listening, and you never have to wait to talk to him. But he wants to be much more than a drive-through prayer window. He wants to hear about your good times and bad. Pray to him and thank him just for being him. Pray to him all the time, not just the times that you need something from him.

But just so you know, he probably won't ask, "Do you want fries with that?"

## Check out Matthew 6:6:

In this verse Jesus encourages you to go to a quiet place when you pray—a place where you won't be distracted and you can concentrate on talking to God. The verse also promises that God rewards this action.

\* \* \*

Think of a time and place that would give you the best opportunity to talk to God without being interrupted. Start small (one or two minutes a day), then work your way up until praying to God is like speaking to a friend on the phone. Talk to God about your family, school, friends, church, pets . . . anything!

Here's the time and place I'm going to talk to God, as well as a few specific things I'm going to pray about:

Time: ..... Place: .....

Prayer Requests:

.....  
.....  
.....

Now get started and see what a difference it makes in your relationship with him.

PRAY:

Tell God you want to be closer to him.



I BELIEVE...  
prayer is important.

Have you ever had a friend who lived far away—not just on the other side of town, but across the country?

It can be hard living so far from a friend, but it can also be fun to write letters, send e-mail, and talk on the phone. But nothing beats the excitement of finding out that friend is coming for a visit! You can do things together the whole time she's visiting—it will be like a party. It's easy to spend every second with your friend.

But what if you found out your friend was going to move next door? "Great!" you say.

And it would be great at first. But before you know it, the excitement you and your friend used to have would be gone. It would still be fun to hang out, but you wouldn't really do special things all the time. You'd usually do the same old thing when you were together—it would become just kind of ho-hum. Sometimes you might miss the way you felt when seeing your friend was not the norm. What would you do to bring back the excitement?

### Check out Psalm 42:1-2:

In these verses, the psalmist talks about wanting to be with God. He probably had times when his friendship with God was amazing; but he probably also had times when God was more like a next-door friend. His words show that he put effort into making his time with God special.

\* \* \*

Can you relate? Think of a time when you were especially hot, tired, and anxious for a cool drink. Remember how great it was when the drink finally flowed over your lips? Now remember a time when you were thirsty to know about God.

Here's how things are going now in my life. And here's what I'm thankful to God for. When things aren't going so great, I can write and tell Jesus what's making me feel ho-hum or tell him how I'd like things to be:

.....

.....

.....

#### PRAY:

Ask God to make you thirsty for him!



#### I BELIEVE...

I have to work on my relationship with Jesus.

Selfish Simon met a pie man going to the fair.

"Give me a blueberry pie, now!" Selfish Simon screamed at the pie man.

"That will be five dollars, young man," the pie man told Simon very calmly.

"I have no money," Simon said. "But I want that pie now!"

"A pie costs money to make," the pie man explained. "I have to pay for flour, eggs, and fruit. I need to sell my pies to make money for my family. I can't give them away."

"I don't care about you or your family," Selfish Simon said. "I just care about me."

\* \* \*

Have you ever known a kid who was totally selfish like Simon—someone who thought the world revolved around him? That person probably had a lot of friends and was really happy all the time, right?

Wrong. Kids who only think of themselves drive other people away. And even when they get their way, selfish people never seem happy.

All of us can act selfishly from time to time. It's a natural way to behave and think. But how do you think God wants us to act?

## Check out Philippians 2:3:

In this verse, Paul writes something that goes directly against what a lot of people say in our world. Society will tell you to look out for number one—yourself. But Paul says to think of other people as more important than yourself.

\* \* \*

Do you want your life to shine like a diamond and glow like a ruby for Jesus? Then you need to live like a GEM. The G stands for God. The E represents everybody. And the M stands for me. Think of it this way: put your relationship with God first in your life, everybody else second, and me last.

It's not easy to be a GEM for Jesus. You'll have to fight against what you naturally want to do. But if you can get your life in GEM order, it'll be super valuable to you, to God, and to other people.

### PRAY:

"Dear God, help me to put you first, everybody else second, and me last. Amen."



I BELIEVE...  
God wants me to put others first.

# INDEX OF SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Genesis 1:1 *October 22*  
Genesis 1:16 *October 4*  
Genesis 1:20-25 *February 25*  
Genesis 1:27 *January 23*  
Genesis 1:28 *August 17*  
Genesis 2:7 *May 10*  
Genesis 50:20 *February 26*  
Exodus 13:21 *February 28*  
Exodus 20:3 *August 4*  
Exodus 20:7 *July 25*  
Exodus 20:17 *May 18*  
Leviticus 19:11 *March 30*  
Leviticus 27:30 *April 13*  
Numbers 23:19 *May 28*  
Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *May 11*  
Deuteronomy 6:14-15 *October 13*  
Deuteronomy 8:10 *February 13*  
Deuteronomy 22:4 *August 22*  
Deuteronomy 31:6 *June 9*  
Deuteronomy 32:4 *July 18*  
Joshua 1:7 *August 2*  
Joshua 1:8 *May 24*  
Joshua 22:20 *October 19*  
Joshua 23:14 *February 17*  
Judges 6:14-16 *May 2*  
Ruth 1:16-17 *April 14*  
1 Samuel 2:2 *May 31*  
1 Samuel 2:8 *January 24*  
1 Samuel 10:5-7 *August 23*  
1 Samuel 16:7 *February 1*  
1 Samuel 17:4-7, 33, 48-51 *September 22*  
2 Samuel 22:51 *May 9*  
1 Kings 18:21 *October 29*  
2 Kings 19:15 *August 10*  
1 Chronicles 16:34 *November 27*  
2 Chronicles 16:9 *December 30*  
Ezra 7:10 *November 24*  
Nehemiah 9:6 *March 23*  
Esther 4:14 *July 16*  
Job 9:10 *July 12*  
Job 10:8 *March 10*  
Job 37:15-16 *March 2*  
Psalm 1:2-3 *June 21*  
Psalm 4:4 *June 5*  
Psalm 8:3-4 *February 8*  
Psalm 12:7 *October 3*  
Psalm 16:11 *August 7*  
Psalm 19:7 *June 11*  
Psalm 19:9-10 *February 3*  
Psalm 27:1 *August 21*  
Psalm 32:7 *October 12*  
Psalm 33:6-8 *November 3*  
Psalm 37:4 *May 8*  
Psalm 37:8 *May 5*  
Psalm 37:40 *December 10*  
Psalm 40:5 *November 22*  
Psalm 42:1-2 *January 9*  
Psalm 46:10 *July 21*  
Psalm 51:10 *December 27*  
Psalm 52:2-4 *February 27*  
Psalm 55:16-17 *September 18*  
Psalm 63:8 *January 12*  
Psalm 68:3 *October 15*  
Psalm 73:23-24 *September 8*  
Psalm 90:2-4 *October 23*  
Psalm 90:12 *June 6*  
Psalm 91:1-2 *January 2*  
Psalm 108:1 *July 19*  
Psalm 116:1 *March 29*  
Psalm 118:6-7 *January 5*  
Psalm 119:9-16 *January 14*  
Psalm 119:97-98 *August 31*  
Psalm 119:105 *April 8*  
Psalm 121:2 *July 23*  
Psalm 125:1-2 *March 11*  
Psalm 127:3 *June 14*  
Psalm 130:5 *September 17*  
Psalm 139:13-14 *January 20*  
Psalm 141:8 *September 13*  
Psalm 145:17-20 *October 7*  
Proverbs 2:8 *June 30*  
Proverbs 3:5-6 *April 22*  
Proverbs 3:11-12 *August 20*  
Proverbs 9:10 *February 23*  
Proverbs 11:13 *July 6*  
Proverbs 12:18 *January 27*  
Proverbs 13:20 *July 31*  
Proverbs 14:23 *November 6*  
Proverbs 15:1 *August 12*  
Proverbs 15:3 *April 11*  
Proverbs 15:22 *March 22*  
Proverbs 15:29 *February 9*  
Proverbs 16:13 *April 21*  
Proverbs 18:24 *June 4*  
Proverbs 20:9 *March 24*  
Proverbs 22:4 *September 6*  
Proverbs 22:6 *May 6*  
Proverbs 26:11 *April 1*  
Proverbs 26:17 *August 16*  
Proverbs 27:6 *March 3*  
Proverbs 27:17 *May 29*  
Proverbs 29:18 *July 24*

# INDEX OF "I BELIEVE" STATEMENTS

## I BELIEVE . . .

### JANUARY

1. God wants me to be bold.
2. God keeps me safe.
3. God forgives my sins.
4. living for God is a long, exciting race.
5. God helps me overcome my fears.
6. the gifts that the wise men gave Jesus tell me a lot about his life.
7. I'm an alien on earth.
8. prayer is important.
9. I have to work on my relationship with Jesus.
10. God wants me to put others first.
11. I should share Jesus with my friends.
12. I need to stay close to God.
13. making time for God every day is important.
14. I should follow God's instructions in the Bible.
15. God can change the world through me.
16. I can live for Jesus at school.
17. I am a light for God.
18. God is my ultimate power source.
19. I need to live for an audience of One.
20. all people are God's handiwork.
21. great things are accomplished when people work together.
22. to live like God means I need to love others.
23. God created people and patterned them after himself.
24. God is a God of order.
25. it's my responsibility to learn about God.
26. the Holy Spirit gives me power to win over sin.
27. my words make a difference.
28. God is the Great Physician.
29. when it comes to God, I'm not shooting in the dark.
30. God loves me exactly as I am.
31. Jesus is the name above all others.

### FEBRUARY

1. God cares about my heart.
2. my life, like a shadow, reflects an image to others.

3. the Bible is precious . . . and sweet.
4. I'm an important part of God's family.
5. I should protect my mind.
6. I need to forgive other people when they make mistakes.
7. the Holy Spirit is my helper.
8. things of beauty are God's gift to me.
9. I shouldn't do wicked things.
10. the Holy Spirit makes God's wisdom understandable.
11. only God holds the keys to true freedom.
12. I need to tell my friends about Jesus.
13. God provides for my needs.
14. other people need to see that I love them.
15. God is love.
16. nothing is impossible with God.
17. God makes promises and always keeps them.
18. God is three persons in One.
19. God created people.
20. it's okay to get angry about the right things.
21. God created me perfectly.
22. I can't hide what I do from God.
23. God gives me wisdom.
24. God wants me to do everything without complaining.
25. God created animals.
26. I grow stronger with God's help during tough times.
27. I should speak the truth.
28. God still guides me today.
29. I need to take care of the little things in my life.

### MARCH

1. there's only one truth about who Jesus is.
2. God is in control.
3. in being honest with my friends.
4. the Bible is God's special message to me.
5. being forgiven doesn't make it okay to keep sinning.
6. I should spend my time wisely.
7. God loves me more than my pet does.
8. Jesus is preparing a place for me in heaven.
9. I should run from temptation.
10. God created me and can do what he wants with me.

# AUTHOR INFORMATION

**Jesse Florea** has worked for Focus on the Family for more than ten years and has been the editor of *Clubhouse* magazine for over half of that time. He loves children, has two of his own, works with them at church, and wants kids to know the excitement of living for Jesus Christ. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in communications from Wheaton College in Illinois and has written professionally for more than eighteen years. He lives with his wife and kids in Colorado Springs.

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