

The ONE
YEAR®



DEVOTIONS
for MOMS



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The One Year Devotions for Moms

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*To my husband, Jim, and sons,
Chad, Nate, and Jordan:*

Thanks for helping in the kitchen, taking walks with me, praying for me, and humoring me. God was gracious to let me be in the same family with the four of you. I appreciate your permission to include some of our family's stories in this book. I love you all.

To my editor, Karin Buursma:

The first time I spoke with you on the phone, I knew I'd enjoy working with you. A few calls later, I discovered that your family lives in the red house just around the corner from my family! Thanks for being gracious, straightforward, encouraging, and insightful—all at the same time.

INTRODUCTION

When I was a young mom, I wanted to spend time with God each day—but I struggled to find a time that *worked*. Although I'm a morning person now, I wasn't then. Evenings weren't practical either, because after the children's bedtime ceremonies were completed, I was exhausted. There was one time of day, however, when the house was (usually) quiet, and that was right after lunch. For the sake of my sanity, I insisted that my boys either read or nap for one hour. On rare occasions when the hour stretched into two, I was blessed with a bonus.

Daily, I was faced with my need for encouragement, hope, wisdom, and faith. So I asked God for his help. I prayed, *God, if you'll allow my children to nap or read quietly for one hour, I will sit down and spend time with you each day*. God did help me—and I sat down most every day with a glass of iced tea or lemonade to read my Bible and pray. As a result of spending time with God, my soul grew rich and I was strengthened for the demands of being a mom.

Now I'm in my fifties and my youngest son is in high school. At this stage of my life, I enjoy rising early each morning to spend time with God. Instead of a glass of iced tea or lemonade, I drink hot coffee with vanilla creamer. And you know what? I still feel the need for encouragement, hope, wisdom, and faith. But years of spending time with God have convinced me that he is faithful to bless me with all of the above and more.

I'm glad you've picked up a copy of *The OneYear Devotions for Moms*. I planned for this book to be simple and uncomplicated, so that you can begin reading it any day of the year. It doesn't matter when or where you choose to begin; all you need to do is locate today's date. Daily devotionals are planned around a weekly theme, so if you're interested in locating a particular subject, just refer to the topical index at the back.

Whatever time of day you choose, I hope that the devotional moments you spend pondering God's truth will enrich your life and strengthen you for your role as a mom. Blessings to you!

"May God bless you with his special favor and wonderful peace as you come to know Jesus, our God and Lord, better and better. As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness!" 2 Peter 1:2-3

Ellen Banks Elwell
Wheaton, Illinois
2004

JANUARY 1
FAITH



FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL ALSO SERVE HIM. OUR CHILDREN WILL HEAR ABOUT THE WONDERS OF THE LORD. HIS RIGHTEOUS ACTS WILL BE TOLD TO THOSE YET UNBORN. THEY WILL HEAR ABOUT EVERYTHING HE HAS DONE.

Psalms 22:30-31

*W*hen my children were in preschool and early elementary years, one of my favorite things to do was read to them. Whether we were sitting in a rocking chair or propped up in bed, it was fun to read and snuggle at the same time. Although we learned from many kinds of books, God's Word enriched us more than any other. Together, we witnessed God's wonders and provisions in other people's lives, and we were encouraged to believe he would provide for us, too.

I especially liked the story of baby Moses. The king of Egypt had instructed the Hebrew midwives to kill all of the Hebrew baby boys. Being a woman of faith, Moses' mother, Jochebed, put him in a basket and hid him among the reeds of a river. His older sister, Miriam, kept an eye on the basket until Pharaoh's daughter found Moses and adopted him. In God's plan, Miriam asked the princess if she should find a nurse for the child, and Moses' very own mother was able to raise him for some years before he was educated in Pharaoh's palace.

Imagine how often Jochebed must have retold that story to Moses and Miriam and their brother Aaron before Moses went to live in the palace. The siblings grew up hearing that God sees and God provides. Later in their lives God used them to lead his people out of Egypt. In the same way, we can encourage our children's faith by telling how God has provided for us. The time we spend encouraging them now will influence their leadership down the road.

*God who sees and provides,
Thank you for blessing us with children to nurture and love. Thank you for giving us your Word to be our guide. Please help us to notice your provisions and then to rehearse them with our children, strengthening our faith and encouraging theirs. Amen.*



JANUARY 2

FAITH

THEN HE SAID TO THOMAS, “PUT YOUR FINGER HERE AND SEE MY HANDS. PUT YOUR HAND INTO THE WOUND IN MY SIDE. DON’T BE FAITHLESS ANY LONGER. BELIEVE!” *John 20:27*

*A*lthough Thomas was one of Jesus’ disciples, he had difficulty believing that Jesus had really risen from the dead. Hence the nickname “Doubting Thomas.”

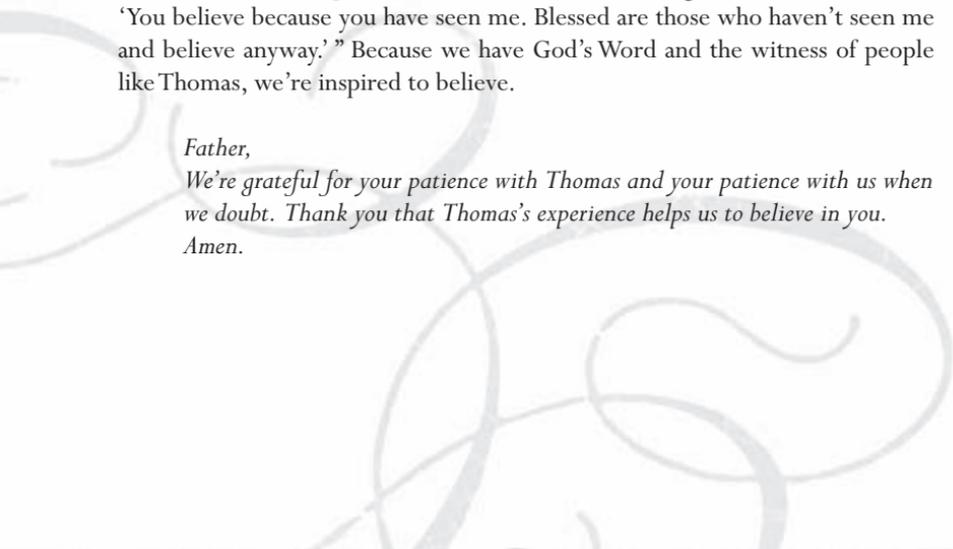
Thomas was not present when Jesus first appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection. When Thomas heard of Jesus’ appearance, he said he wouldn’t believe it unless he felt Jesus’ hands and side. Seven days later they met, and Jesus invited Thomas to touch his wounds. Thomas’s beautiful response—“My Lord and my God!”—prompted St. Augustine to say that Thomas doubted so that we might believe.

Thomas’s struggle for faith offers us hope. If Jesus showed patience and willingness to help Thomas believe, he will do the same for us. If we or our children struggle with doubts that lead to questions, questions that lead to answers, and answers that lead to belief, then the doubts will have been productive. Doubts that stagnate rather than drive us to think more clearly about our faith tend to be nonproductive and may lead us to stubbornness. We’re wise to beware of “camping out” in our doubts. It’s interesting that in John 20:29, Jesus offered “extra credit” to the person who believes *without* seeing: “Then Jesus told him, ‘You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who haven’t seen me and believe anyway.’” Because we have God’s Word and the witness of people like Thomas, we’re inspired to believe.

Father,

We’re grateful for your patience with Thomas and your patience with us when we doubt. Thank you that Thomas’s experience helps us to believe in you.

Amen.



JANUARY 3

FAITH



THEREFORE, SINCE WE HAVE BEEN MADE RIGHT IN GOD'S SIGHT BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD BECAUSE OF WHAT JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD HAS DONE FOR US.

Romans 5:1

In a small farming town, a young family's two-story house caught fire in the middle of the night. Everyone in the family bolted out of the smoke-filled house into the front yard—except a five-year-old boy. The father stood in front of the house and looked up to see his crying son at a bedroom window, rubbing his eyes.

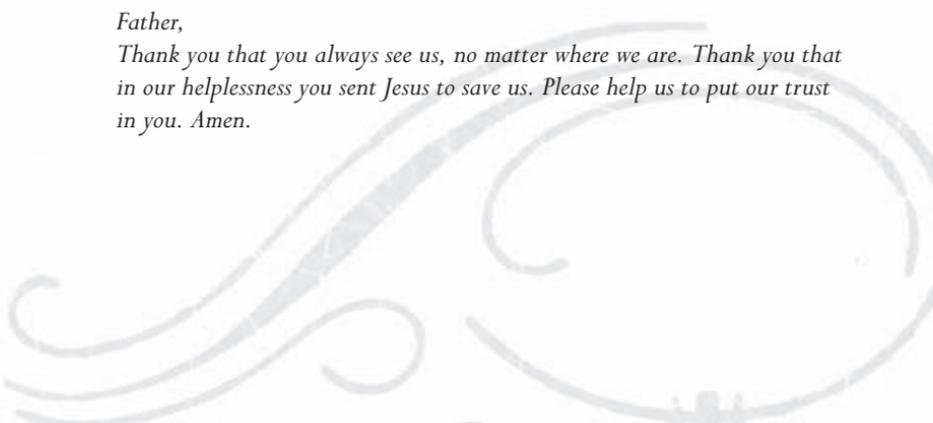
Knowing it would not be wise to go back into the burning house to rescue his son, the father yelled, "Jump, Son, and I'll catch you!" Sobbing, the boy replied to his father's voice, "I can't see you!" The father confidently yelled back, "But I can see you! Go ahead and jump." And the boy did. He jumped and was secure in his father's arms.

The choice this young boy made reminds me of the commitment we make when we decide to put our trust in Jesus. In the boy's helplessness, his father came to save him. In our helplessness, God came to save us. He didn't come to us because of our strength—he came to us because of our weakness.

As a result of Jesus' death and our faith, Romans 5:1-5 tells us we receive peace with God, access to God, hope, confidence amidst the daily trials of life, and a personal experience with God's love. If we realize that he died to save us from our sin, we see our helplessness and realize that jumping into his arms is a very wise choice. In fact, it's the only way we can live!

Father,

Thank you that you always see us, no matter where we are. Thank you that in our helplessness you sent Jesus to save us. Please help us to put our trust in you. Amen.





JANUARY 4

FAITH

THIS SAME GOD WHO TAKES CARE OF ME WILL SUPPLY ALL
YOUR NEEDS FROM HIS GLORIOUS RICHES, WHICH HAVE
BEEN GIVEN TO US IN CHRIST JESUS.

Philippians 4:19

While sorting through a pile of artwork from Chad's grade school years, I uncovered a meaningful treasure. On a piece of construction paper, Chad had drawn two ancient-looking oil jars, and next to them he had written the following poem:

*The widow had no oil,
For it had all been used.
But then it flowed and flowed and flowed,
For it had been renewed!*

Right around the time Chad wrote that poem, his friend Brad's father was tragically killed by a disgruntled employee, leaving Brad's mom to raise two young sons. Chad, along with the rest of our family, observed the many ways that God took care of Brad's family in the months and years after his dad's death.

I'll never forget the night that Brad's mom, Brenda, stopped by our home to deliver a gift. She had purchased small oil jars to give to each family who had been helpful to her and the boys after Dale's death. The oil jars hearkened back to the Old Testament story of Elisha and the widow (2 Kings 4:1-7). The widow in the Bible had also needed help to provide for her two sons, and God—through Elisha—used the empty oil jars of people around her to provide far more than she could have ever imagined. Brenda, Brad, and Andy had faith that God would take care of them, and—as is the case with God—his provisions proved to be even bigger than their faith.

*Father,
Thank you that when we place our faith in you, you give us eyes to see beyond
the visible. Thank you that you take care of us and supply our needs. In the
name of Jesus, amen.*

JANUARY 5

FAITH



AND NOW, JUST AS YOU ACCEPTED CHRIST JESUS AS YOUR LORD, YOU MUST CONTINUE TO LIVE IN OBEDIENCE TO HIM. LET YOUR ROOTS GROW DOWN INTO HIM AND DRAW UP NOURISHMENT FROM HIM, SO YOU WILL GROW IN FAITH, STRONG AND VIGOROUS IN THE TRUTH YOU WERE TAUGHT. LET YOUR LIVES OVERFLOW WITH THANKSGIVING FOR ALL HE HAS DONE. DON'T LET ANYONE LEAD YOU ASTRAY WITH EMPTY PHILOSOPHY AND HIGH-SOUNDING NONSENSE THAT COME FROM HUMAN THINKING AND FROM THE EVIL POWERS OF THIS WORLD, AND NOT FROM CHRIST.

Colossians 2:6-8

Pastor Gary Dausey tells about a time his father asked him to cut sixty-four two-by-fours to a certain length. To get him started, Gary's dad cut one board as a pattern and asked Gary to cut all of them that size. So Gary used the pattern to cut the first board. Then he picked up the board he just had cut and marked the next board, used that board to mark the next, and continued in that manner until he was finished. It wasn't until he completed the project that he realized there was a problem: the last board was several inches longer than the pattern he had been given. Why? Because he hadn't used the pattern as his measuring stick. Gary was reminded that the pattern of faith we need for the foundation of our lives must be primary, not two or three generations away. We must go straight to the source.

As Christian moms, we desire to see our children develop in their faith. Just as our Christian life begins and grows through *our* faith in Christ, so theirs must begin and grow because of *their* faith in Christ. We can encourage this by nurturing our children's hearts through time in God's Word.

If our children are not rooted in Christ and grounded in God's Word, they can be drawn into beliefs that aren't true, resulting in unwholesome behavior and separation from God. We want our children to believe not only that Christ is important but that he is everything!

Father,

Thank you that the Bible provides nourishment for us. Please help us to point our children to personal faith in Christ through time spent in your Word.

Amen.



JANUARY 6

FAITH

AND WE KNOW THAT GOD CAUSES EVERYTHING TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE GOD AND ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE FOR THEM. *Romans 8:28*

*B*ob, would you please baste the turkey with the broth on the stove?" my mom called downstairs to my dad. "I'll be down in a few minutes." It was Thanksgiving morning, and my mom was preparing her scrumptious recipes for our family gathering.

When my mom came downstairs, ready to work on the lime-pear salad, she took the lid off the pan of pear juice. "Why is the pan empty?" she wondered. Quickly lifting the lid off the other pot on the stove, she discovered it was full of turkey broth. Uh-oh. Now my dad was in trouble. He had basted the turkey with pear juice.

"Did your mom ever ask your dad for help in the kitchen again?" you might ask. Yes, she did. The turkey our family ate that year was the tastiest and best-looking turkey we'd ever had. What began as a mistake and a disappointment turned out to be a new family tradition. Now I baste my turkey with pear juice every year.

I'm reminded of other incidents in my life that included more serious disappointments, losses, or pain. At the time they made no sense to me, and my predominant thoughts were, *How do I get out of this situation? How can I get this pain to stop? or Surely nothing good can ever come out of all this!* But I have seen God use those difficult circumstances to accomplish good things in my heart, and I have been encouraged to trust him more. As my friend Wanda says, "God does things in his time; and sometimes he even allows us to see the fruit of what he's doing in our time."

Faithful Father,

Thank you for the variety of ways that you work out your purposes in our lives. It's encouraging to know that you work them together for good. Amen.

JANUARY 7

FAITH



FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF THE FAITH. TAKE HOLD OF THE ETERNAL LIFE TO WHICH YOU WERE CALLED WHEN YOU MADE YOUR GOOD CONFESSION IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES.

1 Timothy 6:12, NIV

During times in our lives when we're struggling with doubts about God, it's good to remember that doubt is not the same as unbelief. Alister McGrath writes, "Unbelief is the decision to live your life as if there were no God. It is a deliberate decision to reject Jesus Christ and all that he stands for. But doubt is something quite different. Doubt arises within the context of faith. It is a wistful longing to be sure of the things in which we trust."¹

It's comforting to learn that doubt is a natural part of growing in faith because faith is not easy. To fight for faith is not only to strive vigorously *for* it but also to struggle *against* our adversary, the devil. First Timothy 6:12 is set in a chapter that instructs us to do three things—flee, follow, and fight. We are to flee from pride, the love of money, and false teachings; follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness; and fight *for* faith and *against* the world, the flesh, and the devil.

A mom who is depressed, whose husband is involved in addictive behavior, or whose child is hanging out with unwholesome friends has plenty of doubts and struggles—she's clearly in a fight. As we fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil through the power of God's Word and Spirit, we "take hold of . . . eternal life"—we grab it, setting our hope not on fleeting things but on God who gives eternal life and is himself hope.

Father,

Please give us strength as we fight the good fight of faith. Thank you that you have promised you will always be with us. Please help us to grab hold of your promises when doubts rise in our minds and hearts. Amen.



JANUARY 8

PRAYER

HANNAH WAS IN DEEP ANGUISH, CRYING BITTERLY AS SHE
PRAYED TO THE LORD.

1 Samuel 1:10

*H*ave you ever experienced times of grief, bitterness, or anguish, when you felt as though you were slipping? Hannah did. Back in the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel (1:1–2:21), we learn that Hannah was married to Elkanah, a Levite priest. He also had a second wife, named Peninnah. Each year the combined families made a trip to the Shiloh tabernacle, and each year the same thing happened: Elkanah celebrated his sacrifices by giving gifts to Peninnah and each of her children, but Hannah received only one for herself because she had no children. The Bible tells us that Peninnah laughed at Hannah's barrenness, making Hannah cry so much that she couldn't eat.

One evening in Shiloh, Hannah went over to the tabernacle. Out of her bitter grief and anguish, she cried out to the Lord. In the process of praying, she endured even *more* taunting because the priest mistook her sorrow for drunkenness! But something amazing happened after she poured out her heart to God. The priest gave her a blessing of peace, and after she left the tabernacle, she ate and her face was no longer downcast. After worshipping God together, the families went home, and Hannah became pregnant. We find Hannah's beautiful song of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

What's the lesson for us? In our heartache or anguish, we can cry out to the Lord, acknowledging that he is God and we are not. We can pour out our souls—grief, bitterness, and all. And after we bring him our requests, we can get on with our lives and worship God, thankful that he hears us.

Father,

Thank you for examples of women like Hannah, who experienced some of the same feelings of sorrow we have from time to time. Thank you that we can express our emotions to you and that you give us the grace and strength to stand up and move ahead. Thanks for your answers to our prayers. Amen.

JANUARY 9
PRAYER



AND SO WE KEEP ON PRAYING FOR YOU, THAT OUR GOD WILL MAKE YOU WORTHY OF THE LIFE TO WHICH HE CALLED YOU. AND WE PRAY THAT GOD, BY HIS POWER, WILL FULFILL ALL YOUR GOOD INTENTIONS AND FAITHFUL DEEDS.

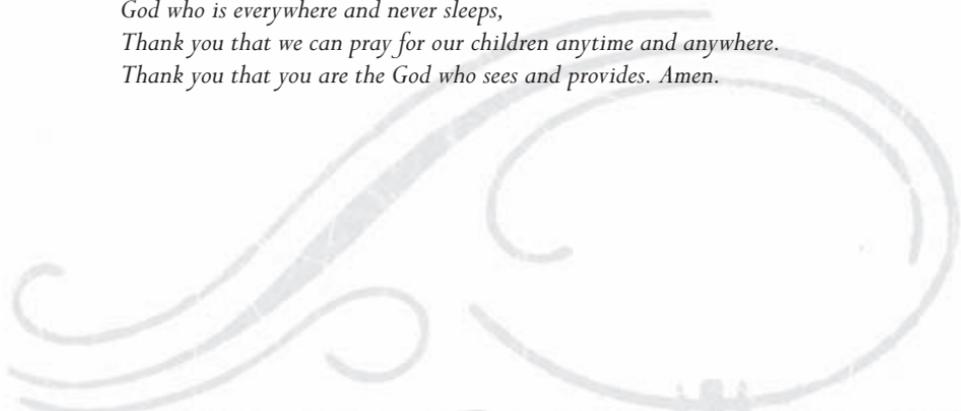
2 Thessalonians 1:11

*J*ust sneaked into my son Nate's bedroom and straightened the blankets over his sleeping body—all six-feet-two of it. He returned home today from a mission trip to Bucharest, Romania. It is *so* good to have him home even if he is asleep. During the weeks he was gone, we were able to communicate through e-mail, and that was great. But I was thankful that I could pray for him all through the day and even sometimes when I woke up at night.

When I communicate with Nate through letters or e-mail, I catch up on the news. But when I pray for him, there's an added dimension to communication. I talk to Nate's Creator and my Creator, his Savior and my Savior, his sustainer and my sustainer. The God who is everywhere at once and who knows everything knows how much I care for Nate, and he hears my prayers on his behalf no matter what hour of the day or night it may be.

Whether our children are in our house, down the street, or across the world, we can communicate with God on their behalf, having confidence that God sees their bodies, minds, and hearts. Mark Twain once said, "I don't know of a single foreign product that enters this country untaxed except the answer to prayer." Prayer, unlike long-distance phone calls, does not cost money. We don't have to shop around for the best rates or the best times—we can talk to God anytime!

*God who is everywhere and never sleeps,
Thank you that we can pray for our children anytime and anywhere.
Thank you that you are the God who sees and provides. Amen.*





JANUARY 10

PRAYER

POUR OUT YOUR HEART LIKE WATER IN THE PRESENCE
OF THE LORD. LIFT UP YOUR HANDS TO HIM FOR THE LIVES
OF YOUR CHILDREN.

Lamentations 2:19, NIV

Pastor Dennis Eenigenburg tells the childhood story of a time he returned home from school with a note from his elementary school teacher, who was concerned that Dennis perpetually talked back to her. His mother was becoming increasingly frustrated by his negative behavior at school, and she wasn't seeing much progress. This particular time, she stood looking at Dennis with tears in her eyes, and then she took his hand and led him to her bedroom. Although Dennis was expecting a well-deserved spanking, what he experienced was far more meaningful. His mother asked him to kneel down next to her as she prayed, and she asked God for wisdom to guide her son. As she prayed, she cried. Dennis was deeply moved. If his behavior was that important to his mom, he thought, he had to change. He reflects that no spanking he ever received had as much impact on him as kneeling next to his praying mother.

Haven't all of us moms, at some point, become frustrated by the behavior or attitudes of our children, our husbands, or ourselves? Perhaps we can relate to the verse above, which expresses the anguish of the Jewish people over the utter ruin of their city. Although most of us have not lived through the painful experience of having another nation conquer us, we sometimes experience anguish over a rebellious child, a husband we're concerned about, or an area in which we lack self-control in our own lives. Pouring our hearts out to God in these situations is the very best thing we can do.

Father,

Like the prophet Jeremiah, may we acknowledge our pain and call it to mind with hope: "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23, NIV). Amen.

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