

The
ONE
YEAR®



THE ONE YEAR BOOK OF
BIBLE
PROMISES

365 MEDITATIONS
ON THE WONDERFUL
PROMISES OF GOD



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The One Year Book of Bible Promises: 365 Meditations on the Wonderful Promises of God

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JANUARY



JANUARY 1

PERSEVERANCE

I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

TODAY MARKS A new beginning. We celebrated it with fireworks, parties, and lots of fun and revelry. But now we need to get down to some real work. Perhaps this statement from Paul is a great one to make your year's verse, or at least a motivation for your purpose in the new year. What does Paul say?

First, forget what's past. Look forward. Like Abigail did as she thought about all the problems she had had during the past year. A stillborn child. A husband who lost his job. Some mistakes she never wants to talk about again.

She told God, "Okay, I'm committing this year to you. I look forward to your guidance and to good things from you. Thanks for giving me this promise of your blessing."

Second, press on in your race. Don't give up, even when trouble comes. Keep running with God. Abigail faced each new circumstance in her life with new faith and verve. She refused to be overwhelmed by discouragement or to lose her trust in God. And she pressed on. In return, God blessed her greatly.

He will do the same for you. When we persevere in the path God gives us, he promises not only to lead us to our destination but also to reward us along the way.



JANUARY 2

JESUS NEVER CHANGES

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

HEBREWS 13:8

ONE OF THE great doctrines of the Bible is the immutability of Christ. This simply means that he will never change. Like WYSIWYG (“What you see is what you get”) in computer terminology, what you saw of Jesus in the past is who he is now and will be forever.

What does that mean in our lives? For one thing, we can trust that Jesus’ words and character are as trustworthy now as when he was on the earth. We can trust his promises. We can rely on the fact that he is always wise, loving, compassionate, and righteous. He will never exclaim, “I’ve had it with the lot of you. Sin once more and you’re out. I’m taking your names out of the Book of Life.”

No, Jesus’ promise was, is, and will be forever that he is consistent. And he is consistently loving. No matter what we do, he will never give up on us, desert us, or turn against us.

Think about the grandeur of it. How many people have you known who say one thing and do another? Or have reneged on their promises?

Such things can never happen with Jesus. His promise is, “I will always be the person you find on the pages of the Bible. Trust those realities, and live in the confidence that I will always be with you.”



JANUARY 3



It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward.

HEBREWS 11:24-26

TAKE A LOOK at all you have in this world: a home? a nice car? a fulfilling job? What do you think you could never live without?

Now consider Moses. He lived in the palace of those ruling one of history's greatest empires. Servants supplied his every need. Wealth? He shared the pharaoh's treasures. Fame? Everyone knew he was the adopted son of the pharaoh's daughter, the boy she'd made her own.

Although he seemed to have everything, something was missing for Moses. He longed to be part of something greater, something that went deeper than the earthly life he knew. He longed to visit the Israelite slaves, his true people, and associate with them. All the other sons of Abraham worked themselves bone weary every day serving the pharaoh Moses loved. But Moses was not a slave. Finally Moses faced a choice: remain in the spiritually empty life of wealth or find his true spiritual calling among the Hebrews.

These verses tell us that anytime we have to give up something for God, he offers a great reward, far beyond anything we could gain on our own in the best of the world's circumstances. Hold this promise close.



JANUARY 4



I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love.

COLOSSIANS 2:2

DARLA WALKED INTO the church with a heavy heart. She and her husband, Ken, had exchanged harsh words that afternoon. Plus, her work wasn't going well. The boss repeatedly criticized her about her performance, even though she felt she did her best every time. And then one of their kids ended up in detention at school—something about talking back to the teacher.

She sat in the prayer meeting, not even sure she wanted to be there. One of her friends, Wanda, whooshed in, all smiles.

“How're things going, Darla?” she chirped.

Darla shrugged. Wanda sat down. “You look like you just got run over by a Mack truck.”

For some reason, Darla began spilling it. Other members arrived and joined the discussion and prayed about Darla's problems. She left that night feeling bolstered—encouraged that she was not alone in her struggles, but supported by friends and feeling a fresh sense of God's presence and love. Their counsel had even given her some practical ideas on how to deal with her situations.

That's the power and promise of fellowship. Whenever we face tough times, we can rest assured that we are not alone. As we look to other believers, they can give us the boost and the reminder of God's power that we need.



JANUARY 5

GOD'S PROVISION

Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!

HABAKKUK 3:17-18

IF YOU WANT to see an excitement junkie, look at someone who's been in ministry for a long time. Look especially at the lives of people who work full time with a Christian organization in which they raise their own salary, or support, from donors.

Talk to these folks for a while, and they'll tell you about times when people stopped giving because of the economy—and God provided anyway. Or perhaps their best donor died, and God still provided. You'll hear stories about God not just sending money but also miraculously supplying food, clothing, and other necessities. What a rush to see God show that he is indeed in charge and truly does take care of his people.

This also happens in the lives of those who aren't in full-time ministry. Our sources of income may be drying up, our food supplies getting low, our bills pouring in. Yet we can still be glad and praise God, for the greater our need, the more obvious it is when God provides for it.

Do you have needs? Then get ready to watch how God will provide!



JANUARY 6

BE STRONG

This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

JOSHUA 1:9

JOSHUA HAD JUST lost his finest friend and mentor, Moses. God was entrusting Joshua with the mission of taking the Israelites into the Promised Land. Moses had lost that right when he sinned against God by striking the rock with his staff after he had been ordered only to speak to it (see Numbers 20).

Understandably, Joshua probably felt frightened and worried. How could he lead this group of people into the land when Moses had not been able to control them so many times in the past?

At that point, God came to Joshua and spoke the words in today's verse. Imagine the relief on Joshua's face when he realized God was promising to be with *him* just as he had been with Moses, through good times and bad.

God gives the same promise to you. So what are you waiting for? God has given you work to do. Get to it!



JANUARY 7



WHERE WE REALLY ARE

You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect. You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel.

HEBREWS 12:22-24

DR. LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, once researched everything that happens to us when we become Christians. He determined that more than thirty specific things happen the moment we ask Jesus to be our Savior, including the realities listed in the promise above.

When you ask Jesus to be part of your life, you come into the “city of the living God.” But instead of your needing to go somewhere to get to this city, it actually comes to you and is with you all the time. Angels surround you. An assembly of believers surrounds you. God the Father is there, welcoming you into his family. Righteous people who have been made perfect greet you. Jesus stands there too, ready to intercede for you about anything and everything. Above all, you enter this place clean, whole, righteous, and perfect.

You are probably not even conscious of most of this, but God says it happens. His promise is that you are not alone in this world, and you will never be alone again. Trust him, and trust that the realities he speaks of surround you every second.



JANUARY 8

PURPOSE

I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

EPHESIANS 3:16-19

WHAT IS YOUR purpose in life? After his conversion, one young man said his greatest purpose was to experience God as fully as he can be known in this world.

That's not an unrealistic goal. This Scripture passage guarantees that we humans can experience and know God. Even though these verses were Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, it's really a prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit for all of us.

The goal of our lives should be that God grows us into the areas Paul mentioned in this portion of Scripture. First, we can grow in our faith to know the true depth and height of God's love for us. Next, we can grow to be strong spiritually. The Holy Spirit wants to guide us to dig deep into God's love. Above all, as we mature and experience Christ's love, we are "made complete" in all the good things God has for us.

Make the prayer in today's verses your own, and relish its great promises. Let God fill your mind with every good thing you can know about him and his love. Experience the promise and privilege of being able to have a relationship with him.



JANUARY 9



THE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH

*My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God
remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.*

PSALM 73:26

PAUL ANDERSON WAS once known as the strongest man who ever lived. The Olympic champ broke eighteen American records and eight world records, and he was listed in *The Guinness Book of World Records* for lifting 6,270 pounds in the back lift.

Like many athletes, Paul used his platform as the strongest man in the world to promote a message. He didn't focus on advocating a product or world peace or another cause. Instead, he used his fame to point to someone who really deserves the fame and adoration: Jesus Christ.

Paul was the strongest man who ever lived, but he still had to look to God for strength and power.

Where do you find your strength? By keeping in shape? By eating right?

It's great to have a physically fit body, but as Paul told people, it's not an end in itself. The only one you can truly entrust your life to in this world is God. He will be your strength in every area of your life, no matter what shape you're in. Are you relying on him?





JANUARY 10

JESUS IS LORD

God elevated [Christ Jesus] to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PHILIPPIANS 2:9-11

SOMETIMES PEOPLE JUST don't have any respect for Jesus.

Doesn't it aggravate you when they use his name in vain or disparage or ridicule him? It's hard to remember to pray that people will find out the truth and seek forgiveness for their sin.

Thankfully, this disrespect won't last forever. God assures all of us that eventually Jesus will be recognized for who he is. His glorious act of saving the world will be known and revered from one end of the earth to the other. No one will fail to understand his greatness, perfection, love, and goodness. No one will ever ridicule him again.

Though we must live in this corrupt world, hearing the insults and taunts of unbelievers about the person we know as the greatest person who ever lived, one day everything will change. Our Lord will reveal himself. All those people will see their folly and bow down, realizing their mistake. At the same time, we will see our Lord exalted and blessed in ways only he deserves. Count on it. Today's Bible promise is that although Jesus may be taking the brunt of verbal shots now, one day he will gain the glory he has deserved ever since he created our world.



JANUARY 11



Those who have been ransomed by the LORD will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness.

ISAIAH 51:11

HAVE YOU EVER felt distant from God?

If so, you can probably relate to how the Israelites felt at different times over the years. Here they were, God's people, yet they were far from the God of their forefathers. Physically, they were in exile, even removed from the land he'd given them.

But the separation wasn't forever. The Scripture above speaks of an eventual return to the land God had given them and to the God who had given them the land. Isaiah prophesied that these men and women would enter Jerusalem singing and joyful—filled with gladness.

Perhaps most of us go through times when we feel separated from God. At times we get distracted by busy lives, earthly concerns, fears, and other hindrances.

But when we face those times of feeling distant, we can cling to the promise in today's verse. We can come back to God. Whether we've been "away" for days or for years, we can return to him, entering his presence with the joy of repenting and renewing our relationship with him.

Do you feel distant from God? He's waiting with open arms to fill you with the joy of his presence again.



JANUARY 12



Because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

GALATIANS 4:6-7

THE RELIGION OF Islam portrays Allah as an aloof, distant potentate who has no personal connection with his followers. Hinduism features millions of gods, few of whom are “nice,” let alone good or gracious. Buddhism doesn’t even have a god in its belief system. Other religions—such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormonism—teach that we can achieve godhood or that we must work for our salvation, or they promote views of a god that is not the God of the Bible.

One of the great truths about God is that he is personal. He wants us to know him intimately and deeply. In fact, one of the first things that happens to a new believer is what the verses above refer to: we begin responding to God as “Abba, Father.”

Abba is the Aramaic term for “Daddy” or “Papa.” It’s an intimate word, reserved for those who would crawl into God’s lap, look into his face, and say, “Daddy, can you help me with this problem?”

God promises that he will personally make himself real to us and that we can experience an intimacy with him that is unparalleled in our world. Today, bask in your relationship with a personal God.



JANUARY 13

DELIVERANCE

Strengthen those who have tired hands, and encourage those who have weak knees. Say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you."

ISAIAH 35:3-4

WHEN THE ISRAELITES learned that the Ninevite army was approaching, many undoubtedly lost courage. Already weary, they shrank from the task of fighting the Ninevites. As they watched the horizon for the dust of the attacking hordes, their spirits quaked, and many felt tempted to sink into despair and terror (see 2 Kings 19).

Isaiah records, though, that King Hezekiah called on God for help. And as a result, he received the promise that God would fight for the Israelites because they trusted in him.

When Sennacherib of Nineveh came to attack Jerusalem, more than 185,000 soldiers rallied outside the walls. God kept his promise, and in the night he sent an avenging angel. The next morning, everyone in the army lay dead, and Sennacherib escaped in defeat.

God originally sent the Ninevites to punish the Israelites for their sin. However, when they repented and turned to God, he relented and saved them. Where do you find yourself today? Do you sense God's displeasure for something in your life? Turn back to him in faith. Call on him for forgiveness and help, even if you've created the mess you're in. He will give you the power to prevail and will fight your battles for you.





JANUARY 14

FINANCIAL BLESSINGS

God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8

HAVE YOU EVER considered that one reason God blesses people financially is so they can bless others with their wealth? That's the point of this passage. God meets the needs of those who give, but part of the reason he blesses them is so that they can help others.

How else would God work in the world? Certainly, everyone doesn't make the same income. Many times, good people suffer reversals that could leave them homeless. Some Christians think that they don't have to do anything—the church will help these people. But what if you just made a lot of money in a stock windfall? Received an inheritance? Benefited from something else? Is hoarding that money or putting it into an account for retirement always the best thing to do?

Not according to this passage. Part of the reason you may have received a sum of money is so you can help others in need. God always works through his people to meet such situations. Could it be that he is blessing you right now so that you can bless others? His promise is that as you learn to give, and possibly to sacrifice, God will bless you even more because he sees that you are a faithful servant he can trust with larger sums.



JANUARY 15



God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

MATTHEW 5:6

AROUND THIS TIME of year, we celebrate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He sought justice for all African Americans, and he wanted them to be treated like other God-created humans, with equal rights before the law. Dr. King was highly effective at motivating people of all races, and he accomplished much in moving our country to establish a more just and righteous system of laws that support freedom and equality.

To be sure, this world has many injustices. People still face danger because of their race, gender, or Christian beliefs. Tyranny destroys multitudes. There are people who, in their greed, strip others of dignity, possessions, and power. These are not the kinds of people God blesses.

On the other hand, God does bless those who long for righteousness in the world. In a way that only God can do, he will satisfy those who work for justice, defend the poor, help the victims of crime, bring those who violate the law to their just ends, and strive for freedom of worship where Christians are persecuted.

Do you have a passion for justice? Do you hunger and thirst for goodness in the world? Keep working for it. You'll find ultimate justice in God's Kingdom. And until then, as you seek to bring about fair treatment and righteousness in the world, God will bless you in incomparable ways.



JANUARY 16

LOOKING AHEAD

*This world is not our permanent home; we are
looking forward to a home yet to come.*

HEBREWS 13:14

“WHAT IN LIFE gives you the best feelings?” one young man asked his mom.

He was surprised when she responded, “Coming home after a long trip and seeing our house and family and everything looking great.”

Most of us can identify. A home represents comfort, safety, security, and feelings of joy and love. Our memories are stored there. From the pictures on the walls to the CD collection next to the stereo to the hobby materials in the basement, home is where the heart is.

Now, think about the fact that God has actually prepared a home for you in heaven that will be far better than anything you can imagine! The Scripture above doesn't spell out exactly what we'll experience, but God has planned something so marvelous we can't even begin to picture it. Will our homes in heaven have pictures on the walls? Comfy furniture with a wide-screen TV, a stocked refrigerator, and the old jukebox in the corner?

Who knows? But you can be sure if God promises that we should all prepare to be astonished (see I Corinthians 2:9), you can count on heaven being something amazing. God intends to give you a place to live in that will be the final and fullest fulfillment of all your homey dreams.



JANUARY 17



*Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you
do not know about things to come.*

JEREMIAH 33:3

DON'T WE ALL love to hear secrets? How quickly we open our ears when we think someone is going to tell one!

Did you know that even God has secrets to tell?

His secrets aren't gossip or rumors, as many of the secrets we hear are; his secrets are truthful things that the rest of the world doesn't know about.

Perhaps you've had this experience with God's secrets: you're reading in the Bible, and suddenly some verse seems to explode. Now you understand that truth in a way you've never grasped before. That's one of God's secrets. He's just let you in on something only we Christians will ever understand.

Or perhaps you're talking with a friend, and suddenly he or she says something that lets you see deep into his or her heart in a way you have never seen that person before. For a second you get a glimpse of how deeply he or she feels or believes something, and it shows you a side of that person that's precious and beautiful.

Those are God's kinds of secrets too. There are many more. How do you get them? Ask God to give you eyes to see such things. He promises that if you ask, he will give you those insights.





JANUARY 18

REAL LIFE

The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

JOHN 20:30-31

WHAT IS THIS life John speaks of?

Ryan experienced it sometime after he became a Christian. “One day I started to notice the beauty of creation. I was amazed. Then I started to notice the beauty of people. How they were constructed. Their faces. Every one of them was unique. I also sensed God was there as I talked to him in prayer. I no longer felt alone, although I’d felt intense loneliness for years before my conversion. I could sense the Holy Spirit deep within my being, talking to me, listening when I prayed. It was totally awesome.”

In time, Ryan noticed something else: how he felt a strange peace even when problems blew up in his face and could have seriously messed up his life. “It just was so gripping. I didn’t scream and yell, for once. I turned to God. It wasn’t like he zapped everything and made it perfect or anything. It’s just that I knew he was there, my situation was in his hands, and he would lead me through it. That was powerful comfort and strength.”

Those are the kinds of things that change merely existing into truly living a supernatural, engrossing, freeing, abundant life. And we can experience this only through Christ. Walking with him. Spending time in prayer. Learning about him. Growing close.

Draw near to him, and you’ll find him drawing near to you. That’s the life God promises you.



JANUARY 19



The master was full of praise. "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!"

MATTHEW 25:21

DON'T YOU LOVE to be praised for a job well done? From parents to corporations, we're discovering the value of lauding people for doing good work. In fact, many offices have forms employees can fill out to give applause where it's due.

Just hearing that someone else has noticed we've accomplished a feat will not only encourages us to work harder but also often makes the work we've done seem worth the effort.

This Scripture verse seems to show us two promises. The more obvious one is that if we are dependable in the smaller tasks God gives us, he'll bless us with more challenges and opportunities.

The second promise is that we can also count on God to notice. Even if a job is so small that no one else would notice what we did, God sees it. He celebrates even our smaller accomplishments with us. And he seems to appreciate them. After all, the one giving this illustration is the same one who pointed out that if we give just a cup of water in his name, we will have a reward.

Today, keep fulfilling with excellence the small responsibilities God has given you. Know that they're significant in his Kingdom. And enjoy celebrating your successes with him.



JANUARY 20

REAL FAITH

*All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith,
yet none of them received all that God had promised.*

HEBREWS 11:39

WHEN WE FIRST come to trust Christ, we often have little idea of what we're getting into. We don't physically see him or feel him. We simply take what the Bible says and stake our lives on it. When we make decisions in faith, we often feel as if we're "shooting in the dark," having no idea where those decisions will lead. Faith can take us on an unexpected journey. We may enjoy experiences we never dreamed possible. And, of course, there are also times when life looks scary and we need to depend on that faith to support us.

Think about those people of faith referred to in the verse. They rarely had the Scriptures to encourage them, surely not what we have today. They were often rejected, hated, tortured, and killed. Some faced lions. Others died by the sword or by incineration.

What held these people together at those times? Faith. They saw something beyond this world. They saw God and his Kingdom. They saw his promises.

Faith is like a sixth sense. By means of faith, you understand and become convinced of realities unbelievers could never grasp. Where does it come from? The Bible says over and over that our faith is part and parcel of being a Christian, a gift of God.

Do you see with the eyes of faith? The main thing to know is that faith will sustain you through everything. And then one day you will see God, and your faith will be rewarded with tangible reality.



JANUARY 21



Thank God! He has made us his captives and continues to lead us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:14

WHEN ROMAN GENERALS returned from conquests throughout Europe, they would lead a procession through Rome. The captives came behind—some in chains, some bound, some even in cages.

But some captives found new joy in their relationship with Rome. Perhaps in their homeland they had experienced hard lives, suffered abuse, and endured hatred. Under the Romans they found freedom and hope. Thus, their joy. They ran along in the procession, casting flowers and fragrant spices into the crowds lining the streets. They filled the air with a sweet aroma, and their joy was palpable.

Paul makes the analogy that we are God's joyful captives. We run about in the procession, spreading a beautiful fragrance to those who watch, making them wish they could join. Some do, becoming believers as we are. And they also experience the freedom and joy of belonging to a great King.

God promises that if you walk with him, you will experience this joy and peace. Do you have this joy, and do you spread this aroma to those you know and love?



JANUARY 22



The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 6:23

WHEN WAS THE last time you received a gift?

Did the giver ask you to pay him or her back? To do something in return? Unless it's a marketing ploy, anything that's called a gift is usually free.

Sometimes, gifts are about the only things in life that come with no strings attached. Few items, possessions, sources of help and strength, or anything else come without a price tag. We're used to paying for whatever we get.

But this verse tells us that eternal life, the spiritual salvation that comes from Jesus, is a "free gift."

Think about it. This gift from God to us—which includes forgiveness of sin, eternal life, salvation, a home in heaven, the power of the Spirit, God's presence in our lives here on earth—is truly free. We can do nothing to merit or earn it. We can't work for a week at hard labor and receive it as wages for a job well done. We can't reach into our wallets and pull out a donation to gain it. We can't even do something spiritual, such as praying for hours on end or beating ourselves with a whip to show our repentance, to get God's attention and approval.

No, God's gift to us is free. All we can do is give him our sins, open our hands and our hearts, and say, "I accept. Thank you." It's true. God offers his Kingdom, love, and eternal friendship for nothing more than a statement of faith.



JANUARY 23



Be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

MARABEL DIDN'T HAVE many talents or gifts. She couldn't teach or preach. She was no writer or singer or actor. She didn't draw well, and her menial job was far from glamorous.

But she did have one gift: she could cook meals like no one else. At one time or another, she had tried many other church activities such as teaching, singing in the choir, working on the drama team. But in time she found her real ministry was cooking for banquets and other meals at church.

That wasn't all. She helped at the local rescue mission and took meals to shut-ins and other people going through tough times. She also invited church visitors, neighbors, and others to come to her home and enjoy various feasts she prepared.

When her new pastor asked her one day, "What do you do for the Lord?" Marabel just shrugged and said, "Not much." But over time he learned about all she really did.

It doesn't much matter what your gifts are. All that matters is that you use them for the Lord. God promises that nothing you ever do for him will be "useless." And he will honor you for your service.



JANUARY 24

SPIRITUAL EYES

Our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17-18

WHAT DOES IT mean to see with spiritual eyes? What will you observe if you look at the world and life through such orbs?

For one thing, you will focus not on this world but on the next world. No matter what this world throws at you, if you have spiritual eyes, you see beyond it: "I won't worry, because one day God will rescue me from this mess, and I'll live with him in a far better place forever."

For another, you realize that no matter how badly you're treated now, one day these tough times will be over, and in God's new world, you'll be treated like a family member and a prince or a princess.

Forget any dreams of becoming a member of the House of Windsor or enjoying a weekend in the Lincoln Bedroom at the White House. You have a home in heaven that will be grander than anything a billionaire could experience on earth.

Spiritual eyes also change your perception of others. You see more than the surface of the people around you. You see them as God's creations, either in need of redemption (in which case, you'll want them to hear about Jesus) or as people who have been redeemed—and you welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Are you seeing the world through spiritual eyes?



JANUARY 25

HELP AND SHARE

Don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.

HEBREWS 13:16

DOING GOOD AND SHARING. These simple words define the actions that are the essence of Christian living.

Think of all the opportunities you have every day to do good and share. Maybe you could say a kind word to a coworker or tell your son's soccer coach how much you appreciate his work. Perhaps someone has a financial need and you had a windfall this past month, so you can help out. Maybe you can assist a neighbor who is struggling with some serious troubles.

God puts such opportunities in your path because he wants you to rise to the occasion. Will your efforts cost you? Sometimes. Will things automatically go right? Not always. Does God promise that everyone you encourage or help will come to a great relationship with Jesus? Not necessarily. But he does promise that when you do good, he will be pleased. And when he is pleased with you, he blesses you in some way that will be meaningful and, sometimes, even fun for you.

Today, look for opportunities to bless others. They'll be pleased and so will God.



JANUARY 26



GOD DELIVERS

*The righteous person faces many troubles, but the
LORD comes to the rescue each time.*

PSALM 34:19

ONE OF AMERICA'S favorite fictional film characters is Indiana Jones, and one of the greatest movies of all time, according to the popularity charts, is *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

It's interesting to note just how many times the heroine, Marion, gets into trouble. First, Indy rescues Marion from Germans. Then from a burning building. Then from bad guys at the market—a couple of times. Then, when she is missing, he finds her and promises to rescue her. Then he saves her from snakes. Then from a moving plane. Then from Germans again. And on and on. But each time the heroine faces troubles, the hero rescues her *again*. He doesn't complain—doesn't say, "Stay out of trouble, for heaven's sake, can't you?"

No, the hero willingly saves her again and again.

The best hero that the cinema can create is nothing compared to the Lord!

It doesn't matter how many times we face troubles or make wrong choices and end up in hot water—God will still rescue us, time and time again. He never complains. Never threatens not to be there the next time. He just rescues us.

If you're in trouble today, don't struggle trying to extricate yourself—call on your personal spiritual rescue squad. If you're not in trouble, spend a little time praising and thanking the Lord for the times he's been your hero!



JANUARY 27



THIRST FOR GOD

[God] said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.”

REVELATION 21:6-7

HAVE YOU EVER been truly thirsty? A relentless thirst can drive you crazy, especially if you have no way to fill that need at the moment. Our bodies can last awhile without food, but they can't go without water.

Even though physical thirst can be bad, spiritual thirst can be far worse. Spiritually, we can be desperate at a far deeper level. We know that eventually death looms in the future, and we don't know what's beyond that final door.

We also feel a spiritual thirst for the meaning of life, for a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Sometimes spiritual thirst involves not knowing what we want to do with our lives. All our dreams seem so elusive.

When Jesus spoke of thirst, he referred to a desperation for God—as well as for meaning, purpose, hope, joy, love, and knowledge of what lies beyond the grave. When a person comes to Jesus, the beautiful truth and promise is that he will satisfy your thirst. He will not only give you eternal life but also show you your purpose, tell you what he wants you to do in this world, and give you a deep sense of joy and fulfillment in life.

Have you called out to him to satisfy your thirst? If you do, he promises to satisfy it.





JANUARY 28

SEEING GOD'S GLORY

All of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

AFTER MOSES SPENT time with God in the tent of meeting, his face literally glowed from the encounter. It shone so brightly that when he stepped out of the tent, people could not look at him directly. He learned that if he wanted to go out in public after worshiping, he had to place a veil over his face so people could stand to look at him.

That was then, though, and this is now. Today, God puts that same glorious glow on some of us who worship him with fervor, intimacy, and true abandon. To the world, we just look happy, enjoy life, and talk about God's greatness. We don't glow literally, but something about us is different. One man said of Christians, "Something about their eyes is different."

What is it? He expounded, "It's like they have this inner light, like there's real joy and peace inside them."

Would you like to have that kind of glory of God evident in your life? Meet with the Lord daily. Get to know him intimately. Your life, he promises, will reflect his glory; you will bask in it, and the world will see it.



JANUARY 29

BECOMING HOLY

May the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24

HOW DOES A Christian become a holy, godly person?

Probably most of us were not angels before our conversions—or even after. In 1 Corinthians, Paul acknowledges that many of the people in the Corinthian church committed all kinds of sins, from drunkenness, cheating, swindling, and theft to sexual sins, impurity, coveting, and lying.

Clearly, that society was not much different from ours, and some of those Christians were still living lifestyles that match some of our own.

Somehow, though, God takes us just as we are at salvation and moves us in the direction of goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. The Spirit works in us to perfect us. No matter what we've done, no matter how young or old we are, he starts where we are and begins the process of transforming us into Christ's image.

God never intended to save us and then leave us in our old sinful condition. No, he plans to make us fit for his new heaven. And that will take a lot of honing and changing. This happens day by day as we walk in the power of the Spirit. His promise is to get you there. So trust him as he works in you. He's perfecting you for eternal life in a heaven of righteousness, peace, and joy.



JANUARY 30



TESTING

*When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When
you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown.
When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will
not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.*

ISAIAH 43:2

AS SIX-YEAR-OLD KATIE stood on the sidelines preparing to play dodgeball, Janie looked down at her daughter and said, “But it’s not that hard, honey. Just go in the middle and try to avoid getting hit by the ball.”

“But I’m afraid,” Katie said. “I’m afraid that it will hurt me.”

“It’s a rubber ball,” Janie answered. “It’s soft, and it doesn’t hurt. Look, I’ll go get one.”

Even after Janie showed her the ball, Katie was unconvinced. “Okay,” her mom said, “let’s stand on the sidelines and watch, and you can see what happens. I’ll hold your hand the whole time.”

Katie eventually got the courage to join the game. But what was the key? Her mother’s concern and presence and assurances.

That’s precisely what God promises. He will be with you through every circumstance of life. When you know you’re not facing the problem alone, when you know that the awesome God of the universe is at your side, you become courageous. And you can face anything.



JANUARY 31



Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. . . . Then the God of peace will be with you.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

WHAT KINDS OF thoughts do you let course through your mind each day?

Many of your thoughts may be right on track with God. But Christians do struggle with thoughts and images that come from the culture they live in or from the time before they met Christ. How does a person extinguish those bad thoughts and feelings?

Today's verses are the antidote. Gene worked on his thoughts by memorizing Scripture. Carla dealt with her thoughts by refusing to listen to them and then meditating on something good—a praise song, a word such as *peace*, or a Bible verse. James fought off bad thoughts by praying and setting his mind on God.

There are many methods. God wants you to “fix your thoughts” on certain things—not the junk and garbage of the past or our culture, but on the good things of life and God's Word: what's true and honorable and right. What's pure and lovely and admirable. Things that are excellent and praiseworthy. How do you get your thoughts “fixed” on such things? You focus your mind and heart on them. You simply pray, “God, help me think thoughts that honor you.” And then you make your mind dwell on the good things of God's character and all he has done for you and others in your world. His promise is that his presence will be with you and bear peacefulness in your life.

