



SWEET & SIMPLE
MOMENTS
WITH GOD



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Kim Newlen

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Sweet and Simple Moments with God

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Introduction

Dear Sweet Reader,

I wish you could see my so-excited face as I share with you this simple, sweet devotional. It's really not the words I am excited about sharing—it is the *Lord*, our Creator, the one true God, who sent Jesus, His only Son, not only to save us from our sin, but also to give us a personal relationship with Himself now and forever.

I came to accept God's free gift of salvation in Christ at an early age, but I did not begin to grow in my love for Him through His Word until I was a young adult. I try to live life with no regrets, but I do regret that I did not plunge into reading His Word every day a lot sooner. Getting to know God has been the greatest adventure of my life! The wildest thing is that the more difficult life is at times, the sweeter He becomes to me!

He is the same unchanging God who is still committed to His people—that's you and me in Christ. He loves us and forgives us. He helps us and changes us. He always has our backs and always has our best interests at heart. Spending time with Him and His Word is not on my "to-do" list but on my daily "want-to-do" list.

My hope and prayer is that we will all know and grow in Christ together in the sweet days ahead.

His.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kim". To the right of the signature is a simple, hand-drawn smiley face with two dots for eyes and a curved line for a mouth, also in blue ink.

BSSYP (Be Sweet & Say Your Prayers)

SP (Sweet Pea): I know it is not fashionable to talk about yourself, but it is in the spirit of Psalm 66:16—His Spirit—that I share these simple devotions with you. “Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me.”

*How precious are your thoughts about me, O God.
They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them;
they outnumber the grains of sand!*

PSALM 139:17-18



Sweet Tooth for God's Word

*How sweet your words taste to me; they are
sweeter than honey. Psalm 119:103*

I have a confession to make. I have a big sweet tooth. If I had to point a finger at the culprit, I'd have a doughnut hanging there. Yes, it's true. Doughnuts are to blame.

When I was growing up, our family went to the beach every summer, and in the mornings my early-bird dad would go to the local doughnut shop and buy fresh ones hot off the conveyor belt for us. It was really a sweet "special delivery."

When we'd get home from vacation, we would beg Mama to make homemade doughnuts. She obliged us on a regular basis by deep-frying canned biscuits. She used a plastic bottle cap as her doughnut-hole cutter. We could choose chocolate or vanilla icing for her home-made delicacies, and she would slather it on and we would scarf them down! My mom fried the doughnut holes, too, which were my favorite because I could dip them in icing, covering the entire pastry.

I'm not a doughnut-a-day person anymore, but every now and then I buy the little powdered-sugar doughnuts to go with my coffee and Bible in the

morning. In the same way I developed a craving for doughnuts, my sweet tooth for God's Word developed by repetition. When I actually began to read the Bible on a daily basis, His words became sweeter and sweeter as I interacted with Him each day through its pages.

As humans, we long for food that tastes good to us. We crave things that are pleasing to the taste, flavors we can savor for a while. And we love our sweets! In Bible times honey was the sweetest substance on earth.

In today's verse from Psalm 119, the psalmist craved the sweetness of the Lord's promises and instructions. In fact, for 176 verses, he cannot say enough about the value of God's Word.

Enjoy your sweet time with the Lord, indulging daily. His Word provides a sweet sustenance you and I cannot live without.



RELISH THE SWEETNESS OF GOD'S WORD.
READ PSALM 119 AND WRITE DOWN A VERSE
OR TWO THAT SPEAK TO YOUR HEART.





Our Father Always Knows Best

[Jesus] never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone.

1 Peter 2:22

Have you ever gotten something in the mail that says you have won a prize? My first “free prize” experience was in high school. Several days after a big fair came to our small hometown, I received a letter saying I had won a trip to Florida.

I couldn't contain my excitement. My dad came into the kitchen to find out what was causing all the commotion. When I showed him the letter, he said quietly, “Kim, this is a gimmick. There's a catch.”

“No, Dad, I'm sure this is real.” I didn't want to think that I had been tricked. Dad advised me to call some of my friends who had gone to the fair with me and had entered their names into the drawing for free prizes. I was ready to prove my dad wrong, so I got on the phone. Of course, Dad was right. All of my friends had “won” too! I was extremely disappointed.

My wise earthly father knew best about that so-called “free” prize. What's more, our heavenly Father knows and sees everything, more than we can imagine. All the more reason to trust Him.

We can know for sure that in all things, in all circumstances, and in all situations our heavenly Father speaks truth. He always knows best and never tricks us. We don't have to enter a raffle or a drawing to receive the greatest prize ever—eternal life with Him. God arranged for all of us to receive that free gift through His Son, Jesus Christ. All we need to do is ask and receive. It's the best thing we could ever hope to possess.



WHAT A DAILY COMFORT IT IS THAT OUR FATHER KNOWS BEST. WHAT QUESTION DO YOU NEED CLEAR TRUTH ABOUT TODAY? HE ANSWERS IN HIS WORD.





God Is Rich!

God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

Ephesians 2:4-5

God is rich in everything! And if you're His child, then so are you! How's that for good news in our struggling economy?

It's true. God's riches are vast and uncountable, and they all belong to His children. Those who love Him as Savior and Lord have all the benefits as heirs, and we can claim many parts of our inheritance today.

He makes His children rich in mercy, loaded with His kindness, wealthy in compassion, overflowing in grace, abundantly forgiven, and invested with hope. His affluence cannot be measured. We cannot fathom the lavishness of His love for us.

God is so magnificent and infinite, and we are so puny and poor. In His richness, He became poor for our sakes. He did not have to. Right now we can lay hold of all the riches He is pouring out upon us and trust that He will forever overflow those to us because He is inexhaustible. His wealth of wisdom, mercy, grace, love,

and truth—everything good and right and pure and lovely—is ours through Christ. Because He loves us, He cannot help but give us His best.

Even though shoestring budgets are becoming the norm in our economy, God never operates on one. He doesn't skimp and never shortchanges us or withholds Himself from us. He never has to pinch and scrape and save to keep His resources from running out.

As I list His riches off the top of my head, my heart starts racing with joy. My heart can hardly hold His wealth, but I can be thankful that every day He's growing my heart larger to hold more of Himself.



NO MATTER WHAT YOUR BANK ACCOUNT HOLDS TODAY,
YOU ARE WEALTHY BY GOD'S KINGDOM STANDARDS
IF YOU ARE HIS CHILD. ASK HIM FOR MORE OF
HIMSELF TODAY. NOW TAKE THAT TO THE BANK!



Loading Up the Carts



*Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD.
Each morning I bring my requests to you
and wait expectantly. Psalm 5:3*

When I go to the grocery store, I always—and I am not exaggerating—*always* get more than what is on my list! This habit is my attempt to follow my sweet friend Sarah’s advice to try something new every time I go to the store. Plus, I’ll often see an item I need for a particular recipe that I forgot to put on my list.

In the same way, when I go to God’s Word each morning with my grocery list of requests for His help, His strength, His courage, and His patience for the day, I always get more than I came for! God is so big, yet so personal. The biggest supermarket we could envision cannot begin to hold all of His awesome character qualities, but He stocks them up in our hearts.

As we read His Word, our finite minds are capable of processing only a glimpse of who He is. He, on the other hand, knows our every thought and request before we do. He supplies our every need, even if we have not revealed the exact list of all that’s crammed in our heavy hearts.

What are some of His character qualities that He



loves to load up in our hearts? Let's list some of them. He is:

- our Friend
- our Rescuer
- our Savior
- our Forgiver
- our Protector
- compassionate
- loving
- merciful

The list goes on and on—and on and on! No matter how much we fill up on Him, the price at the check-out is always the same—free! We never have to worry about having enough funds to cover the cost of all He gives us because He took care of our account long ago through Jesus.



WHAT OTHER ATTRIBUTES OF GOD CAN YOU
THINK OF? JOT DOWN HOW GOD SPIRITUALLY
NOURISHES YOU BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS.





Confessions of a Leaner

Come close to God, and God will come close to you.

James 4:8

As much as I'd like to, I can't hide it: I'm a leaner. I am always being caught in the act by my family and friends who are the embarrassed recipients of my natural inclination. I stopped counting the number of times my daughter, Kali, has said in a public place, "Mom, you're leaning on me." I was oblivious! My "problem" is that I love to be close to people. Growing up, when I was walking anywhere with my friends—down the sidewalk, in the mall—they would be victims each and every time. I would just be brushing a shoulder!

Being in close proximity to people I love is how God made me. When I speak at churches or to women's groups, I ask if I can be as close to the women as possible. My husband, Mark, is the exact opposite. He needs some room, some sweet space! It's not just because he's tall; it's his reserved personality. Can you see why we're definitely a match made in heaven?

Naturally, I love leaning (pun intended!) toward the truth of today's verse. I can relate to it so well. It's comforting to know that our awesome God revels in our company. How amazing is that?

If you're thinking, *Kim, I'm too busy. I don't really have time to draw close to God*, here's what I would say: If you are reading this right now, you are actually being still for a moment. You are drawing close to God. Since God is the Word, we come close to Him by listening to what He has to say. As you meditate on His Word, you are leaning on Him.

Lean in, listen, and learn from God. Listen to others who love and lean on Him too. We can share this wonderful truth with those who do not know there is Someone they can lean on every day.



WHAT HAS GOD TAUGHT YOU RECENTLY AS YOU'VE
LEANED ON HIM? FIND SOMEONE WHO NEEDS
TO HEAR HOW GOD CAME CLOSE TO YOU.





Grasping His Unfathomable Ways

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9

I want to soak in this encouragement from God for a minute with you. We each have a lot of our own thoughts and our own ways, don't we? Our minds process countless ideas every day—some we speak and, thankfully, many we leave unspoken.

I have no idea how many thoughts on average run through a person's mind each day. We definitely have our individual ways of processing concepts and accomplishing things. In the simplest duties of daily life—from squeezing the toothpaste tube from the bottom, the top, or the middle to washing our hair every day or a couple of times a week—our idiosyncrasies are many and varied. And those examples don't even begin to touch on the deeper issues of life!

It is mind-boggling that God not only knows my every thought and my every way, but He knows yours, too, and those of every living creature. Yet He is so

personal to each of His children. He knows everything that will pass through our minds and how our choices will affect us. He wants the very best for each of us and understands each of our unique dreams—and in every way His are higher.

The more I read about God and His thoughts and ways in His Word, the more *He gets bigger* and I grow smaller. How thrilling! Let's take another peek at some of His ways that we know for sure.

God's way is perfect. All the LORD's promises prove true. Psalm 18:30

The way of the LORD is a stronghold to those with integrity. Proverbs 10:29

Accept the way God does things, for who can straighten what he has made crooked? Ecclesiastes 7:13



KNOWING THE LORD'S UNFATHOMABLE WAYS,
WHY WOULD WE SETTLE FOR LESS? TODAY LET ANY
CONFUSION AND QUESTIONS FADE AS HIS
HIGHER WAYS BECOME YOUR DESIRE!





Pay It Upward

These righteous ones will reply, “Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will say, “I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!”

Matthew 25:37-40

You’ve heard the term “pay it forward.” But today’s verses make me want to “pay it upward!”

When we feed hungry people, give thirsty people something to drink, show hospitality to a stranger, provide clothing, or visit sick people or prisoners, we’re ministering to Jesus as well as to those in need.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus tells us how to live. *Gospel* means “good news,” and Jesus Himself is Good News! In some Bibles, the words of Jesus are printed in red ink (it always looks pink to me). Every word in Matthew 25 is red! When we read this chapter, it’s like we are sitting with the followers who were hearing Jesus in person.

These verses are truly an invitation to love. Those who know Jesus understand that His love for the

downtrodden is so great that He identifies Himself with them in order to impress on His listeners the value of serving them.

Jesus' way of service is not burdensome to us. It truly is a joy to reach out to others with the love of Christ, particularly those who suffer in this life. We can imagine His smile of compassion and hope each time we share His mercy and thoughtfulness, each time we purposefully open our eyes to look for those who need His love.

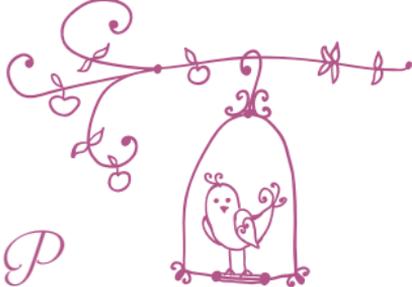
When we live to give, we not only pay it forward on a horizontal, earthly level, but we also pay it upward to Jesus. Do for Him by doing for others because He has done so much for us.



CHOOSE ONE SIMPLE WAY TO SHARE GOD'S
BLESSING WITH SOMEONE TODAY. DON'T TELL
ANYONE—JUST DO IT AND PAY IT UPWARD.



BSSYP



Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees!

Psalm 119:5

It truly is the little things in life repeated over and over that make the most lasting impressions. Consistency is crucial for connecting with people in a way that stirs love and warmth and builds trust in a relationship's stability. Consistency explains how family traditions *become* traditions.

Throughout our home—on license plates, art, and a mirror—the acronym BSSYP is on display. You see, when I went off to college, the first letter I received from home was written and addressed by my precious mother. My daddy had scribbled BSSYP in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope, along with a smiley face. For the life of me, I couldn't figure out what it meant. I was so homesick that I called home and said, "Daddy, what is that BSSYP?"

He replied, "Sugar, it is what I've told you all your life: Be Sweet & Say Your Prayers."

For over twenty-five years until the day he died, Daddy consistently wrote BSSYP on every package or piece of mail from home. More than merely scrawling letters, my father's actions consistently reflected a



parent's love. Mom's too—he'd say she did all the hard work! Those five letters have become a legacy that my own daughter surely will pass on to generations after her. In fact, my first text from Kali, away at college, closed with BSSYP.

I long to tell everyone I know to be consistent in the small things. They can grow to leave legacies later in life. Our actions will reflect God's desires if we are giving Christ full access to our hearts.



ASK THE LORD TO HELP YOU BSSYP . . . AND TO
BE CONSISTENT IN THE LITTLE BIG THINGS!





Basking in the Son's Rays

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." John 8:12

You would be laughing if you could see me right now. It is early morning, I am in my favorite lightweight long robe, and I just sat down to read my Bible. It's too cold to go outside for devotions, so I am doing the next best thing—sitting near the window. What's so funny is that I had to get up and put on my sun visor to read my Bible in the house! I could have moved from my sunny spot, but I did not want to because the sun's warmth makes me realize that God's Son, Jesus Christ, is sending His rays in my direction.

Shine on me, Lord. I need Your Sunshine!

Christ is comfort. Christ is light. As I am soaking in physical warmth and light from the sun, I long to soak in the One who created these necessities. I long to allow the Son to illumine His way for me this day, this hour—all day and night and the next until I reach heaven, where there is no darkness!

The rays really are bright, and I briefly consider whether I need to get sunscreen. I'm so glad that when

it comes to getting burned by the heat of my sins, I have the 100++ percent protection of *Sonscreen*.

Lord, You are my shield from sin. You see me without sin's damage, made perfect through the death of Christ, Your Son, on the cross.

I probably should get out of the sun before it burns me, but I never need to limit my time in the direct presence of the Son, and neither do you. In fact, the more we soak Him up, the more we'll glow with His Sonshine lighting us from the inside out. Jesus is our SPF 100++ (Son Protection Forever).



YOU AND I MAY BE FACING SOME DARK SITUATIONS, SO LET JESUS' WORDS SHINE INTO OUR HEARTS. WHEN WE FOLLOW HIM, WE HAVE THE PROTECTION OF SONSCREEN AND THE SON'S RAYS. HIS SPIRIT PRODUCES THE GLOW!





You Look Very Fine

The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

Whenever I ask my daughter or husband how I look and they reply, “You look just fine,” I want to head right back to my closet and start over! Of course, I usually do not have enough time for that, so I leave the house looking “just fine.”

What is meant by “fine” anyway? My children’s dictionary, which I prefer to use for simplicity, defines *fine* as “very well or healthy.” All I can think of is that I don’t look sick and that because I look “healthy,” people think I’ve gained weight!

Our loving God tells us plainly that although we see outward appearances and do not see the heart, He does see the heart, and that’s what really matters. What a beautiful truth! He sees the good, the bad, and the ugly in our hearts, regardless of the state of our outward appearance. Beautiful to Him is quite different from the world’s definition of beauty.

He sees my heart when it isn’t so fine because I’ve failed, yet He knows I want to please Him. He knows my weak heart is made of dust but it still beats for Him.

He knows I love Him and want to be obedient until my heart stops beating on this earth, when I finally will see Him face to face. That happens not because I look fine, but because I *am* very fine—perfect, actually—in Jesus Christ. You, too, are very fine—perfect, actually—in Jesus Christ, whether you feel or look “just fine” or not.

It is encouraging to know that even though God sees and knows everything about us, He still has plans for us that are a lot more than just fine!



THANK GOD THAT HE MADE OUR HEARTS
FOREVER PERFECT IN JESUS CHRIST.
“JUST FINE” WILL HARDLY DO!

