

The background features large, expressive brushstrokes in shades of teal and dark teal, creating a textured, artistic feel. The main title is written in a white, elegant, calligraphic serif font.

One Good Word A Day

365
Invitations to
Encourage,
Deepen & Refine
Your Faith

Julie Fisk | Kendra Roehl | Kristin Demery

One Good Word a Day is like a daily treasure hunt, providing opportunities to look for the work God is doing in your everyday life through the lens of each day's word. As a self-proclaimed word nerd, I love how this book guided me through so many applicable themes at just the right time. Focusing on one word a day is a brilliant way to remember the Scriptures provided and truly internalize their meaning. Julie, Kendra, and Kristin have a unique gift of inviting you into their lives and pointing back to Jesus through the relatable and refreshing words on these pages.

LINDSAY MAY, publisher of *Truly* magazine and founder of thetrulyco.com

As though a lovely memoir, this devotional uses events and life lessons from the authors' lives to guide and soothe like a fragrant balm to the sojourner's soul. Julie, Kendra, and Kristin offer encouragement to take one good step a day toward a deeper faith.

SHELLI LITTLETON, author of *A Gift Worth Keeping*

Julie, Kendra, and Kristin touch the hearts of those who, like myself, love words. *One Good Word a Day* is more than a devotional. It's a sweet place to go deeper in, examining who we are in the face of the good and the difficult days, coming out better able to serve the world around us.

CHRISTINA SUZANN NELSON, award-winning author of *More Than We Remember* and *If We Make It Home*

Sometimes our circumstances threaten to crowd out our walk with God. But our daily time with him doesn't have to suffer. If you are looking for a devotional to go to for that much-needed encouragement in your day, *One Good Word a Day* will bring perspective and hope to whatever you are facing.

RUTH SCHWENK, co-host of Rootlike Faith podcast and author of *The Better Mom Devotional*

With so much contending for our attention, women are longing for daily, deep, and satisfying encounters with Jesus. We crave to be awakened deeper into who we are and who we are called to be. *One Good Word a Day* delivers transformative, rich, and thought-provoking invitations infusing fresh perspectives lasting far beyond one day. The varying backgrounds of this writing trio deepen the understanding and application of each devotion. Through richly applicable and focused daily readings, readers will be both encouraged and challenged to approach each day with fresh beauty and awe.

AMANDA DAVISON, founder of A Wife Like Me

My spiritual journey can feel overwhelming at times. That's why the sweet simplicity of *One Good Word a Day* was exactly what my fatigued heart needed. Each page gave me the spiritual boost I needed, one day, one biblically-infused word at a time!

AMBER LIA, coauthor of the best-selling Triggers book series and *Parenting Scripts*

This incredible resource is more than just a daily devotional. It is a miniature, digestible word study with resonant application. There is not an abundance of books that actually live up to their subtitle promise, but Julie Fisk, Kendra Roehl, and Kristin Demery have truly launched 365 invitations to encourage, deepen, and refine your faith, and you won't want to miss a single one. This is a book I'll be going back to again and again!

TIFFANY EDMONDS, managing editor of *The Joyful Life* magazine

If recent times have taught me anything, it's that the future is way too uncertain for me to choose a single word to drive an entire year. (Anyone else choose the word *gather* for 2020 and then have to backpedal in March?) Even so, I still see the value of allowing words to help me intentionally focus on the things of the Lord. This devotional offers the perfect mix of ambition and practicality. Instead of offering a single word to ring out as the anthem for our entire year, *One Good Word a Day* allows our focus words to serve as a soothing soundtrack instead. The beauty of these morning coffee-sized devotions is that they give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to whisper a just-right word at a just-right time. *Peace* when you need it. *Resolve* when you require it. And yes, even *gather* when you've missed it.

EMILY E. RYAN, author of *Guilt-Free Quiet Times: Exposing the Top Ten Myths about Your Time with God*

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Introduction

INVITE. Abide. Balance. Simplify. Behold. Sustain. Each January, people claim a word of the year, choosing an inspiring word that helps set a goal or intention for the coming months. Some years, we've even chosen one ourselves. But what we noticed was that—more often than not—no matter how excited we were by the word we chose at the beginning of the year, the words were eventually overlooked or perhaps even forgotten by the time June arrived. Or, sometimes, life threw us a curveball and the word we chose in January wasn't the word we needed the most in September.

As the three of us talked about our failed attempts to hang on to one word for an entire year—and our desire for God to use it to transform, shape, and grow us—we wondered if there was a way to reframe our focus on words and the powerful intention behind each one.

We asked, “What would happen if we focused on one good word—one thought-provoking, encouraging word—each day of the year?” Reframing our days with a single, powerful word can be transformational. Rather than trying to swallow and digest huge hunks of teaching or inspiration, landing on one key word each day gives the mind and heart a place to return to, rest on, consider, and often take action.

The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

This year, let's choose to be transformed by the Word of God each day. These five-minute meditations will help us focus on one word each day so we can identify and reflect on how the Word influences our lives throughout the course of that day. We can take time to consider words we'd never choose for an entire year, allowing our faith to grow deeper and wider as we step out of our comfort zones, allowing God to refine us, challenge us, and recalibrate us as we strive to live lives that reflect God, always.

Julie, Kristin, and Kendra

An abstract composition of thick, expressive brushstrokes in black and white. The strokes are layered and textured, creating a sense of depth and movement. The word "January" is centered over the composition in a white serif font.

January

JANUARY 1

Begin

Forget all that—it is nothing compared to what I am going to do.
For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun!
Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the
wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.

ISAIAH 43:18-19

HERE WE ARE at the beginning of a new year. Everything feels so hopeful and fresh. We're at the starting point where the possibilities of what could be are endless. For some of us, this is exciting, and for others it might feel overwhelming. I personally run the gamut of emotions, vacillating between excitement over the thought of something new and dread or even fear over what I might have to change.

I have a love/hate relationship with stepping outside my comfort zone. Often I'd like to just stay where I am. I sometimes need a nudge to push me to do a new thing, and a new year feels like a good time to do that. Many people love resolutions, but I've never been big on coming up with those. I get discouraged and usually quit when I inevitably break them, but I do like to have goals. Goals feel more attainable to me because I can mess up, try again, and still be in pursuit of my goal. Resolutions aren't meant to be broken, while goals can ebb and flow throughout the year.

So whether you are someone who is excited about the possibility of this new beginning or a little trepidatious, I believe that God will start with us right where we're at. God does not change, but he is always doing a new thing. Do we see it? He promises to make pathways through a wilderness and rivers in dry wasteland. These are things I'd love to have in my life. I just have to be willing enough to begin again, try something new, and set some goals.

Lord, thank you that you are always doing a new thing. Thank you that you bring things about for our good. Give us the eyes to see the new things you are doing in and through us and give us the courage to begin again with you. Amen.

-Kendra

One Good Step: Spend some time in prayer asking God what new things he'd like to do in your life this year. Then write them down.

JANUARY 2

Welcome

On the other side of the lake the crowds welcomed Jesus,
because they had been waiting for him.

LUKE 8:40

“MOM, I LIKE IT WHEN I get home and you already have the music on,” my oldest daughter said, shrugging out of her backpack and jacket. She sighed deeply, then inhaled. “And it always smells good too.”

A few months earlier, I’d learned about the concept of *hygge*. Pronounced “hoo-gah,” it’s a Danish word that roughly translates to all things cozy, a feeling of comfort that fosters contentment. As the busy whirlwind of the holidays moved into the deep chill of winter, I found myself gravitating toward things that made me feel this sense of coziness. Candlelight. Soft music. Fuzzy blankets. Chunky mugs. Even the twinkling lights leftover from holiday celebrations that still wound around our banister and lit our otherwise empty tree.

Those small changes were less about the atmosphere in my home and more about the attitude of my heart. I was grateful, and I wanted my life and home to reflect that gratitude. I wanted both to feel welcoming.

The word *welcome* is from the Old English *wilcuma*, meaning “a person whose coming is pleasing.” From the beginning, the word was meant positively, expressing pleasure at a person’s visit. Welcoming someone reveals our happiness at their arrival in the intimate confines of our home. It shows a level of trust in that person and comfort in their presence.

Similarly, Jesus’ followers once welcomed him with gladness. As they waited for him on the opposite side of the lake, preparing for his arrival, a sense of anticipation rippled through the crowd. They were ready to welcome Jesus and the good news he bore, of salvation and mercy and healing. When we think of Jesus, do we bear the same posture the crowd did, of joyful expectation? Do we cultivate a heart that’s ready for him, or one that considers our time with him an unwelcome intrusion?

I love the idea of *hygge* because, though the changes are external, they are meant to foster an environment of contentment and ease. Similarly, when we actively prepare our hearts for Jesus, the work we have done in advance means that our time with him is more likely to be fulfilling.

Lord, help us to welcome you into our hearts and homes with a posture of joyful expectancy. Amen.

-Kristin

One Good Step: What are three ways you can actively welcome Jesus into your life today?

JANUARY 3

Words

The tongue can bring death or life;
those who love to talk will reap the consequences.

PROVERBS 18:21

WHEN THE MESSAGE CAME THROUGH, my immediate thought was not very kind. Instead of responding with my initial reaction, I stopped, took a deep breath, and prayed. I waited several hours and then talked to my husband, Kyle, before replying. I wanted to be wise and measured in my response.

If I'm honest, I'm someone who would love to—at times—put another person in their place, at least from the way that I see it. My love of words can sometimes get me into trouble when I allow foolish talk to leave my lips unfiltered. I've regretted words that were spoken and sought forgiveness more times than I can count.

I've seen the power the tongue has to bring death or life in relationships. I know how it can be used to tear another down, discourage or bring heartache to those around me. But on the flip side, I've also seen how our words have the potential to bring life, to speak peace, to encourage and build others up. There is power in the way that we talk and the way that we choose to use our words.

In an age where people often seem to say whatever they think and feel haphazardly, spilling reckless words onto others and often causing discord and division, we can be the ones to step in to use our words wisely. We can be the ones to use the way that we talk to bring life to situations and people around us. We can calm a situation or send it into a frenzy, all by the things we let slip from our mouths. And the result will be, for better or worse, that we will reap the consequences of the things that we say.

Lord, help me watch what I say today. Give me wisdom to know when to speak and when to remain silent. Help me to use my words to build others up, not tear them down. Amen.

-Kendra

One Good Step: Be mindful to use your words to bring life to yourself and the people around you.

JANUARY 4

Before

Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.

DEUTERONOMY 31:8

AS I WALKED BRISKLY across the polished granite floor, the clickety-clack of my high heels declared my presence, exuding both confidence and purpose to anyone watching. Despite my calm and competent outward appearance, my heart beat faster than normal and my palms were clammy. I knew the importance of today's motion hearing, and I was understandably nervous. As I moved toward the large, ornately carved wooden doors leading into the courtroom, I, as was my custom, was silently praying. *Lord, go before me. May your presence be in this courtroom this morning. Give the judge divine insight and wisdom, whether she knows you or not. May I argue my client's case with excellence and integrity. But, Lord, may your perfect will be done, always. Amen.*

Pausing outside the room to straighten my shoulders, I pulled open the door and entered, ready to defend my client's position to the best of my ability but relying upon God for the outcome based on his perfect understanding of the parties and the situation at hand.

I often ask God to go before me, before loved ones, before perfect strangers who find themselves facing uncertainty or scary situations. I not only invite God into school buildings, hospital rooms, operating theaters, courtrooms, and even into conference rooms where important decisions are about to be made, but I ask him to be the advance guard—to already be present as the person I am praying for steps through the doorway.

There is something immensely comforting in knowing that God's presence is already awaiting us as we step across a threshold. When he goes before us, we are not alone, not even for a millisecond as we move from one space to another. We are not abandoned, even in our worst moments and deepest grief. His presence brings peace and comfort, no matter what we face.

Lord, go before me and those I love today. Be already present in all the places and spaces we enter today. May I perform to the best of my ability, leaving the outcome to you. Amen.

-Julie

One Good Step: As you cross thresholds, pause to ask God to go before you, meeting you as you enter.

JANUARY 5

Obedience

Serve only the LORD your God
and fear him alone. Obey his commands,
listen to his voice, and cling to him.

DEUTERONOMY 13:4

MY PARENTS WERE JUST A FEW YEARS into their marriage with two small children in 1980 when they were headed home one evening. As they drove down their country dirt road, they passed a man walking. He looked rough and out of place since the nearest town was several miles away. Feeling compelled to pick him up, they stopped and offered him a ride. As they drove toward town, he told them how he had two kids, no money, and no food for the last two days. They stopped in town at the only gas station and gave the man all the money they had in their checking account, just a little over nineteen dollars, to buy food for his family.

When he asked why they'd helped him, they told him how they'd just become Christians and felt like God had asked them to stop. They left him with their information and told him about the little church community they were a part of, inviting him to join them.

What they would not know until months later was that the man and his family had once been Christians themselves. His dad had even been a pastor. But things had happened in the church his dad pastored that had wounded his family, and they had all drifted away from the Lord. My parents' obedience and sharing the little they had was the catalyst that brought the man back to God. He started bringing his family to the church my parents attended, and over time, his whole family came back into a relationship with Jesus.

We never know the impact our actions may have when we act in obedience to what God asks of us. My parents had no idea that this man's family had been deeply wounded by the church, but God knew and cared enough to want to draw him and his family back. We may not always see the result of our actions, but we can always trust that if God is asking us to do something, he will use it for good. We just have to be willing to obey.

Lord, may we listen and obey what you ask of us today. Amen.

-Kendra

One Good Step: Listen for God's voice and take the step of obedience when he asks you to.

JANUARY 6

Resilience

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-9

HUGGING MY ARMS TO MY SIDES, I shivered a bit. It was Saturday morning, and the chill of the ice rink was seeping through my not-as-warm-as-I-thought vest. On the ice, kids spun in dizzying circles or practiced tiny steps as coaches encouraged them or demonstrated skills. I watched as my oldest daughters mostly managed to stay on their feet but caught sight of my five-year-old just as she wobbled and fell down, catching herself on her elbows. Unperturbed, she clambered back to her feet, smiling widely.

Describing it to my friend Lindsay later that week, I couldn't help but marvel at the skaters' resilience. The kids—especially the littlest ones—fell and got back up countless times. An avid figure skater during our childhood, she shrugged and smiled.

“That's what they do,” she explained. “That's the first thing the coaches teach the little ones: how to get back up.”

As children of God, that kind of resilience should be our default too. Life will topple us at times; it may even knock the breath from our lungs. But instead of thinking badly of ourselves or telling ourselves that God can't use us, those moments can be opportunities to build our resilience muscles. Like a rubber band snapping back into place, resilience is demonstrated by elasticity. It's not a measure of how hard someone falls, but of how they are able to recover and bounce back. In our Christian walk, that flexible response should be our posture as well. Though we will fall, with God's insistently loving coaching we can bounce back to our feet again. He never gives up on us—so we shouldn't, either.

Lord, thank you that our hardships can be lessons in resilience. Help us to always look to you and rise again. Amen.

-Kristin

One Good Step: Work on resilience by listening for negative comments in your head, then replacing them with positive ones (*With God's help, I can do this, I'm a great friend, I'm good at my job.*)

JANUARY 7

Safe

A troublemaker plants seeds of strife;
gossip separates the best of friends.

PROVERBS 16:28

“HEY, JULIE, do you have a moment?”

“Sure, what’s up?” I noted my place in the brief I was proofreading before setting it aside and cleared a small space in the piles of neatly stacked papers cluttering my desk.

As she slipped inside and closed the door, I suspected this visit was personal rather than professional. She was one of several people who felt safe slipping into my office for a quiet chat about hard things, and I’d learned that the soft snick of my closing door usually preceded tears.

On occasion I’d pray with those seeking respite in my office, but more often than not I listened sympathetically, offering my box of tissues, silently asking God for discernment when I was asked for advice, dispensing biblical wisdom without directly invoking Jesus’ name.

In a workplace that loved gossip, thriving on juicy tidbits, the things shared with me in those private moments stayed private, unrepeated unless I had express permission. I was a safe person and quickly became a trusted sounding board for several coworkers.

I don’t know who among my friend group first used the word *safe* as shorthand to describe a woman who does not talk about others negatively when they step out of the room, does not make gossip a habit, and does not stir up drama, but we use that label with our daughters as they learn the ins and outs of female friendship.

In a world of oversharing and overexposure, being a safe person is valuable and increasingly rare. It is a habit that can be developed and practiced, rather than an innate characteristic or personality trait. And it is a behavior that will silently speak of our faith, setting us apart culturally, inviting questions about why we choose to live differently than those around us, pointing others toward God, whether they realize it immediately or not. We admit that we are imperfectly on the journey, slipping from time to time, but the intentional focus on being safe women and safe friends has helped tremendously.

Lord, show us where we need to do better, helping us develop strong defenses around gossiping, tearing other women down, and creating unnecessary drama. May we be safe women. Amen.

-Julie

One Good Step: Pick one area—gossip, backbiting, or drama—to focus on this week, asking God to show you where you fall a little short.