

A
CHALLENGE
TO CULTIVATE
FAITH

THROUGH DEVOTIONS,
JOURNALING, AND
PRAYER

40
DAYS

of
Intentional
Living



SNEAK
PEEK

UNCORRECTED
PROOF

THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO:

40 DAYS OF INTENTIONAL LIVING

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HOPE · FAITH · SUFFERING · JOY · SURRENDER · REST · GENEROSITY · LOVE

40 DAYS OF INTENTIONAL LIVING

A CHALLENGE TO CULTIVATE FAITH
THROUGH DEVOTIONS, JOURNALING, AND PRAYER




Ink &
Willow

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INTRODUCTION

I have come that they may have
life, and have it to the full.

—John 10:10

When we hear the promise of Jesus to bring us life “to the full,” we might pause and, with the best of intentions, attempt to consider the magnitude of how incredible that reality is, only to be swept along a moment later by the demands and busyness of our everyday lives. After all, how is there really time to reflect on the deeper themes of faith and spiritual growth when a work deadline is looming, meals need to be prepped, or kids need to be shuffled from one extracurricular activity to the next?

Still, no matter our hectic schedules and unending to-do lists, there is an integral part of us that longs for a deeper connection to God and a more intentional approach toward developing our faith. In his sermon “The Weight of Glory,” C. S. Lewis addresses a similarly innate longing by tying it to the German word *sehnsucht*, which he described as “the inconsolable longing in the heart for we know not what.” And as we all know, longings—whatever their source—yearn to be filled.

If you resonate with this idea for *more* in your faith—more focus, more depth, more intentionality—then *40 Days of Intentional Living* is the perfect resource for you. With thoughtful reflections from a number of beloved authors of faith, along with inspirational quotes, practical action steps, and beautiful illustrations designed to set your mind and soul at rest, this forty-day devotional will help strengthen your spiritual growth as it guides you through eight key themes of the Christian faith. In addition to daily journal prompts, each theme also closes with a reflection page, which will offer encouragement for cultivating intentional faith practices that can be carried on past the completion of this book.

Lastly, the forty-day structure of this devotional makes it an ideal guide for Lent or Advent. However, whether you plan to use this devotional as a guide through those seasons or simply as an individual or group-study resource at any other time of the year, our prayer is that through the next forty days your faith will experience exponential growth and you will know the nearness of God and allow His promises to take root in your heart:

The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.

—Zephaniah 3:17 (ESV, emphasis added)

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

PLAN This devotional is divided into eight themes with five topics each, for a total of forty days of material. With that structure in mind, follow the timeline that works best for you. You can tackle one devotion a day for forty days, focus on one theme each week for eight weeks, or come up with your own individual reading plan. You know your own schedule, so pick a habit that will stick!

READ Each devotion is composed of the following elements:

- *Scripture passage and devotional reading*
- *Quote or prayer for meditation*
- *Journal prompt*
- *Image for reflection*

To begin, read the day’s Scripture passage in your Bible or on your mobile device, and then read the devotion. Take time to reflect on how the message is applicable to your own life as you read the designed quote or prayer.

Next, answer the journal prompt in the space provided. Feel free to add a personal prayer or any other notes as needed.

PRACTICE In addition to the above elements, there is a section at the end of each theme to reflect on the topic as a whole. This page includes a few targeted questions as well as a related action step that will help you on your journey of cultivating an intentional faith lifestyle.

Even when you complete this devotional, you can build on these action steps by establishing daily, weekly, and monthly faith habits and keeping track of them in the My Intentional Life section at the back of this book.

Hope



Read Romans 5:1-5

All action movies have a familiar scene: The heroes have just lost a pivotal battle. Their resources, allies, and endurance are spent. At any moment, the villains will descend in full force and claim the final victory. As darkness—both literal and figurative—creeps in at the periphery, our champions are left to wonder if the fight was really ever worth it at all.

And there, in a moment that seems like an end, hope enters and ignites the spark of a new beginning. The way forward may no longer resemble the heroes' original path, but their final goal is more established than it ever was before. All at once, the presence of hope has done nothing and everything.

When defeat appears to be inevitable and the circumstances are darker and more hopeless than ever, in a beautiful twist, hope shines brightly. At the end of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Two Towers*, the heroes are weary after a long battle and have no reason to believe the tide will ever turn back in their favor. It is in this hopelessness that Samwise Gamgee delivers one of the most powerful speeches in the Lord of the Rings trilogy: "it's only a passing thing, this shadow. Even the darkness must pass. A new day will come. And when the sun shines, it will shine out the clearer."

For the Jews living under the oppression of Rome, the new day they were hoping for revolved around the coming of the Messiah, whom they believed would free them from corruption and lead them to glorious triumph over the Roman Empire. Their hope turned out to be terribly misplaced, but the reality was actually much better than their expectation. For the Messiah did come, not as a conquering warrior but as a helpless baby. And not to build some temporary earthly kingdom, but one that would last forever, bringing light and life not just to the first-century Jews, but to all who call on His name.

WAITING

Read Psalm 27:13-14

There are times when you cannot understand why you cannot do what you want to do. When God brings the blank space, see that you do not fill it, but wait. The blank space may come in order to teach you what sanctification means, or it may come after sanctification to teach you what service means. Never run before God's guidance. If there is the slightest doubt, then He is not guiding. Whenever there is doubt—*don't* . . . Wait for God's time to bring it round and He will do it without any heartbreak or disappointment. When it is a question of the providential will of God, wait for God to move.

*—from My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers
(Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935)*

Waiting on the Lord isn't for the faint of heart. While we can know deep in our heart that His timing is the best, that doesn't make the waiting any easier. Look to His resurrection, be encouraged that nothing is wasted. Not even the time of waiting. Life often looks different than we would have imagined, but as we follow God, we can trust that His leading is best.



PATIENCE

Read Luke 2:25–38

When we hope for something, the timeline is usually very simple. We want whatever it is we're hoping for, and we want it now. Or better yet, yesterday. The idea of spending days, much less *years*, patiently hoping for something sounds nearly unbearable.

This is why a look at the Hebrew word for hope reveals a fascinating twist: the word *tikvah* (hope) contains the root *kavah*, which means “to wait.” In other words, waiting is literally a central part of hoping.

Consider the wait times some of the heroes of our faith experienced. Abram and Sarai were told they would have a son, but it was eleven years before Ishmael was born, and *twenty-five* before Isaac was born. The Israelites wandered around in a desert for forty years before they were able to enter the Promised Land. The time between the end of Malachi and the beginning of Matthew is said to span *four hundred* years. And in the New Testament, when Jesus is presented at the temple, we encounter Anna and Simeon, who have been waiting for Israel's promised Savior for practically their whole lives.

Today we are also waiting—not for Jesus's initial coming, but for His return. The question is, how will we spend the time between?

In modern, first-world vernacular, when someone tells us to wait, we usually stop and sit still. But a second look at the above examples shows us a different picture. One that doesn't involve being stationary. Abram had to *leave* his homeland to fulfill God's promise. The Israelites were constantly on the move. Anna and Simeon spent their lives worshiping and praying in the temple. All of these are stories of forward momentum, even while the players in them waited.

Perhaps that is the real test of patience in hope. We keep waiting, and we keep moving forward.



ANTICIPATION

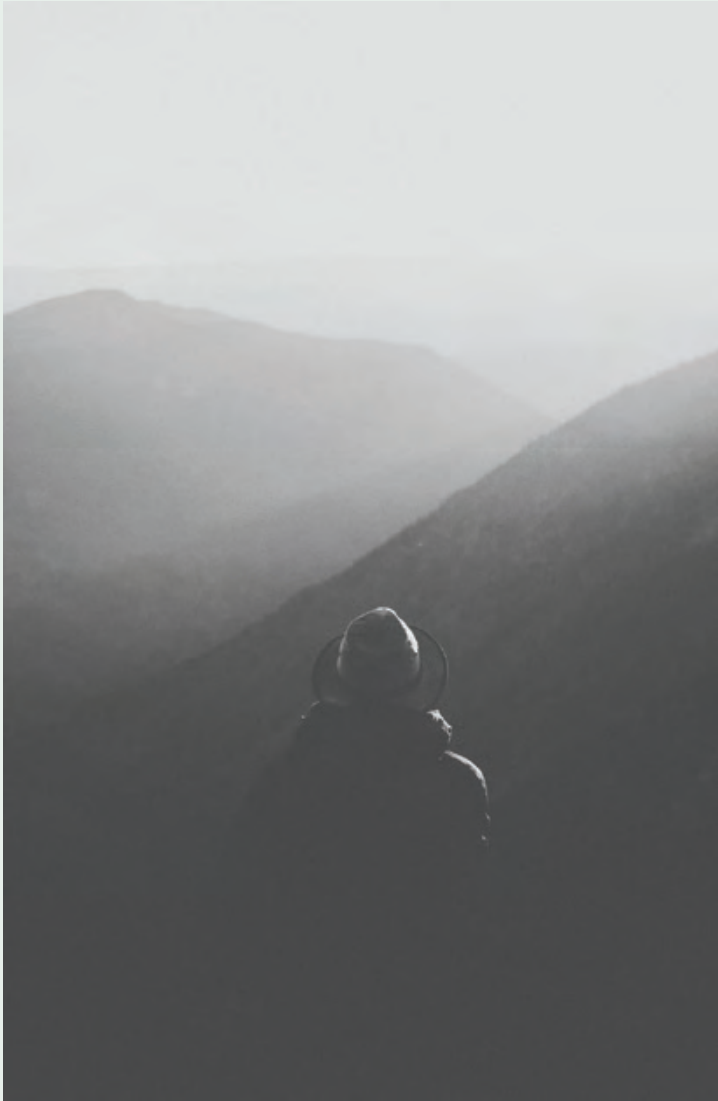
Read Genesis 22:1-14

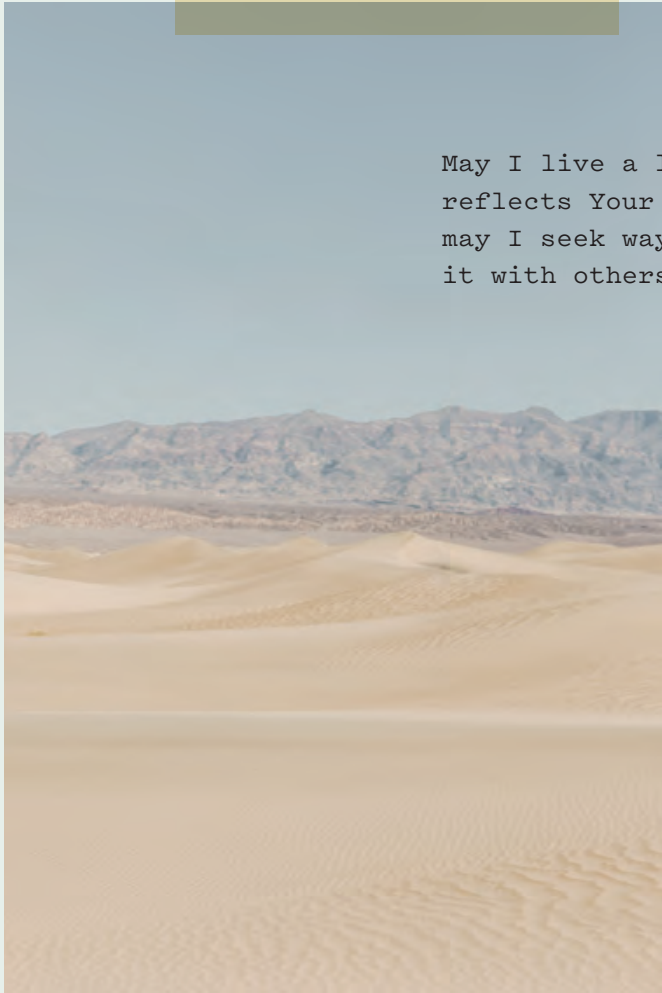
God sees you and me in our pain and our brokenness. He sees you walking a difficult path when the sun goes down and your life is a far cry from that which you expected or dreamed up. He sees you, dear friend, when the ending of the story is not the one that you yearned for and your prayers seem unanswered and it all just feels like a bit of a mess. He wants to name these places The Lord Will Provide. In the places where you thought life might be easier, when you thought things might be different, when you thought *you* might be better, be more, God provides His Son, who meets you and provides grace for your gaps and light in your darkness.

His deep desire is for us—that we would know His love in these unexpected broken places and that we would know the true hope found only in His Son Jesus, the Lamb, who never, ever stops reaching out for us, who cups our pain in His nail-scarred palms and cradles our hearts close to His. He wants to be our reward.

It is a bold claim, to look up your mountain, to look out over the dry, cracked places and the barren places and the broken places, outcomes yet unknown, and call the place The Lord Will Provide, to believe that He will when we cannot yet see how. But perhaps that was the offering He was looking for in the first place. Just the believing. Just the hoping. Just the trusting. Just that our hearts would say, would truly know that “God will provide the lamb, my son.” Because He did. And He does.

—from Daring to Hope by Katie Davis Majors (Multnomah, 2017)





May I live a life that
reflects Your grace and
may I seek ways to share
it with others.

REFLECTIONS ON HOPE

1. What is one way your perspective on hope has shifted during your time journaling on this topic?

2. Identify an area in your life in which you could apply something you learned about hope.

3. Which aspect of hope (waiting, patience, anticipation, grace) are you committed to working on right now?

PRACTICE INTENTIONALITY

Every day is filled with small moments of waiting—waiting in line, at stop-lights, for appointments, in drive-thrus, and so on. What is your first impulse in these moments? This week, practice using these moments as opportunities to pause and refocus your thoughts—either by recognizing things you are grateful for, releasing things that are causing you worry or stress, or looking forward to something with joyful hope.

BONUS Using the checklist page in the My Intentional Life section at the back of this book, make a list of things you are currently hoping for. Pray over the list, and then write one intentional action step you can take to keep moving forward in those areas.

Example: *I am hoping for deeper friendships:* invite someone out for coffee or tea.

I am hoping for a promotion: volunteer to take on an extra responsibility.

I am hoping for a new computer: make a revised budget plan.