



GOD IS
WITH YOU
Every Day

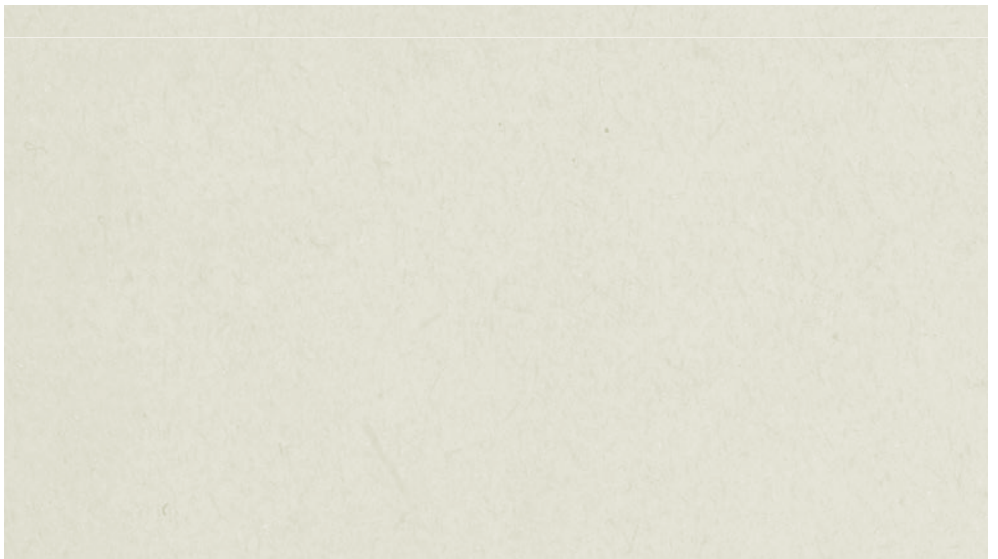
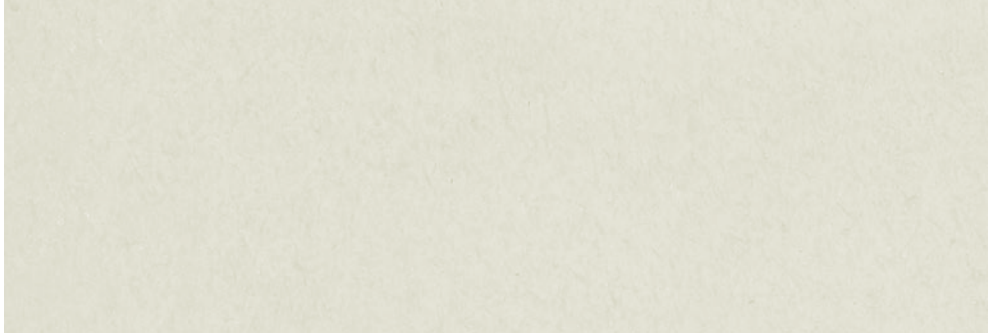
A 365-DAY DEVOTIONAL

MAX LUCADO



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO



January 1

A Prayer . . . of Praise

Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works!

1 Chronicles 16:8–9

Father, you are so worthy of it all—my attention, praise, worship, and love. Your works are amazing, beyond anything I can even express.

Help me be a light that shines toward you today. It is often hard for me to stand out from the world and be different. Give me the courage to make your goodness known and to never be ashamed.

Please give peace to my friends who are standing up for you and as a result have found themselves friendless or with few who understand them.

I thank you for your wonderful works and all that you have done and will do.

In the glorious name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Pocket Prayers

January 2

Today I Will . . .

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Ephesians 5:15–16 NIV

Today I will make a difference. I will begin by controlling my thoughts. A person is the product of his thoughts. I want to be happy and hopeful. Therefore, I will have thoughts that are happy and hopeful. I refuse to be victimized by my circumstances. Optimism will be my companion, and victory will be my hallmark. Today I will make a difference.

I will be grateful for the twenty-four hours that are before me. Time is a precious commodity. I refuse to allow what little time I have to be contaminated by self-pity, anxiety, or boredom. I will face this day with the joy of a child and the courage of a giant. While it is here, I will use it for loving and giving. Today I will make a difference.

I will not let past failures haunt me. Even though my life is scarred with mistakes, I refuse to rummage through my trash heap of failures. I will admit them. I will correct them. I will press on. Victoriously. No failure is fatal. It's okay to stumble. . . . I will get up. It's okay to fail. . . . I will rise again. Today I will make a difference.

I will spend time with those I love. My spouse, my children, my family. Today I will spend at least five minutes with the significant people in my world. Five *quality* minutes of talking or hugging or thanking or listening.

Today I will make a difference.

On the Anvil

January 3

Be About His Business

“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”

Luke 2:49

Time on God’s anvil should clarify our mission and define our purpose. When a tool emerges from a blacksmith’s anvil, there is no question as to what it is for. There is no question as to why it was made. One look at the tool and you instantly know its function.

As a human emerges from the anvil of God, the same should be true. Being tested by God reminds us that our function and task is to be about his business, that our purpose is to be an extension of his nature, an ambassador of his throne room, and a proclaimer of his message. We should exit the shop with no question as to why God made us. We know our purpose.

We are God’s people, and we are to be about his business.

If we live our lives in this way, then we can enter our final years with the assurance of knowing that life was well spent and that heaven is but a wink away.

And is there any greater reward than this?

On the Anvil

January 4

Stay in Your Own Lane

Stir up the gift of God which is in you.

2 Timothy 1:6

A little boy named Adam wanted to be like his friend Bobby. Adam loved the way Bobby walked and talked. Bobby, however, wanted to be like Charlie. Something about Charlie's stride and accent intrigued him. Charlie, on the other hand, was impressed with Danny. Charlie wanted to look and sound like Danny. Danny, of all things, had a hero as well: Adam. He wanted to be just like Adam.

So Adam was imitating Bobby, who was imitating Charlie, who was imitating Danny, who was imitating Adam.

Turns out, all Adam had to do was be himself.¹

Stay in your own lane. Run your own race. Nothing good happens when you compare and compete. God does not judge you according to the talents of others. He judges you according to yours. His yardstick for measuring faithfulness is how faithful you are with your own gifts. You are not responsible for the nature of your gift. But you are responsible for how you use it.

Glory Days

January 5

Your Assignment

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

1 Corinthians 12:4–6 NIV

“Stir up the gift of God which is *in you*” (2 Timothy 1:6, emphasis mine).

You be you. Don’t be your parents or grandparents. You can admire them, appreciate them, and learn from them. But you cannot be them. You aren’t them. “Don’t compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life” (Galatians 6:4–5 MSG).

Jesus was insistent on this. After the resurrection he appeared to some of his followers. He gave Peter a specific pastoral assignment that included great sacrifice. The apostle responded by pointing at John and saying, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus answered, “If I want him to live until I come back, that is not your business. You follow me” (John 21:21–22 NCV).

In other words, don’t occupy yourself with another person’s assignment; stay focused on your own.

Glory Days

January 6

Unimpeachable Authority

He sustains everything by the mighty power of his command.

Hebrews 1:3 NLT

Jesus has unimpeachable authority.

The Roman government tried to intimidate him. False religion tried to silence him. The Devil tried to kill him. All failed. Even “death was no match for him” (Acts 2:24 MSG).

He was not kidding when he declared, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18 NIV). Jesus is the command center of the galaxies. He occupies the Oval Office. He called a coin out of the mouth of a fish. He stopped the waves with a word. He spoke, and a tree withered. He spoke again, and a basket became a banquet. Economy. Meteorology. Botany. Food supply. “All things have been handed over to me by my Father” (Matthew 11:27 NRSV).

That includes Satan. The Devil was soundly defeated by Christ on the cross. Jesus outranks him in every situation. He must obey Jesus, and he knows it. Prayers offered in the name of Jesus have “divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4 NIV). Demolish! Not damage or hamper but demolish.

Satan setting up a stronghold in your life? Lift up a prayer and unleash the demolition power of Jesus.

Before Amen

January 7

God's Goal for You

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Philippians 2:12–13 NLT

Envision the day you stand before Jesus and look back over your life. “God will give to each one whatever praise is due” (1 Corinthians 4:5 NLT). Your Savior will declare the final outcome of your life:

“With God’s help John Doe took on the enemies of his promised land and drove them out.

“Greed!

“Explosive temper!

“Envy!

“Abused as a child yet stable as an adult.

“Tempted with drugs yet sober and steady.

“Strayed off course yet returned with vigor.”

One by one the conquests will be read and celebrated.

Every witness will rejoice at the work God did. This is God’s goal for you. This is your inheritance: more victory than defeat, more joy than sadness, more hope than despair.

Glory Days

January 8

A Prayer . . . to Shine

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your
good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

*Heavenly Father, work in my life in such a way that people will see you
shining forth. Help me to break free from the selfishness and sin that
prevent me from being conformed to your image and expressing your
holiness. In Jesus' name, amen.*

On Calvary's Hill

January 9

Live a Stirring Life

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

Philippians 2:14–16 NIV

Each of us should lead a life stirring enough to start a movement. We should yearn to change the world. We should love unquenchably, dream unfalteringly, and work unceasingly.

We should close our ears to the manifold voices of compromise and perch ourselves on the branch of truth. We should champion the value of people, proclaim the forgiveness of God, and claim the promise of heaven.

And we should lead a life stirring enough to cause a movement.

A movement comes of age when one life harvests the seeds planted by countless lives in previous generations. A movement occurs when one person, no greater or lesser than those who have gone before, lives a forceful life in the fullness of time.

Let’s live lives stirring and forceful enough to cause a movement. A true mark of the visionary is his willingness to lay down his life for those whom he’ll never see.

Will the movement come in our generation? I hope so. But even if it doesn’t, even if we never see it, it will occur. And we’ll be part of it.

On the Anvil

January 10

Ask for Hebron

*When doubts filled my mind,
your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer.*

Psalm 94:19 NLT

Turn a deaf ear to doubters. Ignore the naysayers. People have a right to say what they want. And you have a right to ignore them.

When the twelve spies reported back to Moses, all but Caleb and Joshua were spouting doubt (Numbers 13:26–33). They were outnumbered ten to two, but they still believed in God’s power. Let’s take our cue from Caleb. Disregard the lethal disbelief of cynics.

This is no sanction for rudeness or isolation. When people express their sincere struggles or questions, help them. But some folks do not want to be helped. They would rather pull you down than let you pull them up. Don’t let them.

Caleb didn’t. He filled his mind with faith and took on a God-size challenge.

When Moses sent Caleb to spy out the land, Caleb saw something that troubled him: the town of Hebron. Abraham had buried his wife there. He was buried there. So were Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob.

Hebron was a sacred site, but it was inhabited by unholy people. So Caleb asked Moses for Hebron.

Moses took the request to God, and Caleb was given the land. Forty-five years later, at the age of eighty-five, the old soldier chased the enemy and reclaimed the city.

Caleb wanted to do something great for God. He lived with a higher call. You can too. Ask for your Hebron.

Glory Days

January 11

Wait for the Nudge

Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

Galatians 5:25 NLT

Is there anything in your life that needs to be removed? Any impediment to the impression of God's Spirit? We can grieve the Spirit with our angry words (Ephesians 4:29–30; Isaiah 63:10) and resist the Spirit in our disobedience (Acts 7:51). We can even quench the Spirit by having no regard for God's teachings.

Here is something that helps me stay in step with the Spirit. We know that the "fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23 NASB). God's Spirit creates and distributes these characteristics. They are indicators on my spiritual dashboard. So whenever I sense them, I know I am walking in the Spirit. Whenever I lack them, I know I am out of step with the Spirit.

To walk in the Spirit, respond to the promptings God gives you.

Don't sense any nudging? Just be patient and wait. Abraham waited for the promised son. Moses waited forty years in the wilderness. Jesus waited thirty years before he began his ministry. God instills seasons of silence in his plan. Winter is needed for the soil to bear fruit. Time is needed for the development of a crop. And disciples wait for the move of God. Wait for him to move, nudge, and direct you.

God's Story, Your Story

January 12

A Spiritual Battle

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12

For a book about conquests, the book of Joshua sure skimps on military details. What weapons did Joshua's army use? How many officers did his army have? The answer to these and other questions? We don't know.

We don't know because the emphasis is not on a physical battle but a spiritual one. The real conflict wasn't with Canaanites or Amorites; it was with Satan and his demons.

Canaan was the choicest real estate on earth. It was marked by fertile fields and valleys. Most important, the land was God's gift to Israel (Genesis 12:7).

God set this property apart for his people and his people apart to be a blessing for the world. God promised Abram, "I will make you a great nation" (12:2). The Hebrews were the couriers of God's covenant to a galaxy of people. Israel was the parchment on which God's redemption story would be written.

Satan's counterstrategy was clear: contaminate the Promised Land and preempt the Promised Child. Destroy God's people and destroy God's work.

Joshua's battle, then, was a spiritual one.

So is ours.

Glory Days

January 13

The Discovery That Changes Everything

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

You are in the hands of a living, loving God. Random collection of disconnected short stories? Far from it. Your life is a crafted narrative written by a good God, who is working toward your supreme good.

God is not slipshod or haphazard. He planned creation according to a calendar. He determined the details of salvation “before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20). The death of Jesus was not an afterthought, nor was it Plan B or an emergency operation. Jesus died “when the set time had fully come” (Galatians 4:4 NIV), according to God’s “deliberate plan and foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23 NIV).

God isn’t making up a plan as he goes along. Nor did he wind up the clock and walk away. “The Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will” (Daniel 5:21 ESV). He “executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another” (Psalm 75:7 ESV). “The LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intentions of his mind” (Jeremiah 30:24 ESV). Look at those verbs: God *rules, sets, executes, accomplished*. These terms confirm the existence of heavenly blueprints and plans. Those plans include you. “In him we were also chosen, . . . according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11 NIV).

This discovery changes everything!

God’s Story, Your Story

January 14

A New Song

*Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, bless His name; . . .
For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised.*

Psalm 96:1–4

God places a song in the hearts of his children. A song of hope and life. “He has put a new song in my mouth” (Psalm 40:3). Some saints sing this song loud and long every single day of their lives. In other cases the song falls silent. Life’s hurts and happenings mute the music within. Long seasons pass in which God’s song is not sung.

I want to be careful here. Truth is, we do not always know if someone has trusted God’s grace.

A person may have feigned belief but not meant it. Judas is an example of one who seemed to have been saved but in truth was not. For three years he followed Christ. While the others were becoming apostles, he was becoming a tool of Satan. When Jesus said, “You are clean, though not every one of you” (John 13:10 NIV), he was referring to Judas, who possessed a fake faith.

Whether or not someone’s faith is real isn’t ours to know. But we know this: where there is genuine conversion, there is eternal salvation. Our task is to trust God’s ability to call his children home.

We join God as he walks among his wayward and wounded children, singing.

Eventually his own will hear his voice, and something within them will awaken. And when it does, they will begin to sing again.

Grace