

JACKIE HILL PERRY UPON WAKING



A SIXTY-DAY DEVOTIONAL

UPON WAKING



JACKIE HILL PERRY
UPON WAKING



Copyright 2023 © Jackie Hill Perry
All rights reserved.
Printed in China

978-1-0877-8371-0

Published by B&H Publishing Group
Brentwood, Tennessee

Dewey Decimal Classification: 242.5
Subject Heading: DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE
/ CHRISTIAN LIFE / MEDITATIONS

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

Scriptures marked CSB are taken from The Christian Standard Bible. Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible®, and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers, all rights reserved.

Scriptures marked NIV are taken from New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scriptures marked NLT are taken from New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scriptures marked ISV are taken from the International Standard Version, copyright © 1995-2014 by ISV Foundation. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INTERNATIONALLY. Used by permission of Davidson Press, LLC.

Scriptures marked MEV are taken from the Modern English Version, copyright © 2014 by Military Bible Association. Published and distributed by Charisma House.

Scriptures marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

Scriptures marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scriptures marked NLT are taken from the New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scriptures marked KJV are taken from the King James Version, public domain.

Cover design by B&H Publishing Group. Cover images by SanderMeertinsPhotography/Shutterstock; Artem Zarubin/Shutterstock; ilolab/Shutterstock

TO EVERY SAINT THAT TAUGHT ME TO
GIVE GOD MY FIRST HELLO.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Team Wartrace

The saints at B&H

Austin and nem

1. The sum of true wisdom—viz. the knowledge of God and of ourselves. Effects of the latter.
2. Effects of the knowledge of God, in humbling our pride, unveiling our hypocrisy, demonstrating the absolute perfections of God, and our own utter helplessness.



Who, in fact, does not thus rest, so long as he is unknown to himself; that is, so long as he is contented with his own endowments, and unconscious or unmindful of his misery? Every person, therefore, on coming to the knowledge of himself, is not only urged to seek God, but is also led as by the hand to find him.

So long as we do not look beyond the earth, we are quite pleased with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue; we address ourselves in the most flattering terms, and seem only less than demigods. But should we once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and reflect what kind of Being he is, and how absolute the perfection of that righteousness, and wisdom, and virtue, to which, as a standard, we are bound to be conformed, what formerly delighted us by its false show of righteousness will become polluted with the greatest iniquity.

—John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: Book 1*, chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

DEVOTIONALS HAVE NEVER BEEN my cup of tea. A strange way to introduce this book, I know. Seeing that in your hand is, in fact, a devotional. When there is contempt for anything, the process of seeing the good in it usually means adding to it whatever you think is missing. For me, what's missing is depth. Not in all devotional content but in many. The small book, able to fit in one hand or displayed as an ornament on the coffee table, is opened. Day one or thirty is listed at the top of the page. A short Scripture is listed underneath. Followed by a paragraph or two of sentences that are supposed to lift the reader toward God.

All of that is wonderful, but what happens when the words themselves center self and not Jesus? When the sentences are a garden with an inch of dirt, what kind of flowers do we expect to grow from such shallow soil? I recall the works of Oswald Chambers, Charles Spurgeon, and *The Valley of Vision* from which contemporary writers have departed. It is possible to communicate glory in a few words. Because of this, it is my opinion that even the word count restrictions in a devotional format aren't to blame for the lack of depth. It's us. "We are far too easily pleased," as C. S. Lewis said.¹ We can read six sentences, chew the crackers, sip the cup, swallow the piece, and believe ourselves to be full. But surely, if God is the Bread of Life, there is always more.

With that said, this work isn't the meal; it's the appetizer. My attempt to take us beyond the quick and easy is by

centering the Scriptures and not the self on each page. Each devotional is exegetically focused or observational in its approach. With either form, the goal is to stir you up. To whet your appetite, if you will, for God and His Word. Each devotional is a shovel. Once the cover is closed, it's your turn to dig. To open the Scriptures, using my observations of them as a resource, not a conclusion. My heart for you is that by seeing Him, then and only then will you discover yourself. Primarily, that you need Him. It's the insufficiency of everything, including devotionals, that signals our need for more than what we've been satisfied with.

What is typical of devotional-like content, we engage only as a means to check off a box or temper our spiritual insecurities. This work cannot become the measure of your maturity in which you read only to feel good enough. Or study only to prove your godliness. You are capable of so much more, and you know it. God made you and redeemed you so that you may know Him. That's the point of everything. And that's the point of this book. To cultivate in you the desire for God. I can promise you that a sixty-day devotional cannot do that for you. God sent Christ to die for sin, overcoming the penalty and power of it so that you can know Him. And Christ sent the Spirit to fill the saints so that you can know Him. He is the sufficient one. So if ever you finish a page on day one or sixty and notice that you're still hungry, good! Your stomach is being made ready for more. Be reminded that the bread isn't in this book. It's in the One this book is pointing toward. Close the page, return the book to its place because dinner is ready. The Scriptures are the meal and Christ is its bread. Go to Him and be filled.

And when He had given thanks, He broke [the bread] and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you." 1 CORINTHIANS 11:24 NKJV

BEFORE WORK OR WHATEVER it is that obligates our time after waking, we eat, even if we ate six to nine hours before. Before bed we eat to cease the hunger. After the risen sun and early yawn, we do the same. This is science. Biological. Human. Fuel is a perpetual need to which our bodies would break if kept from it. On those spiritual days when we fast, withholding food from the body, we taste what starvation does to us. The mind twists and turns. Our emotions sway and, if turned in the wrong direction, tempt us to burn everything to the ground. Monday through Sunday we are largely controlled by our stomachs and if anything is in it. So much so that its contents determine if we will be a Monster or a Mercy.

I don't find it odd, then, that our Lord uses food as a metaphor for Himself. The most memorable being that of bread. The whole subject began when Jesus told Israel the Father has bread to give them that is true (John 6:32). Figuring that Jesus's preaching about bread must mean He had access to a

better manna, they heard this and contemplated a different miracle. One of constant sustenance. “Sir, give us this bread always,” they said (John 6:34). Always. They supposed Jesus was offering to fill their belly and not their soul. With a product made of wheat, planted in the soil, grown from the ground, harvested by human hands. That might’ve been bread, but that bread was not the better manna. The true bread was and is Jesus, He who said, “I am the bread of life” and “I am the living bread that came down from heaven” (John 6:35, 51).

You may be wondering where I am going by saying all of this. Wondering how my original point connects to my most recent, and it is this: in the same way our bodies need a constant diet of food, our souls need God like this always. Upon waking, we are hungry for heaven, and yet we fill it with a scroll or many. As the day moves forward and the belly still empty, we fill it again, when a person gives us a measure of love, a like, a look. Before bed, the soul, if visible, would be skeletal. Barely able to stand on its own or smile with all of its teeth. The body who holds this almost-dead thing feels alive because it depends on every other bread except the One the Father sent.

But the Lord’s Table has been set, so sit. Revive yourself in His life. Fill yourself in His love. Scrape the plate and wipe it clean. We need the Bread of heaven because truly no other food will do.

Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind
and a thankful heart. COLOSSIANS 4:2 NLT

NO ONE LIKES TO be bored. Especially now, in this age, with a million ways to be entertained. Things like the optionality of commercials reinforces our impatience. When only a decade or so ago, sitting through an advertisement with twiddling thumbs was an obligation. Now it's a choice no one makes. Keep the entertainment going we say.

Then there's the wonderfully terrible invention of social media that entertains without ceasing. Like the Colosseum in our hands. In one swipe, videos of a recipe, a twelve-second sermon, a slam dunk, a knee on a neck, an article about nothing or everything, a riot at the Capitol and a dog singing Sinatra.

It's no wonder that when it's time to pray, the length and consistency of the prayer suffers under the weight of a mind that's completely uncomfortable with boredom. In whatever quiet place you've chosen, in your car or in your closet, you sit or lie, kneel or stand. Closing your eyes, you begin, as usual, "Our Father" or something like it. Then you remember

you forgot to get some paper towels for the kitchen. “Who art in heaven . . .” Then there’s the online meeting you have on Thursday. “Hallowed be Your name.” And why didn’t Daddy buy the bike you asked for when you were twelve? At this point, you have two options: keep sitting with God in the silence of everything, or give into the noise in your mind, which, if you’re honest, feels more entertaining than intimacy.

“Think of boredom during silent prayer as an act of purification,” one pastor recommends. “In this uneventful moment, God purifies us of the false god of good feelings. Silent prayer is often something I want to avoid because it forces me to exorcise the demons of excitement, stimulation, and distraction.”² On some level, regaining discipline over your prayer life will happen as you rediscover the beauty of boredom. As long as you need to be doing, writing, reading, laughing at, watching something to have joy, prayer will be of no interest to you. But if you pause and remember the beginning of the prayer again—“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name”—you will remember God, the aim of every prayer. Whether in a closet or a car, the One to whom you speak is holy in heaven, transcendent in nature, yet relational and therefore near to you, His child. He is most interesting. Most intriguing. Not entertaining *per se*, but completely worthy of your mind’s focus. And trust me, distractions will happen. It’s a part of what it means for you to be you. But every time your mind wanders, just find your way back to God again and again and again.

So I say, "I am grieved
that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

I will remember the LORD's works;
yes, I will remember your ancient wonders.

I will reflect on all you have done
and meditate on your actions. PSALM 77:10-12 CSB

GOD'S WORD AND GOD'S nature must inform your emotions. In saying this, I don't mean feelings are unnecessary when, in fact, emotions are useful for many things. As utilitarian as they might be however, they become a danger to us and the world whenever they are detached from God's Word.

For example, think of the ten spies who looked at the giants in Caanan, felt fear, and forgot God. Or consider David who walked his roof, observing a woman in covenant with another, feeling passion, and forgot purity of heart. Or Peter who inhabited a garden not only with his Lord but also with the men into whose hands his Lord had been delivered, and as his Lord was being taken, Peter felt a lot of things. Maybe fear, maybe zeal. Either way, after a sword was raised, an ear was removed. Feeling what he felt, he forgot the kingdom. When emotions are given underserved supremacy,

they can lead us to respond to ourselves, others, and our circumstances in ways that reflect the emotion more than it does their Creator.

At this point, by singling out the negative influence emotions can have, one might see emotions as an enemy of faith. That too would be an irrational, or even emotional, way of seeing things. Emotions are good, for not only did our Lord make them, but He also has them. The issue then is not simply what or how we feel but how what we've inherited from Adam leads us to respond to said feelings.

To say it another way, emotions aren't the problem; the flesh is. So then, in becoming more holy, doing away with emotions won't serve us. What will is that God-breathed Word, both written and living—written in every narrative, epistle, prophet, and psalm, and living in the enfleshed God of heaven. Who, after ascending to that glorious right hand, together with His Father, sent their Spirit who once hovered the waters to not just hover over but fully indwell the people for whom Christ died. These people will feel all kinds of ways all of the time, but they can and they must reflect God's nature when they do.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? PSALM 22:1

WHILE READING THE PSALMS, I'm struck by how often God is questioned. Why He's allowing this. Why He's forsaken that. Suffering makes you curious, and to me, it seems, being inquisitive is in fact a healthy part of prayer. Even Jesus, in His dying hour, asked God a question.

I'm not sure who taught us to deny God our questions. If I were to guess, it must've come from the elders of Israel who didn't want us to be irreverent. They knew God was a consuming fire, who descended onto mountains that couldn't be touched. Every generation after them is just as stiff-necked as they were and therefore prone to testing God like their soul wasn't on the line. So I won't deny them the dignity of having good intentions.

But neither should we deny Scripture's testimony regarding this subject. Godly people ask God questions, and why shouldn't they? His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. The way God moves doesn't often align with our own logic since He doesn't share our nature or essence. We run from pain; He uses it. We hate our enemies;

He loves them. We try to hold onto our life with clinched fists, and He commands another way. The way of death which somehow, somehow, causes us to find the life we thought we were losing.

Life with a transcendent God isn't always going to make sense, and if that is the case, questions will be commonplace. When our aversion to prayerful curiosity has lifted, I often wonder if we will discover what we've withheld from God. And by what, I mean our very self. Avoiding curiosity can be a luxury in some sense. To ask anything at all, you have to acknowledge your intellectual limitations. But not only that: to ask anything at all, you have to sit inside whatever tension your body, life, and mind have brought about. Uncovering what hurts, hurts. Thinking about whatever is unclear is frustrating. If you decide not to ask God any questions regarding these things, you can go on with your life, maintain your sense of control and manufactured peace. But to do that is to deny yourself the opportunity of giving God your whole self.

What if asking God questions is one way to cultivate intimacy with God? What if your questions became a door by which you could be vulnerable with Him? What if your questions opened up your mind to read the Scriptures with Spirit-empowered expectation instead of apathetic drudgery? If, in fact, Jesus is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24), what if, by asking questions, you discover God; and by finding God, you find your answers?

Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. EPHESIANS 6:18 CSB

I USED TO BELIEVE prayerlessness had everything to do with time. If I didn't pray, it was because the day got ahead of me. The clock is a lot like my oldest daughter, an untempered leader. The calendar too. Every single day there is something to do. Much of which is good. Working from home or an office. Lunch with friends from school, or church, or wherever. Then there are the pesky duties like laundry. Somewhere in the world, there's a pile of clothes on the cold side of the bed, abandoned and ignored for better joys. When there are life, friends, church, children, school, husbands, wives, nine-to-fives and five-to-nines, where in the world is prayer supposed to fit? This all made sense to me. It gave me a reason and a finger to point until I opened the Gospels and saw the truth.

Truth is, Jesus was busy too. The Father had business Jesus came to handle. A woman at a well to give water to. A Lazarus to raise. Streets to straighten. Wine to turn. Bodies to heal. Even at rest, when a few waves prompted the disciples

to wake Him, He got to work by speaking peace. And yet, at no point in any Gospel do you see Him neglect prayer. He made it His business to meet with the Father, sometimes in the morning and other times all the way through the night. Often before making decisions and creating miracles. Even on His dying day, He met with God about a cup, and while it was poured, He spoke with God on a cross (Matt. 26:39; 27:46).

There was no way, in heaven or on earth, that anything would ever keep Jesus from meeting with the Father. Time has never been the reason anyone doesn't pray; the heart is. Prayerlessness is almost always a humility issue—the natural consequence of a heart that tends to believe it is good without God. Yes, you may be busy, but it's possible that you are also proud. Pride is the true enemy of your prayer life. Pride deludes us into thinking we're self-sufficient. That our jobs supply our needs. Our relationships provide comfort. Our intellect and ambition make us successful. But in fact, everything you are and everything you have is because God rains on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45).

So then, to become more prayerful, we have to be humble. To be humble, we need to be honest. Each morning, tell the truth. The truth being, you are needy even when it doesn't feel like it. Then, turn toward God and pray.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come! 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 CSB

TO BE CALLED A “new creature” is a glorious, praiseworthy attribution. You, if Christ is who you’re in, are new. As in, different, novel, recently made. What is typical about you is that you have and will always be a creature. The only One who isn’t is God. Everything else is made. A derivative of the eternal One.

The fact you’re a creature has never been the problem; the issue has always been your resistance to the submission your creatureliness requires. All things were made through Him and for Him (Col. 1:16). If you were made, then you were made for Someone higher than yourself. The first human creature, Adam, ruined that concept for you. Original sin, as its called, trained you to hate your maker and the limitations of being made. Your entire life, you tried with all of your might to live independent of God. Denying yourself of life with all the breath He gave. You thought the world was yours, your body too. Those delusions were natural to you. Darkness was your native country.

But then, not because of anything you ever did, the Spirit of God hovered over the land, your soul the soil, and brought life from death. A grace. The impenetrable ground softened and opened wide. All that was without form and void took shape. Living water welled up and into the empty spaces. A cloud of burdens lifted above you since they were only ever suitable for the sky to carry. Your eyes a sun now, full of light and a thousand invisible stars. Before long the soil brought forth plants it only received and never planted. Each one came with the discovery of fruit. Of love, kindness, gentleness, patience, self-control, joy, peace, gentleness, and faithfulness. The fruit was proof of your newness. Nothing and everything had changed. You were still a creature but of a different kind. One that recognized your Creator by name and gave Him everything He deserved. The mind and heart you tried to hoard, you gave back. The soul too.

Your newness influenced how you saw the world and everything in it. Creatures looked different. You saw them and remembered who made them. When they hated, you loved. When they were burdened, you took their clouds and carried them toward the sky. You even joined them in praise and prayer for the heaven you shared and the hell you endured on the way.

To be called a new creature is to see your name in the Genesis narrative, but different from it is how you have had two beginnings. One when you were born. The other when you were born again. And this new life has defeated death. That too is different in that it won't be the end of newness but the continuation of it. The end of life will be a kind of beginning, on a new heaven and new earth, where nothing and everything has changed forever.

There is nothing in your hands that

God won't replace with more of Himself.

So let it go. Let it fly. Let it burn. God is better anyway.

UPON WAKING: 60 DAILY REFLECTIONS TO DISCOVER
OURSELVES AND THE GOD WE WERE MADE FOR

In her third book and much-anticipated debut devotional, bestselling author and Bible teacher Jackie Hill Perry offers 60 Scripture-soaked, daily reflections to help you awaken to the God you were made for, the life you were made for, and the person you were made to be.

B&H
BHPUBLISHING.COM

RELIGION/Christian Living/Devotional
978-1-0877-8371-0
Printed in China \$22.99 USD

