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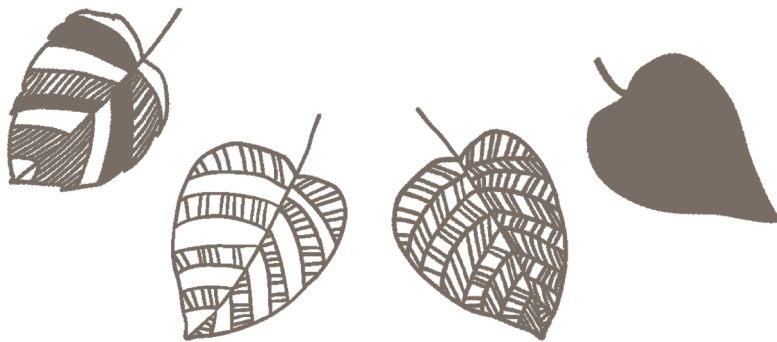
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MAX LUCADO



GOD IS  
WITH YOU  
*every day*

365 - DAY DEVOTIONAL



THOMAS NELSON  
*Since 1798*

*God Is with You Every Day*

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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

**F**ather, 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



## 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*



## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

**S**tir 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*



## 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

**E**nvision 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*



## 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

*H*eavenly 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*



## ASK FOR HEBRON

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

PSALM 94:19 NLT

**T**urn 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 out 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*



## 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" (v. 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

**Y**ou 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*



## 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



JANUARY 15

## A PRAYER . . . TO LIVE AS YOUR CHILD

When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

GALATIANS 4:4-5

*L*oving Father, your Son came into our broken world to redeem us from our sin and make a way for us to be adopted into your family. Thank you, Jesus, for paying the price, for I was helpless to pay it myself. Help me to live today as your child. In Jesus' name, amen.

*—In the Manger*



## WHO ARE YOU?

Consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God.

ROMANS 6:11 NLT

Who are you?  
I'm glad you asked.

You are:

- God's child (John 1:12),
- Christ's friend (John 15:15),
- a member of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:27),
- a saint (Ephesians 1:1),
- redeemed and forgiven of all your sins (Colossians 1:14),
- complete in Christ, lacking in nothing (Colossians 2:10),
- free from condemnation (Romans 8:1–2),
- God's coworker (2 Corinthians 6:1),
- seated with Christ in the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:6),
- God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10),
- a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20),
- adopted into God's family (Ephesians 1:5),
- born of God, and the evil one cannot touch you (1 John 5:18).

Get acquainted with your new self.

–*Glory Days*



JANUARY 17

## WHAT WILL HE DO WITH YOU?

“No man ever spoke like this Man!”

JOHN 7:46

Jesus claimed to be able to forgive sins—a privilege only God can exercise (Matthew 9:4–7). He claimed to be greater than Jonah, Solomon, Jacob, and even Abraham (Matthew 12:38–42; John 4:12–14; 8:53–56). Jesus commanded people to pray in his name (John 14:13–14). He claimed his words would outlive heaven and earth (Mark 13:31) and that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him (Matthew 28:18–20).

Does a decent fellow say things like this? No, but a demented fool does.

Maybe Jesus was a megalomaniac on par with Alexander the Great or Adolf Hitler. But, honestly, could a madman do what Jesus did?

Look at the devotion he inspired. People didn’t just respect Jesus. They liked him; they left their homes and businesses and followed him. Men and women alike tethered their hope to his life. Impulsive people like Peter. Visionaries like Philip. Passionate men like John, careful men like Thomas, methodical men like Matthew the tax collector. When the men had left Jesus in the grave, it was the women who came to honor him—women from all walks of life, homemaking to philanthropy.

Jesus transformed common dockworkers and net casters into the authors of history’s greatest book and founders of its greatest movement.

What will he do with you?

–*God’s Story, Your Story*



## EVERYONE CAN HELP SOMEONE

“I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.”

MATTHEW 25:35–36

Many years ago I heard a woman discuss the work of Matthew 25:31–46. The event wasn’t publicized. The audience was chatty and restless. Yet when she entered the room, all stirring stopped.

She wore her characteristic white Indian sari with a blue border that represented the Missionaries of Charity, the order she had founded in 1950. Her sixty-nine years had bent her already small frame. But there was nothing small about Mother Teresa’s presence.

“Give me your unborn children,” she offered. “Don’t abort them. If you cannot raise them, I will. They are precious to God.” Who would’ve ever pegged this slight Albanian woman as a change agent?

I wonder if God creates people like Mother Teresa so he can prove his point: “See, you can do something today that will outlive your life.”

There are several billion reasons to consider his challenge. Some of them live in your neighborhood; others live in jungles you can’t find and have names you can’t pronounce. Some of them play in cardboard slums or sell sex on a busy street.

None of us can help everyone. But all of us can help someone. And when we help them, we serve Jesus.

Who would want to miss a chance to do that?

– *Outlive Your Life*



JANUARY 19

## VOICES OF FAILURE

I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God.

PSALM 40:1–3 NLT

**H**ave you heard voices of failure? When you lost your job, flunked the exam, dropped out of school. When your marriage went south. When your business went broke. When you failed. The voices began to howl.

And you joined them!

Failure finds us all. Failure is so universal we have to wonder why more self-help gurus don't address it. Bookstores overflow with volumes on how to succeed. But you'll look a long time before you find a section called "How to Succeed at Failing."

Maybe no one knows what to say. But God does. His book is written for failures. It is full of folks who were foul-ups and flops. David was a moral failure, yet God used him. Elijah was an emotional train wreck after Mount Carmel, but God blessed him. Jonah was in the belly of a fish when he prayed his most honest prayer, and God heard it.

Perfect people? No. Perfect messes? You bet. Yet God used them. A surprising and welcome discovery of the Bible is this: God uses failures.

– *Glory Days*



## THE FINAL WORD

“The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins.”

MARK 2:10

If you are in Christ, your sin is gone. It was last seen on the back of your Sin Bearer as he headed out to Death Valley. When Jesus cried on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46 NIV), he entered the wilderness on your behalf. He carried your sin away.

He has the final word on your life. And his word is *grace*.

Jesus did his part. Now do yours.

*Give God your guilt.* Tell Jesus what you did. Hold nothing back. Be abundant in your confession, and . . .

*Be concrete in your confession.* Go into as much detail as you can. Healing happens when the wound is exposed to the atmosphere of grace.

Exactly what is it that you need forgiveness for? For being a bad person? That is too general. For losing your patience and calling your coworker a creep? There, you can confess that. Confession, you see, is not a punishment for sin; it is an isolation of sin so it can be exposed and extracted.

*Be firm in this prayer.* Satan traffics in guilt. So tell his guilt where to get off. Speak to it in the name of Jesus. “I left you at the foot of the cross, you evil spirit. Stay there!”

And, for heaven’s sake, stop tormenting yourself. Jesus is strong enough to carry your sin. Did he not say he would do so? Believe him! He has the final word.

—*Before Amen*



JANUARY 21

## MOVED BY PRAYER

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

1 JOHN 5:14

Let's pray, *first*. Traveling to help the hungry? Be sure to bathe your mission in prayer. Working to disentangle the knots of injustice? Pray. Weary of a world of racism and division? So is God. And he would love to talk to you about it.

Let's pray, *most*. Did God call us to preach without ceasing? Or teach without ceasing? Or have committee meetings without ceasing? Or sing without ceasing? No, but he did call us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Did Jesus declare: My house shall be called a house of study? Fellowship? Music? A house of exposition? A house of activities? No, but he did say, "My house will be called a house of prayer" (Mark 11:17 NIV).

No other spiritual activity is guaranteed such results. "When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action" (Matthew 18:19 MSG). He is moved by the humble, prayerful heart.

He is moved by prayer.

—*Outlive Your Life*



## A PRAYER . . . FOR STRENGTH

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7

**D**ear Father, you are the Prince of Peace and the great I Am.  
You are my helper and my Redeemer.

*I need your help today. I am weak and frail and tired. Give me the strength to get through just this day and the desire to work as if I am doing it all for your glory.*

*Help those who are carrying especially heavy burdens right now. They need your power and peace that goes beyond our understanding.*

*I am so grateful that I can come to you and present my requests at any time. Thank you for giving me peace and rest even in the hard times.*

*In the name of the Prince of Peace, I pray, amen.*

–Pocket Prayers



JANUARY 23

## OF GREATER WORTH THAN GOLD

“I will refine them like silver  
and test them like gold.  
They will call on my name  
and I will answer them;  
I will say, ‘They are my people,’  
and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’”

ZECHARIAH 13:9 NIV

With a strong forearm, the apron-clad blacksmith puts his tongs into the fire, grasps the heated metal, and places it on the anvil. His keen eye examines the glowing piece. He sees what the tool is now and envisions what he wants it to be. With a clear picture in his mind, he begins to pound.

On the solid anvil, the smoldering iron is remolded.

The smith knows the type of instrument he wants. He knows the size. He knows the shape. He knows the strength.

*Whang! Whang!* The hammer slams. The shop rings with noise, the air fills with smoke, and the softened metal responds.

But the response doesn't come easily. It doesn't come without discomfort. To melt down the old and recast it as new is a disrupting process. Yet the metal remains on the anvil, allowing the toolmaker to remove the scars, repair the cracks, refill the voids, and purge the impurities.

And with time, a change occurs: what was dull becomes sharpened, what was crooked becomes straight, what was weak becomes strong, and what was useless becomes valuable.

—*On the Anvil*



## YOUR BEST WEAPON

GOD makes everything come out right;  
he puts victims back on their feet.

PSALM 103:6 MSG

Satan has no recourse to your personal testimony. So your best weapon against his attacks is a good memory.

Don't forget a single one of God's blessings!

He forgives your sins—every one.

He heals your diseases—every one.

He redeems you from hell—saves your life!

He crowns you with love and mercy—a paradise crown.

He wraps you in goodness—beauty eternal.

He renews your youth—you're always young in his presence.

Create a trophy room in your heart. Each time you experience a victory, place a memory on the shelf. Before you face a challenge, take a quick tour of God's accomplishments. Look at all the paychecks he has provided, all the blessings he has given, all the prayers he has answered. Imitate the shepherd boy David. Before he fought Goliath, the giant, he remembered how God had helped him kill a lion and a bear (1 Samuel 17:34–36). He faced his future by revisiting the past.

Face your future by recalling God's past victories.

—*Glory Days*



JANUARY 25

## A PLAN FOR GRACE

We can make our plans,  
but the LORD determines our steps.

PROVERBS 16:9 NLT

**B**efore we knew God's story, we made a mess of our own. Even afterward, we're prone to demand our own way, cut our own path, and hurt people in the process. Can God make good out of our bad?

He did with Paul.

"As I journeyed and came near Damascus . . . suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me . . ." (Acts 22:6–7).

"I'm going to give you a taste of your own medicine."

"Back to the dust with you, you Christian-killer."

"Prepare to meet your Maker!"

Did Paul expect to hear words like these? Regardless, he didn't. Even before he requested mercy, he was offered mercy. Jesus told him, "I have a job for you. . . . I'm sending you off to open the eyes of the outsiders so they can see. . . . I'm sending you off to present my offer of sins forgiven, and a place in the family" (Acts 26:16–18 MSG).

Jesus transformed Paul, the card-carrying legalist, into a champion for mercy. Who would have thought? Yet who would be better qualified? Paul could write epistles of grace by dipping his pen into the inkwell of his own heart. He learned about love when Jesus paid him a personal visit on Damascus Highway.

—*God's Story, Your Story*



## SUFFICIENT, SUSTAINING GRACE

I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7–9 NIV

A thorn in the flesh. Such vivid imagery. The sharp end of a thorn pierces the soft skin of life and lodges beneath the surface. Every step is a reminder of the thorn in the flesh.

The cancer in the body.

The child in the rehab center.

The red ink on the ledger.

The tears in the middle of the night.

“Take it away,” you’ve pleaded. Not once, twice, or even three times. You’ve outprayed Paul. He prayed a sprint; you’ve prayed a marathon. But what you hear is this: “My grace is sufficient for you.”

Grace takes on an added dimension here. Paul is referring to sustaining grace. Saving grace saves us from our sins. Sustaining grace meets us at our point of need and equips us with courage, wisdom, and strength. Sustaining grace promises not the absence of struggle but the presence of God.

And according to Paul, God has *sufficient* sustaining grace to meet every single challenge of our lives. Sufficient. We fear its antonym: *insufficient*. We’ve written checks only to see the words *insufficient funds*. Will we offer prayers only to discover insufficient strength? Never.

—Grace



JANUARY 27

## UNSHEATHE THE PROMISE

The LORD your God is He who has fought for you.

JOSHUA 23:3

Not only does God desire that you live the Promised Land life, but he fights for you so you can. This was the main point of Joshua’s victory speech (Joshua 23–24).

Joshua has seen every significant moment of the last half century. The Jordan River opened, and the Jericho walls fell. The sun stood still, and the enemies scattered. And Joshua in his final words wants to make sure they have gotten the message: “The LORD your God is He who has fought for you” (23:3).

Joshua summarized the victory by saying, “For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; . . . no one has been able to stand against you to this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you” (vv. 9–10).

Don’t you love that image? *One man of you shall chase a thousand*. I envision a single Hebrew soldier with drawn sword racing after an entire battalion of enemies. Since God fights for him, they scatter like scared pigeons.

I picture the same for you. The enemies of your life—fears, dread, hatred, and hurt—come at you like a legion of hoodlums. Yet rather than run away, you turn and face them. You unsheathe the promise of God’s Word. You were not made to quake in fear. You are a living, breathing expression of God. He fights for you.

– *Glory Days*



## GOD'S UNRIVALED GOODNESS

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;  
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

PSALM 34:8

The heart of God is unblemished. “There is nothing deceitful in God, nothing two-faced, nothing fickle” (James 1:17 MSG). He has no hidden agenda or selfish motive. He loves with a good love and forgives with a good forgiveness.

God’s goodness is a major headline in the Bible. I think I know why. If God were only mighty, we would salute him. But since he is merciful and mighty, we can approach him. No wonder the psalmist invited, “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). A glimpse of God’s goodness changes us.

God’s unrivaled goodness undergirds everything else we can say about prayer. If he is like us, only slightly stronger, then why pray? If he grows weary, then why pray? If he has limitations, questions, and hesitations, then you might as well pray to the Wizard of Oz.

However, if God is at once Father and Creator, holy—unlike us—and high above us, then we at any point are only a prayer away from help.

—*Before Amen*



JANUARY 29

## A PRAYER . . . FOR BOLDNESS

We have this hope, so we are very bold.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:12 NCV

**O** God, you created all that exists, and you sustain all through your infinite wisdom and boundless power. Yet you invite me to come to you in prayer, boldly and with the expectation that you will hear and answer me. Teach me, Lord, to take full advantage of this privilege, especially in regard to reaching others with your love. Give me a heart for those who have yet to experience the fullness of your grace, and prompt me to pray for them and for their welfare, both in this world and in eternity. Lord, bring me to the front lines of this battle. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

– *Outlive Your Life*



## FIND YOUR LOT

You saw me before I was born.  
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.  
Every moment was laid out  
before a single day had passed.

PSALM 139:16 NLT

Uniqueness is a big message in the Bible. And—this may surprise you—it is a huge message of the book of Joshua. In fact, one could argue that the majority of its chapters advance one command: know your territory and possess it.

Joshua's first goal was to establish Israel in Canaan by taking the land, neutralizing the enemy armies, and eliminating the major seats of authority. Each tribe was given a distinct territory and/or assignment.

The inheritance was for everyone. All the Hebrews were welcomed to Canaan—the old, the young, the feeble, the forceful. The inheritance was universal.

But the assignments were individual. They are listed in detail in Joshua 13–21. If you can't fall asleep tonight, read these chapters. The book moves from an action novel to a land survey. The pages make for dull reading unless, of course, you stand to inherit something.

But the big message was this: No one gets everything. But everyone gets something. Drive out the remaining enemies. Build your farms. Cultivate your fields.

Find your lot in life and indwell it.

—*Glory Days*