

PRESENTED TO

.....

FROM

.....

DATE

.....



GOD'S MESSAGE FOR EACH DAY

A 365-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Wisdom from the Word of God

EUGENE H. PETERSON

God's Message for Each Day

© 2004, 2020 Eugene H. Peterson

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by Thomas Nelson. Thomas Nelson is a registered trademark of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, Inc.

Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Communications, Inc., 1465 Kelly Johnson Blvd., Suite 320, Colorado Springs, CO 80920.

Compiled and edited by Terri Gibbs.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from *The Message*. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, a Division of Tyndale House Ministries.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are from the New King James Version®. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NRSV are from New Revised Standard Version Bible. Copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked RSV are from Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.


Any Internet addresses, phone numbers, or company or product information printed in this book are offered as a resource and are not intended in any way to be or to imply an endorsement by Thomas Nelson, nor does Thomas Nelson vouch for the existence, content, or services of these sites, phone numbers, companies, or products beyond the life of this book.

ISBN: 978-1-4002-1892-9

ISBN: 978-1-4002-1889-9 (ebook)

Printed in China

20 21 22 23 24 GRI 5 4 3 2 1



*Nothing counts more in
the way we live than what
we believe about God.*

JANUARY

.....

*God is the living center
of everything.*



JANUARY 1

GOD IS SURE OF US

.....

*God will never let you down;
he'll never let you be pushed past your limit.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13, THE MESSAGE

We wander like lost sheep, true; but God is a faithful shepherd who pursues us relentlessly. We have our ups and downs, zealously believing one day and gloomily doubting the next, but He is faithful. We break our promises, but He doesn't break His. Discipleship is not a contract in which if we break our part of the agreement He is free to break His; it is a covenant in which He established the conditions and guarantees the results. . . .

All the persons of faith I know are sinners, doubters, uneven performers. We are secure not because we are sure of ourselves but because we trust that God is sure of us.

A Long Obedience

2

JANUARY 2

GOD LISTENS

.....

*Open up before God, keep nothing back;
he'll do whatever needs to be done.*

PSALM 37:5, THE MESSAGE

We live in a noisy world. We are yelled at, promoted, called. Everyone has an urgent message for us. We are surrounded with noise: telephone, radio, television, stereo. Messages are amplified deafeningly. The world is a mob in which everyone is talking at once and no one is willing or able to listen. But God listens. He not only speaks to us, he listens to us. His listening to us is an even greater marvel than his speaking to us. It is rare to find anyone who listens carefully and thoroughly. . . .

When it happens we know that what we say and feel are immensely important. We acquire dignity. We never know how well we think or speak until we find someone who listens.

Reversed Thunder

3



JANUARY 3

PIECES OF LIFE

.....

*“Then give Caesar what is his,
and give God what is his.”*

MATTHEW 22:21, THE MESSAGE

Our citizenship is in heaven,” say those who pray, and they are ardent in pursuing the prizes of that place. But this passion for the unseen in no way detracts from their involvement in daily affairs: working well and playing fair, signing petitions and paying taxes, rebuking the wicked and encouraging the righteous, getting wet in the rain and smelling the flowers. Theirs is a tremendous, kaleidoscopic assemblage of bits and pieces of touched, smelled, seen and tasted reality that is received and offered in acts of prayer.

Where Your Treasure Is

JANUARY 4

LIVING WELL

.....

*Help me understand these things inside and out
so I can ponder your miracle-wonders.*

PSALM 119:27, THE MESSAGE

What do Bible stories tell us about living this human life well, living it totally? Primarily and mostly they tell us that it means dealing with God. It means dealing with a lot of other things as well: danger and parents and enemies and friends and lovers and children and wives and pride and humiliation and . . . sickness and death and sexuality . . . and fear and peace—to say nothing of diapers . . . and breakfast and traffic jams and clogged drainpipes and bounced checks. But always, at the forefront and in the background of circumstances, events, and people, it's God.

Leap Over a Wall



JANUARY 5

WE ARE BECOMING

.....

*When the Complete arrives,
our incompletes will be canceled.*

1 CORINTHIANS 13:10, THE MESSAGE

Not one of us, at this moment, is complete. In another hour, another day, we will have changed. We are in process of becoming either less or more. There are a million chemical and electrical interchanges going on in each of us this very moment. There are intricate moral decisions and spiritual transactions taking place. What are we becoming? Less or more?

Run with the Horses

JANUARY 6

PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

.....

*How wonderful, how beautiful,
when brothers and sisters get along!*

PSALM 133:1, THE MESSAGE

The psalm puts into song what is said and demonstrated throughout Scripture and church: community is essential. Scripture knows nothing of the solitary Christian. People of faith are always members of a community. Creation itself was not complete until there was community, Adam needing Eve before humanity was whole. God never works with individuals in isolation, but always with people in community.

A Long Obedience



JANUARY 7

DIRECTION AND PURPOSE



*Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit.
Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness.*

GALATIANS 5:16, THE MESSAGE

In the Christian way we acquire a healthy value system. We find that persons are more important than property. We learn that forgiveness is preferable to property. We learn that forgiveness is preferable to revenge. We realize that worshiping God is more central than impressing our neighbors.

Without values we live “in vain.” If we lose touch with our values, we are at the mercy of every seduction, every inducement, every claim on our money, our energy, our time. Values infuse life with a steady sense of direction and purpose.

Traveling Light



JANUARY 8

GOD DOESN'T GET BORED

.....

Absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love.

ROMANS 8:39, THE MESSAGE

The only serious mistake we can make when illness comes, when anxiety threatens, when conflict disturbs our relationships with others is to conclude that God has gotten bored looking after us and has shifted his attention to a more exciting Christian. Or that God has become disgusted with our meandering obedience and decided to let us fend for ourselves for a while. Or that God has gotten too busy fulfilling prophecy in the Middle East to take time now to sort out the complicated mess we have gotten ourselves into. That is the *only* serious mistake we can make.

A Long Obedience



JANUARY 9

THE LORD IS MIGHTY



Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!

PSALM 93:4, RSV

If God is not sovereign, I do, in fact, live in chaos. Randomness and chance permeate the universe. On the other hand, if God rules, there is foundational order. No accident is sheer accident. No chaos is ultimate. . . . Whatever other wills, powers, and influences I live under and among, one is first and last, foundational and final: “The LORD on high is mighty!”

Where Your Treasure Is

JANUARY 10

GOD'S GREAT GIFT

.....

GOD is magnificent; he can never be praised enough.

PSALM 145:3, THE MESSAGE

We believe that this human life is a great gift, that every part of it is designed by God and therefore means something, that every part of it is blessed by God and therefore to be enjoyed, that every part is accompanied by God and therefore workable.

We can't get away from God. He's there whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not. We can refuse to participate in God; we can act as if God weren't our designer, provider, and covenant presence. But when we refuse, we're less; our essential humanity is less. Our lives are diminished and impoverished.

Leap Over a Wall



JANUARY 11

GOOD AND JOYFUL



*This great Message I delivered to you
is not mere human optimism. . . .
I got it straight . . . from Jesus Christ.*

GALATIANS 1:11-12, THE MESSAGE

Paul discovered a personal relationship with God himself—no more secondhand rumor but firsthand faith. He immediately knew that God was not what he’d been told at all—that was all a lie. God was not *against* but *for*. God was not furious but compassionate. God was not out to get sinners so that he could make them good and sorry; he was out to get sinners so that he could make them good and joyful. This truth about God came to Paul in the person of God’s son, Jesus Christ.

Traveling Light



JANUARY 12

LIVING IN WHOLENESS

.....

*Live . . . a life Jesus will be proud of:
bountiful in fruits from the soul.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:10-11, THE MESSAGE

Christian spirituality means living in the mature wholeness of the gospel. It means taking all the elements of your life—children, spouse, job, weather, possessions, relationships—and experiencing them as an act of faith. God wants all the material of our lives. . . .

The assumption of spirituality is that always God is doing something before I know it. So the task is not to get God to do something I think needs to be done, but to become aware of what God is doing so I can respond to it and participate and take delight in it.

The Contemplative Pastor



JANUARY 13

THE REASON FOR PRAYER



Let my cry come right into your presence, God.

PSALM 119:170, THE MESSAGE

The Psalms were not prayed by people trying to understand themselves. They are not the record of people searching for the meaning of life. They were prayed by people who understood that God had everything to do with them. God, not their feelings, was the center. God, not their souls, was the issue. God, not the meaning of life, was critical.

Feelings, souls, and meanings were not excluded—they are very much in evidence—but they are not the reason for the prayers. Human experiences might provoke the prayers, but they do not condition them *as* prayers.

Answering God



JANUARY 14

GOD'S WORD, NOT OURS

.....

*He spoke, and it came to be; he commanded,
and it stood forth.*

PSALM 33:9, RSV

The word of God constitutes the total reality in which we find ourselves. Everything we see and feel and deal with—sea and sky, codfish and warblers, sycamores and carrots—originates by means of this word. Everything, absolutely everything, was *spoken* into being. The *word* is as foundational in the work of salvation as it is in the work of creation. Just as everything outside us originates in the word of God, so does everything inside us.

Everywhere we look, everywhere we probe, everywhere we listen we come upon *word*—and it is God's word, not ours.

Working the Angles



JANUARY 15

LOVE IS A DECISION

.....

*Love means following his commandments,
and his unifying commandment is that
you conduct your lives in love.*

2 JOHN 6, THE MESSAGE

Agape love is not first of all a feeling, or an experience, or a need, but a decision. It wills the fulfillment of the other. It is the love that is demonstrated by God for His people. It is a love that neither exploits needs nor demands gifts. It seeks to enjoy what is there in the other person and to share what one has. It is the love that Jesus exhibited in every word and act.

His love freed others to be themselves in a way they could never have been without Him and allowed them to respond with a love for God that no sense of dependence or realization of duty could have created.

Like Dew Your Youth

JANUARY 16

LIVING GOD-WARDS

.....

*The moment I called out, you stepped in;
you made my life large with strength.*

PSALM 138:3, THE MESSAGE

One of the first things that strikes us about the men and women in Scripture is that they were disappointingly nonheroic. . . . Abraham lied; Jacob cheated; Moses murdered and complained; David committed adultery; Peter blasphemed. . . .

[Yet] the persons we meet on the pages of Scripture are remarkable for the intensity with which they live Godwards, the thoroughness in which all the details of their lives are included in God's word to them, in God's action in them. It is these persons, who are conscious of participating in what God is saying and doing, who are most human, most alive.

Run with the Horses



JANUARY 17

DOUBT AND FAITH



The person who lives in right relationship with God does it by embracing what God arranges for him.

GALATIANS 3:11, THE MESSAGE

The claim of the gospel is that it puts us in touch with reality—all of it, not just a part. It puts us in touch with a God who creates and with the people and world he created. It puts us in touch with a Christ who redeems and the people whom he loves. It puts us in touch with our feelings of hope and despair, with our thoughts of doubt and faith, with our acts of virtue and vice. It puts us in touch with everything, visible and invisible, right and wrong, good and evil. It puts us in touch and then trains us in mature ways of living.

Traveling Light



JANUARY 18

WE EXPECT MERCY

.....

*We're watching and waiting, holding our
breath, awaiting your word of mercy.*

PSALM 123:2, THE MESSAGE

What happens when we look up to God in faith? There is an awesome mystery in God that we can never completely penetrate. We cannot define God; we cannot package God. But that doesn't mean that we are completely at sea with God, never knowing what to expect, nervously on edge all the time, wondering what he might do.

We know very well what to expect, and what we expect is mercy.

A Long Obedience



JANUARY 19

SINGLENES OF FOCUS



God, the one and only—I'll wait as long as he says.

PSALM 62:1, THE MESSAGE

God is not one among many. When we pray we are not covering our bases. Prayer is not a way of checking out a last resort of potential help. We understandably want to explore all the options: we write letters, make telephone calls, visit prospects, arrange interviews. We don't know who might be useful to us at any one time. Of course, we cultivate God. But not in prayer. We try it, but it doesn't work.

Prayer is exclusive. Prayer is centering. . . . We can't pray with one eye on the main chance and a side glance for God. Prayer trains the soul to singleness of focus: for God *alone*.

Where Your Treasure Is



JANUARY 20

ROBUST IN PRAISE

.....

*God always does what he says,
and is gracious in everything he does.*

PSALM 145:13, THE MESSAGE

David was a master at asking God for what he needed. Bold and eloquent in his asking—asking for help, for refuge, for healing, for salvation, for deliverance, for forgiveness, for mercy, for the Holy Spirit. He was also wonderfully robust in praise, but the praise was all mined from this hardscrabble life of asking.

Leap Over a Wall



JANUARY 21

PRAYER IN OUR STORY

.....

Christ brought you over to God's side and put your lives together, whole and holy in his presence.

COLOSSIANS 1:22, THE MESSAGE

Everyone's life is [filled with] conflict and failure and fear, love and betrayal, loss and salvation. Every day is a story, a morning beginning and evening ending that are boundaries for people who go about their tasks with more or less purpose, go to war, make love, earn a living, scheme and sin and believe. Everything is connected. Meaning is everywhere. The days add up to a life that is a story. . . .

All prayer is prayed in a story, by someone who is in the story. . . . Prayers are prayed by people who live stories.

Answering God

JANUARY 22

GOD'S INTENT

.....

*I inherited your book on living; it's
mine forever—what a gift!*

PSALM 119:111, THE MESSAGE

A part from Scripture there are guessed-at relationships between God and his creatures, surmised anticipations of God's intent, conjectures and speculations on God's nature and ways of working. But in the pages of Scripture we see the acts of salvation, of providence, of blessing.

God's word brings creation into being, brings people into existence. We see God bridging the abyss of sin and establishing peace. We see God disciplining and nurturing rebellious and recalcitrant people to the end that love can be experienced and developed to maturity. We see God entering our history in the form of a servant so that we can freely participate in the redemption that God is working in us.

Reversed Thunder



JANUARY 23

FREE CHOICE

.....

*Be generous with me and I'll live a full life;
not for a minute will I take my eyes off your road.*

PSALM 119:17, THE MESSAGE

Christians are not determinists. We do not believe that environment makes a person a Christian, and we do not believe that heredity makes a person righteous. We do not believe that training can make a person moral, and we do not believe that baptism can create a person of faith. Christian theology maintains that every person makes his or her own decisions for or against God.

Every life is an accumulation of such decisions. No one can choose right for another. The choice is free. The decision is open. Anyone, regardless of background and upbringing, can choose either way. "Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision!" (Joel 3:14, RSV)

Like Dew Your Youth

JANUARY 24

THE WAY OF FAITH

.....

*Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began
and finished this race we're in.*

HEBREWS 12:2, THE MESSAGE

When mountain climbers are in dangerous terrain . . . they rope themselves together. Sometimes one of them slips and falls—backslides. But not everyone falls at once, and so those who are still on their feet are able to keep the backslider from falling away completely. And of course, in any group of climbers there is a veteran climber in the lead, identified for us in the letter to the Hebrews as “Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in.”

Traveling in the way of faith and climbing the ascent to Christ may be difficult, but it is not worrisome. The weather may be adverse, but it is never fatal. We may slip and stumble and fall, but the rope will hold us.

A Long Obedience

25



JANUARY 25

GOD'S PROMISES



"I am watching over my word to perform it."

JEREMIAH 1:12, RSV

The almond tree is one of the earliest trees to bloom in Palestine. Before it puts forth leaves, it puts forth blossoms, white and snowy. While the land is still chill from winter, the warm blossoms, untended and unforced, surprise us with a promise of spring. Every spring it happens again. . . .

The blossom is a delight in itself, . . . fragrant to smell. But it is more. It is anticipation. It is promise. Like words. . . . God's words. . . . They are promises that lead to fulfillment. . . . God does what he says.

Run with the Horses



JANUARY 26

GLORY IN DIVERSITY

.....

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither
slave nor free, there is neither male nor
female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

GALATIANS 3:28, RSV

All the children in a family are different—different sizes, different states of health, different temperaments. . . . And the parent deals with each differently. But the same love and wisdom is exercised in relation to each. We at our best (and we not always are) do not have favorite children. God at his best (and he always is) does not have favorite children.

How freeing it is to discover that! Other people then are no longer a threat to our security or our chances of being recognized and loved. We are not rivals competing for a prize, but participants in a common life, brothers and sisters in a single family. We are free to accept, even glory in, our diversity.

Traveling Light

27



JANUARY 27

FAILURE AND FAITH

.....

God's readiness to give and forgive is now public. Salvation's available for everyone!

TITUS 2:11, THE MESSAGE

Michelangelo sculpted in marble what many Jews and Christians have carved in their imaginations—a flawless David, the spirited human body in perfection. But the biblical text does not give us a flawless David. Putting people on pedestals is a way of not having to deal with who they really are (and who the God working in them really is).

The biblical narrator insists on telling us everything bad about David. . . . The narrator refuses to idealize or glamorize him to show that God's sovereignty works through just such a mixed bag of human failure and sin.

"Bathsheba-Gate," Christianity Today

JANUARY 28

FREE TO LOVE

.....

*Love others as you love yourself.
That's an act of true freedom.*

GALATIANS 5:14, THE MESSAGE

Each person is God's person, standing before God as his child and before me as a brother or sister. "All men," wrote William Law, "are great instances of divine love, therefore let all men be instances of your love."

This person does not stand before me as an obstruction or a threat or an affront. If I cannot see the person in relation to God, then I am not free to love. I will either want to get rid of her because she is in my way, or I will want to use her in order to get my own way. Either way I lose freedom.

Traveling Light



JANUARY 29

REMEMBER AND RECEIVE



Then he took a cup, and . . . said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”

MARK 14:23-24, NRSV

The eucharistic meal . . . is the primary way that Christians remember, receive, and share the meaning of our salvation: Christ crucified for us, his blood shed for the remission of our sins. This is where we affirm the action of our salvation.

The many-dimensional reality of salvation is preserved not by a truth that we must figure out, or by an ethical behavior that we must carry out, but in a meal to eat. Not everyone can comprehend a doctrine; not everyone can obey a precept; but everyone can eat a piece of bread, drink a cup of wine, and understand a simple statement—my body, my blood.

Reversed Thunder

30



JANUARY 30

POSSIBILITIES

.....

The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

ROMANS 8:18, NKJV

The Bible spends only a few pages establishing the conditions of our beginnings; and then several hundred pages cultivating in us a taste for the future—immersing us in a narrative in which the future is always impinging on the present. . . .

The future is not a blank to be filled in, depending on our mood, by either fantasy or horror, but a source of brightness that we await and receive. Our lives are still outstanding. Our prayers give expression to lives that go far beyond the past and present and reach into what is promised and prophesied. When we pray we can no longer confine our understanding of ourselves to who we are or have been; we understand ourselves in terms of possibilities yet to be realized.

Answering God

JANUARY 31

RULED BY GOD

.....

*I am about to do a new thing; now it
springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

ISAIAH 43:19, NRSV

The gospel message says: “You don’t live in a mechanistic world ruled by necessity; you don’t live in a random world ruled by chance; you live in a world ruled by the God of Exodus and Easter. He will do things in you that neither you nor your friends would have supposed possible. He is not limited by anything you think you know about him; he is not boxed into the cramped dimensions of your ignorance or your despair. As Isaiah says, ‘I am about to do a new thing.’”

Five Smooth Stones