



**BE STRONG  
AND  
COURAGEOUS**

365 DAILY DEVOTIONS

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“Be strong and courageous!  
Do not be afraid or discouraged.  
For the LORD your God is with you  
wherever you go.”

JOSHUA 1:9 NLT



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## INTRODUCTION

Courage isn't something that comes naturally to most. The only way to truly be strong is to walk in the confidence that comes from knowing God and relying on him to be your strength. When you spend time with him, he will fill you with peace and hope for the future. When you finally see yourself as God sees you, you will recognize the talents and abilities you have been blessed with and start operating in the fullness of those gifts.

Be encouraged with truth as you spend time with God, reflecting on these devotions, Scriptures, and prayers. Let him show you that you are radiant, you are strong, and you were created with a purpose. Take courage in God's love for you and be ready to conquer each day!

# JANUARY

"Be strong and courageous.

Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

DEUTERONOMY 31:6 NIV

JANUARY 1

# THRIVE IN WINTER

*To everything there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under heaven.*

ECCLESIASTES 3:1 KJV

Winter can be a time of inactivity. For farmers, winter is their slow season. For others, just the snow, rain, and chill make it difficult to be outside. But stillness and slowness do not mean nothing is happening. In nature, things are always happening below the surface. Birds are still eating, animals are still sleeping, and trout are still swimming under the frozen ice.

Sometimes slowing down can be one of the most powerful acts in the life of a believer. It is a declaration of trust that the one who made us is still working and fighting for us. We allow the work and the seeds he has planted in us to grow and take even greater root in our hearts. Sometimes in our stillness, we have the greatest victories over our giants because we exhibit trust that God is still moving mightily.

God, teach me not to resist the slowness of winter. Give me the faith to see that you are still moving and working even if my physical eyes don't perceive it.

# GERMINATING

*"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me."*

JOHN 15:4 ESV

When winter comes, although things look quiet on the outside, there is much life and growth brewing under the surface. Just because we don't see life budding up from the ground, it does not mean that no growth is happening. It is hidden from our eyes. Many trees and plants that pop up in the spring were able to do so because the seeds were germinating in the winter months. And scientists have found that some seeds do better with a layer of snow on top of the soil.

This is true of us as well. There are seasons we feel like we are dripping with the evidence of God's activity in our lives. And other seasons where the work of God feels deeply internal, shifting our preferences and loyalties. Rest assured that any beautiful work you see externally in a child of God was first cultivated internally. God knows when to plant, water, and prune. The work is in his hands; we have only to abide.

God, give me the courage to believe you are at work even when I can't see it. Help me to trust in your love. You will complete that which you began.

## RESOLUTION TO ABIDE

*I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:6 ESV

The start of a new year can bring about a lot of emotions. Culturally we are told to quickly come up with a resolution. Often, we look back at our previous year and reflect on what we want to change. This has the potential to cause regret for a lost year or shame for what we did or didn't do.

With God, however, all things can be made new, regardless of if it is January first or mid-October. He is our good shepherd who promises to be our steady leader. It takes courage to trust him and not grow anxious as we abide in him. The thing that pleases his heart most is our trust in him. As we trust, our courage and bravery will increase.

Jesus, thank you that you will be my ever-faithful guide throughout this year. Thank you that I can rest assured you are always working on me, and because of that, I can simply abide in you and trust you to complete your work.

JANUARY 4

## ROD AND STAFF

*Your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.*

PSALM 23:4 ESV

It takes courage to follow God where we sense him leading. Sometimes the path is clearly obvious: a well-worn trail blazed by the saints that have gone before us. However, there are other times that we sense him leading in a new direction, on a new path. In some ways, it's not even a path; it's an uncharted trail that has yet to be traversed.

In these times, we need the assurance from God that this is the direction we are to walk in. When we are told he is our shepherd, it means that he knows how to usher us in the right direction for our lives. While we might be afraid that our bravery may cause us to take the wrong path, his staff will keep us from doing so. The hook of the staff will curl around us and pull us back. As the Psalmist says, that staff will be a comfort to us. We never have to worry because our good shepherd is always on the watch.

Jesus, thank you that you are good at using your staff of comfort. Thank you that you're quick to pull me back if I am wandering. I trust you to guide me.

JANUARY 5

# THE SHEPHERD'S ROLE

*"I am the good shepherd.  
The good shepherd lays his life down for the sheep."*

JOHN 10:11 ESV

For first century readers, a comparison to sheep was not lost on them. They knew sheep were vulnerable animals with no way to protect themselves. They knew that sheep responded well to leadership. And they knew that if sheep were to accomplish anything noteworthy, it was to the credit of their shepherd.

When Jesus announced that he was a good shepherd, it brought an incredible sense of security to his followers. It meant that they had a protector, defender, and leader. Shepherds care for their sheep and they are equipped to do what it takes to carry this out. The instinct to lead and protect sheep is so strong that they are willing to take on a predator, even unto death, so their sheep won't die. The benefit of following our shepherd is that we don't have to be brave and fight for ourselves; that is his job, and one he does quite well.

Father, thank you that you are my shepherd. When I am afraid, remind me that you fight my battles for me.

JANUARY 6

# OWNER'S MANUAL

*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit  
for the common good.*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:7 ESV

All new phones come with an owner's manual. The manufacturer produces one specific to each phone they make. One phone might have GPS tracking installed while another has a great camera. If owners want to enjoy the phone to the fullest extent, they will read the manual. Our maker designed us even more intricately than a complex phone; we were fearfully and wonderfully made.

Without using our manual, the Bible, we will miss many of the unique features God put in us. Through his Spirit, he apportions each of us with giftings. May we take the time to draw near to him and inquire of him what special features he has put in us, for it will not only benefit us but also those around us.

Lord, thank you for gifting me with special abilities. Remind me to walk in my giftings so others can see you and your love.

JANUARY 7

## THE RIGHT FUEL

*It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning.*

PSALM 92:2 NLT

There are many different fuel options at the pump. A driver can choose from regular, premium, and at some stations, ethanol-based fuel. All three options will work in most cars, but some vehicles were designed to run best with premium gasoline. The engine will not operate at its optimum on regular gas, and long term it has the propensity to break down sooner.

God designed us not to simply trudge through our days but to thrive. In Psalm 92, he admonishes us to begin our days reflecting on his unfailing love. His intent is that we would be strengthened in our spirits to know that no matter what comes our way, we have been loved with a love that is incapable of failure. Can we function without knowing this? Sure, just like a car on regular gasoline. But we were designed to run on premium, each day remembering that we are loved so we dwell in grace and peace instead of anxiety and fear.

God, thank you that your love will never fail me. Please write that truth on my heart that I might never forget it.

JANUARY 8

## ALL THINGS NEW

*You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ:  
Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor,  
so that by his poverty you might become rich.*

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9 CSB

We can't imagine a king in all of his splendor and richness, full of wealth and abounding in power as Christ was in heaven. We can try our best to picture the most majestic earthly kingdom, and then assume we would multiply that by one million. This is what Christ left when he came to dwell among us. He was born to parents on the move, not owning a home. When he ended his life, he didn't even have any financial means to take care of his mother; he had to entrust her to John. He was the epitome of poor.

He did this to abide with you. Not to hand you a variety of earthly riches that will rust and fade away, but to pick you up out of your low estate, wash you clean, and hand you a robe of righteousness. You are wealthy in every sense of the word. All that the King has is yours. His promises for provision are abundant.

God, thank you for all the ways you have blessed me richly!

## GOD IS KIND

*Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.*

ZECHARIAH 7:8-10 ESV

Do you see this verse? It says to be honest, kind, and merciful, to be careful about those who are marginalized, and to not even let our minds consider doing ill to another. Yet we do wonder, if we will be honest, why God lets people become orphans, widows, or otherwise marginalized group members. We wonder if God is really involved in our lives, and we wonder why God's mercy and kindness allow atrocities on the earth. Why are we experiencing evil when God is good?

Part of rendering true judgments is to spend time with God and let him help you rethink the world. Life is not perfect, and Jesus told us there will be many troubles. He told us the poor will always be with us. He told us a lot of things that would indicate that we will never be in a perfect world until this old one passes away and the new one is brought forth. Do good and love people. Be kind because God is kind. In all things, remember God is sovereign. This is enough.

God, I don't understand why bad things happen, but I hope, rest, and trust in you. Help me to reflect your kindness, mercy, and justice in truth and spirit.

## A NEW FUTURE

*"I will bring the blind by a way they did not know;  
I will lead them in paths they have not known.  
I will make darkness light before them,  
And crooked places straight.  
These things I will do for them,  
And not forsake them."*

ISAIAH 42:16 NKJV

God is capable of making your way straight. He can give you insights you never knew, restore health and relationships, and give you wisdom and understanding to manage all his blessings. He is capable of making this gift accessible to you and a way to draw you further into your relationship with him. How does this look?

When you give someone a gift, you make sure it is appropriate and will be something they will find useful and enjoyable. God is the one who came up with that idea. He does not say he will point the blind down a new path, but rather that he is going bring them along personally. Let us take one part of this verse for ourselves right now. Consider the question: what is a new path to the blind? Sight, of course. Take a bold leap and ask Jesus to give you new insight.

Lord, thank you for new insight. Please help me to apply it and make it a forever principle.

# RELENT

*"From eternity I am He,  
And there is no one who can rescue from My hand;  
I act, and who can reverse it?"*

ISAIAH 43:13 NASB

In this passage, God explains that he alone is God, and there is not going to be any other Savior except the Lord. That means Jesus, alone, is the way to God. God declares that we know him to be the Ancient of Days. It is established, it follows, that nothing supersedes him or displaces him or his Word.

When we try to be good for the sake of getting into heaven, we balk at the promise of Christ and his resurrection. We are trying to make a better way, one more suitable for us to enter eternity with God. But the fact is this: we want to be good because, deep down, we know this is the very reason we cannot stand before God. Do not let your attempts at good works be the reason you don't accept the fullness of Christ's grace through his blood and forgiveness. There is no other way, and the Ancient of Days has said it.

God, I relent. I will no longer plead with my good intentions and attempts to act well. I know good behavior is a product of forgiveness, and it is not a substitute for Jesus being my Lord. I accept him, now, and forego trying to prove my worthiness to you.

## A REASON

*Revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

1 PETER 3:15 NIV

Eventually, each of us is asked why we are so different, or someone comments that they were changed because we said something that altered their perspective. Isn't it good to know you make change? But it is important that everything we do points to Christ because he is our habitation and the hope of the world.

You are not made different because of a program or process. You are different because Jesus' Holy Spirit lit upon what you were doing and birthed new life in you when you asked. Now, others around you look at you because they recognize the touch of Jesus on your life. They need an explanation, so they too can receive the change God has for them. Have your testimony ready and be prepared to be used.

God, thank you for the change in my life. The world is hungry, and the fields are white. Send me into the fields.

# UNLEASH YOUR LOVE

*Have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love,  
a tender heart, and a humble mind.*

1 PETER 3:8 ESV

Unite with the rest of the body, and actively seek to harmonize within it. Walk in compassion for each other. Love in ways that affirms you recognize we are God's children and proves your loyalty regardless of differences. Be humble in the way you think about yourself. This is quite a list of directives! Here, Peter boiled down a whole lot of Old Testament rules into a simple five-point bullet list. This list guides us in how we treat our brothers and sisters regarding the second great commandment: love your neighbor as yourself.

Anyone who has ever been hurt by being kind to someone (and that probably includes everyone) knows that it takes bravery to get back in the arena and give fully with the sake of love in mind. Love protects. It is the best armor your heart can have. Why? Because when you love, the response will never dictate its value. A response can only reveal the heart of the recipient. When you love, victory takes place. That will always be a celebrated fact in heaven and at the very throne of God. Christ in you is the promise of a very strong love on the earth. Unleash it.

God, thank you for love. Show me where I need to love my brothers and sisters in you more fully. I humbly unleash my love for you.