



# January 1

*Watch over your heart with all diligence,  
for from it flow the springs of life.*

PROVERBS 4:23

A WOMAN CANNOT PASS ON what she herself does not have. If we want to pass on health and beauty and goodness to our children, we must discipline ourselves to pour into our minds and souls truth from Scripture, seek out wise people, and read great books, as well as protect our souls from all that is base.

And so, as I ponder what I want to become more of this year, I must take seriously the cultivating of my own soul, so when others come to draw from me, they are drawing from Him, because I have invested time in Him, His Word, His wisdom, His truth, and His ways. I am working on my own personal goals, so I may determine how I will use my time this year to ensure that I am growing in all the elements that are beautiful, true, wise, good, and lovely.

Here's my advice: seek out a time to get away alone to consider how you would like to grow this year. Evaluate the habits you practice and how they influence your soul, your heart, and consequently, your worship of God. Make a plan of how you will grow in wisdom, beauty, and truth this year. What will you read? When will you have a quiet time? What do you need to stop doing?

Make a plan for all the ways you will pour beauty, goodness, wisdom, and truth into your children this year. What books and stories will you read to them? When will you have devotions with them? How do you need to change in order to reflect love and graciousness to them, so they will form their relationship habits on gentleness and generous love?

What do you need to change in order to focus more on investing, rather than just passing time with emptiness?



Take this opportunity to put time away for evaluation  
and planning on your calendar!



## January 2

*Love is patient, love is kind . . .  
does not take into account a wrong suffered.*

I CORINTHIANS 13:4-5

TIME AND AGE HAVE CONVINCED me of my own propensity to be selfish and immature. Consequently, my gratitude has grown immensely, since I know that I don't have to perform for the Lord. He is mindful of my imperfections, yet He still calls me His own special child. The number of times He has had to bear with me, love me, and give me grace has made me so much more apt to bear with, love, and forgive my sweet but human children, husband, and friends.

I know they will make mistakes and be selfish and sinful—just like me!—but I also know that I can only please God and have peace in my own heart when I choose to love them back. And in practicing loving them, my own heart swells with more love, good thoughts, and generosity.

This is how it works in my own life. I will have a critical thought toward Clay or the kids or a friend. If I foster that thought, it nurtures self-righteousness, resentment, and anger. When I choose to look at the relationship with eyes of love instead, I can get perspective: this is a person dear to me. They have a personality that comes with many flaws, just as mine does. They do not live to hurt my feelings!

I need to remember that love covers a multitude of sins. I remember how much I need grace in all of my own fragile times. I also remind myself that I will please my precious, patient Lord Jesus if I obediently act in love.

So, I cover the person with grace, say words of patience and kindness, and then I am amazed that my feelings of love follow and the relationship improves, rather than being broken. Good feelings often accompany acts of obedience.



These words in 1 Corinthians describe God, who tells us that He actually is love! Too often, these words do not describe me. Do patience and kindness come easily to you?



## January 3

*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but  
he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*

PROVERBS 29:18, KJV

“THE MOTHER IS THE FOUNTAIN-HEAD of the Home. The home is the fountain-head of society and of the Church of Christ. And no influences in the universe contribute so much toward guiding immortal souls Heavenward as the Home and the Mother. If I were asked to name any one principle that seems to have an almost universal application, it would be this one: show me the mother and I will show you the man! Next to the sovereign grace of God, the influence of a mother’s teachings and example is the most effective in moulding character and shaping destiny.”\*

These words, written over a hundred years ago, are still very powerful today. Perhaps they are even more powerful now, in a culture where an understanding of the importance of mothers to the overall well-being of soul of the next generation has been lost. How affirming it is to see that truth of past generations still applies to us today.

Often, I find that in the absence of a clear enough vision for their children and homes, mothers replace conviction and vision with lots of activities and distractions for their children. As a result of all this rushing around to endless lessons and buying the newest curriculum and technology for their children, moms feel like they are accomplishing something. However, a focus on home life is the key to civilizing our children, and thereby our nation.

From the beginning of time, God created the home to be a place sufficient to nurture genius, excellence, graciousness, and grand civility. But the key factor is nothing that can be purchased or owned. The accomplishment of this grand life is found only in the soul of a mother personally mentoring her children through the power of the Holy Spirit.



Do you have a vision for your family? Write down your dreams and goals in order to have a true focus for the time you spend together.

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\* Gene Fedele, ed., *Golden Thoughts of Mother, Home, and Heaven* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2003), 221.



## January 4

*You shall teach [these commandments] diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.*

DEUTERONOMY 6:7

IT IS IN A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with a real person whose soul is alive that the deepest imprints of life are given. The secrets and deep emotions shared during the good-night hours, in which the soul of a child is tender and open; the comfort of warm, homemade food prepared and eaten in the early evening as ideas are discussed, prayers are said, and devotions are read; the advice given in the midst of washing dishes together after a meal; the heroic and riveting stories read aloud and enjoyed together that establish common patterns of morality, values, and dreams in the comfort of the blazing hearth; the mugs of steaming hot chocolate savored while squishing against each other on a couch—these are the heavenly moments when we can share God’s Word with our children. His Word is food to the soul and nourishment to the mind and conscience of a child fully awake to all that is important in life.

There is no computer, television, software, or textbook that can pass on such passion, love, and motivation.

When the invisible strings of a mother’s heart are tied to the hearts of her children through loving sacrifice and nurture, the stability and foundations of a nation become secure and stable. A mother, living well in her God-ordained role, is of great beauty and inestimable value to the future of any generation. Her impact is irreplaceable and necessary to the spiritual formation of children who will be the adults of the next generation. Fun, comfort, humor, graciousness, spiritual passion, compassion for the lost, hospitality, chores, meals, training, lifegiving words, hours and hours of listening and playing and praying and reading—all are parts of the mosaic of soul development.



Are the words of God on your heart? They must be there before they can be given to your children. Take a moment to work on memorizing today’s important verse.



## January 5

*Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

HEBREWS 11:6

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I had two miscarriages in one year, and all of my three children had pneumonia, chicken pox, ruptured eardrums, and encephalitis within two months! We had moved to a tiny town in Texas where I had no friends, Clay had no job, and we were almost out of money. I was tired and struggling with depression, desperately seeking answers from the Lord. Because we lived with my mother-in-law at the time, going for long walks by myself was the only way I could get away to think and pray.

One day, as I was walking and pondering, it was as if the Lord said to me, “Sally, if I took everything away from you that you hold dear, would you still believe in Me?” It was as though God was shining a spotlight onto the deepest part of my soul. And I found at the very bottom of it that I would rather hold on to my faith in God and believe in His love and goodness for the rest of my life than choose a life of existentialism and despair. I also knew this choice would require constant vigilance—that I would have to guard my heart and feed it with the truth of God’s Word and His constancy in my life.

Faith was planting a flag in my heart that day. Faith was my assurance of things hoped for but not seen. Faith meant choosing to hope in Him every day, acting on that faith and hope, and understanding that without this commitment of my will to choosing to believe and hope, I couldn’t be pleasing to God or sense His wisdom and hand upon my life.

I would look back on that day as a day that would determine the course of my walk with God.



Have you made a decision to plant a flag of faith in your own life? What challenges that faith?



## January 6

*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.*

HEBREWS 10:22

MAKING A DECISION TO STAND FOR and in faith means many things. It means I choose to believe the best and act in light of what Scripture says about God—that He is loving, righteous, good, kind, wise, and so on. I believe in light even when I find myself in darkness. I believe love is redemptive and is a perfect bond of unity, even when I am confronted with unloving, immature people.

It means choosing to believe that God listens to my prayers and that the prayer of a righteous person avails much—trusting that in His time, I will see eternal results, even if it isn't on my time schedule.

If I put God on trial every time something difficult happened to me, I would only be unstable and insecure in life—wondering and fearing when the next trial or danger would come my way. But if I build my life on the foundation of believing in Him—sowing faithfulness and goodness—I will reap the blessing of freedom and peace.

I determined long ago to never allow my mind to wander to an active place of doubt. In the way that I made a promise to stay married to Clay and choose to love him unconditionally for all of our years, with divorce never being an option, my promise to God meant the same thing. As I look back over the years, my commitment has determined my behavior and has always pointed me to the source of direct instructions—always to God and His Word, always to faith, and always to obedience.



Do you believe that God hears you? That He will answer in time? How can you strengthen your soul in order to continue choosing rightly in the midst of daily challenges?



## January 7

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.*

ECCLESIASTES 3:11, ESV

WOMEN LONG FOR IDEALS, beauty, and goodness in the depths of their souls as a consequence of God's elegant design. Intuitively, we all sense there is a better way, a better place. A sense of justice tells us in our hearts that life should be fair, because we were created for a perfect world filled with the virtues of God's character. These shadows of a long-lost reality lead us to hope for heaven, that place where we will not be disappointed.

Our deep longings become a platform for our hope in God. Jesus' disciples depended on this hope, authentic to them because they had experienced Jesus face to face and knew their hope was founded on reality. Their sure hope of heaven gave them joy in this world.

Many years ago during a time of testing, I renewed a promise to God that I would trust Him. In light of my commitment, I would act in faith, believing that what I had learned from Scripture was true. Redoubling my efforts to give God the chance to speak to me as often as possible, I disciplined my life to have quiet times almost every day. Sometimes the quiet times would be full and fruitful; sometimes they were extremely short and empty; sometimes I was dull and dead inside. But over many years I learned to turn over my worries and fears, one by one, to God and leave them there with Him.



One of the most important parts of my day is the time I set aside for prayer, reading, and pondering God's Word. Have you found a special time to set aside specifically to quiet your heart before the Lord? If not, may I encourage you to do so?

It's the best investment you will ever make.