



HOLD FAST

365 DEVOTIONS
FOR MEN BY MEN

Our Daily Bread

A stylized, teal-colored flame graphic with a circular base, positioned behind the text. The flame has several upward-pointing tongues of fire.

**HOLD
FAST**

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**365 DEVOTIONS
FOR MEN BY MEN**

Our Daily Bread



Our Daily Bread
Publishing™

Hold Fast: 365 Devotions for Men by Men

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FOREWORD

The world needs men! Men who are brave, daring, and intentional, men who offer shelter for the weak and vulnerable, men who call out the good in others and fight against sin and evil, men who are willing to sacrifice so others flourish.

I know this in my bones and my heart beats faster as I write these words, but the easy life is tempting, the couch and TV call, and I'm easily distracted. I am like Paul in Romans 7:

Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? (vv. 21–24)

Waging war. The imagery is unavoidable. We are in a battle. Paul reminds us that this battle is not specific to me; it's part of the human condition. It's encouraging to know that we have company. In fact, every man I know, when he's honest, will share about this battle and the shame of his defeats when he's taken the easy route.

So what's the remedy?

Here are three steps to help you in the fight:

1. Find your identity in Christ and not in your successes or failures. The Bible says that when you decided to follow Jesus Christ, you were “crucified with Christ” so that you no longer live for yourself but live by faith in Jesus who loves you and died for you (Galatians 2:20).
2. Hold fast to the Word of God. There are several different Greek words to capture the idea of holding fast that have a range of meanings: to glue, to adhere, to bind, to arrest, to grasp, to possess. These are aggressive words. And the New Testament writers give a list of things we are to hang on to: what is good (Romans 12:9), the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:2), one’s wife (Ephesians 5:31), the word of life (Philippians 2:16), Christ (Colossians 2:19), and the confession of our hope (Hebrews 10:23). This is hard work! And how do you do this? It doesn’t happen by chance but by being purposeful, and we start to hold fast by reading, reflecting, and responding to the Bible daily.
3. Finally, gather with other men who will encourage you and help you in the battle. These devotions can be the first or ninety-first step in a lifelong journey of knowing and loving God and His people. We were not meant to live this life alone.

If you have read this far, I would like to invite you to take the next step. Start reading daily, but don’t stop

there. Invite two or three other men to join you and meet or connect weekly to share how God is changing you as you engage the battle. The world needs you, your coworkers need you, your family needs you, other men need you.

And if you do this, we would love to hear your story. Send me or any of the devotional writers in this book an email at books@odb.org. I am pulling for you; we are all pulling for you.

Matt Lucas
President and CEO
Our Daily Bread Ministries



JANUARY 1

Uncharted Waters Ahead

Isaiah 43:1–7

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. —Isaiah 43:2

The ball drops in New York’s Times Square. The crowd counts down to Big Ben chiming. Sydney Harbor erupts in fireworks. However your city marks it, there’s something exciting about welcoming in a new year and the fresh start it brings. On New Year’s Day we push out into new waters. What friendships and opportunities might we find?

For all its excitement, though, a new year can be unsettling. None of us knows the future or what storms it may hold. Many New Year’s traditions reflect this: Fireworks were invented in China to supposedly ward off evil spirits and make a new season prosperous. And New Year’s resolutions date back to the Babylonians who made vows to appease their gods. Such acts were an attempt to make an unknown future secure.

When they weren’t making vows, the Babylonians were busy conquering people—including Israel. In time, God sent the enslaved Jews this message: “Do not fear. . . . When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:1–2). Later, Jesus said something similar when He and the disciples were caught sailing in a violent storm. “Why are you so afraid?” He told them before commanding the waters to be still (Matthew 8:23–27).

Today we push out from the shore into new, uncharted waters. Whatever we face, our Lord is with us—and He has the power to calm the waves. Only in His power can we stand fast. **Sheridan Voysey**

Resolutions

Nehemiah 10:28–31

[They] entered into . . . an oath to walk in God's Law, . . . and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord. —Nehemiah 10:29 NKJV

In 1722, American theologian Jonathan Edwards drew up a list of seventy resolutions, dedicating himself to live in harmony with God and others. The following resolutions give a picture of the serious purpose with which Edwards approached his relationship with God. He resolved:

- To do whatever is most to God's glory.
- To do my duty, for the good of mankind in general.
- Never to do anything which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.
- To study the Scriptures steadily, constantly, and frequently.
- To ask myself at the end of every day, week, month, and year if I could possibly have done better.
- Until I die, not to act as if I were my own, but entirely and altogether God's.

In Nehemiah 10, God's people made an oath, vowing to follow all the commands, laws, and regulations of the Lord. This oath was so serious that they were willing to accept the curse of God if they failed to keep these commands.

Our resolutions need not be as serious as that. But any resolution to follow God is not a casual promise. Rather, it is a solemn and serious declaration that—with the help of the Holy Spirit—we can renew every day. **Marvin Williams**

How to Hold Fast

Jude 1:24–25

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling. —Jude 1:24

It was a cold, icy winter's day, and my mind was focused on getting from my warm vehicle to a warm building. The next thing I knew I was on the ground, my knees turned inward and my lower legs turned outward. Nothing was broken, but I was in pain. The pain would get worse as time went by, and it would be weeks before I was whole again.

Who among us hasn't taken a spill of some sort? Wouldn't it be nice to have something or someone to keep us on our feet all the time? While there are no guarantees of surefootedness in the physical sense, there is One who stands ready to assist us in our quest to honor Christ in this life and to prepare us to stand joyfully before Him in the next.

Every day we face temptations (and even false teachings) that seek to divert us, confuse us, and entangle us. Yet, it's not ultimately through our own efforts that we remain on our feet as we walk in this world. How assuring to know that when we hold our peace when tempted to speak angrily, to opt for honesty over deceit, to choose love over hate, or to select truth over error—we experience God's power to keep us standing fast (Jude 1:24). And when we appear approved before God when Christ returns, the praise that we offer now for His sustaining grace will echo throughout eternity (v. 25). **Arthur Jackson**

Dying to Live

Matthew 16:21–28

Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. —Matthew 16:25

Western Michigan is plagued by snowy winters, requiring that salt be put on road surfaces to make them safer to travel. Here's the problem: salt eats away at a car's metal body. So, unless you own a Corvette, going to a car wash is a frequent winter ritual.

When I lived in Michigan, I was sitting in a car-wash facility near the end of the washing process when the machines began to spray a special liquid all over the car. The sign said it was a “drying agent,” but that struck me as odd. Wetting something down to dry it seems contrary to what you'd expect. Yet that is precisely what those chemicals are designed to do. It is counterintuitive thinking—a paradox.

Jesus also dealt in counterintuitive thinking when presenting His kingdom message to His followers. In Matthew 16:25, He said, “Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” That doesn't sound right. To save your life, you have to lose it? That seems like saying, “To dry something, you wet it down!” Yet, it is absolutely true. Only as we die to self, entrusting ownership of our lives to Christ, can we learn what it means to really live.

“Dying to live” may seem counterintuitive, but it is the heart of the Christian experience. **Bill Crowder**

Another Chance

Philemon 1:8–19

[You] have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. —Colossians 3:10

For almost one hundred years, a huge piece of flawed Carrara marble lay in the courtyard of a cathedral in Florence, Italy. Then, in 1501, a young sculptor was asked to do something with it. He measured the block and noted its imperfections. In his mind, he envisioned a young shepherd boy.

For three years, he chiseled and shaped the marble skillfully. Finally, when the eighteen-foot towering figure of the biblical David was unveiled, a student of the sculptor—Michelangelo—exclaimed, “Master, it lacks only one thing—speech!”

Onesimus was like that once-flawed marble. He was an unfaithful servant when he fled from his master Philemon. But while on the run he came to know the Jesus, the Master Sculptor. As a changed man, he served God faithfully and was invaluable to Paul’s ministry. When Paul sent him back to Philemon, he commended him as one who “was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me” (Philemon 1:11). He asked Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a brother (v. 16).

Paul knew what it meant to be given another chance after past wrongs (Acts 9:26–28). He knew personally the transformation God can do. Now he saw it in the life of Onesimus. The Lord can chisel His image on our flawed lives and make us beautiful and useful too. **Albert Lee**

Tell It!

Mark 5:1–20

The man went away and began to tell . . .
 how much Jesus had done for him. —Mark 5:20

The year was 1975 and something significant had just happened to me. I needed to find my friend Francis, with whom I shared a lot of personal matters, and tell him about it. I found him in his apartment hurriedly preparing to go out, but I slowed him down. The way he stared at me, he must have sensed that I had something important to tell him. “What is it?” he asked. So, I told him simply, “Yesterday I surrendered my life to Jesus!”

Francis looked at me, sighed heavily, and said, “I’ve felt like doing the same for a long time now.” He asked me to share what happened, and I told him that the previous day someone had explained the gospel to me—and I had asked Jesus to save me. I still remember the tears in his eyes as he too prayed to receive Jesus’s forgiveness. No longer in a hurry, he and I talked and talked about our new relationship with Christ.

After Jesus healed a man with an evil spirit, He told him, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19). The man didn’t need to preach a powerful sermon; he simply needed to share his story.

No matter what our conversion experience is, we can do what that man did: “[He] went away and began to tell . . . how much Jesus had done for him.” **Lawrence Darmani**

All Things New

Revelation 21:1–7

If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here! —2 Corinthians 5:17

Junkyards intrigue me.

I enjoy working on cars, so I frequently make trips to the junkyard near our home. It's a lonely place, where the wind whispers through discarded hulks that were once someone's prized possession. Some were wrecked, some wore out, and others simply outlived their usefulness. As I walk between the rows, a car will sometimes catch my eye, and I'll find myself wondering about the adventures it had during its "lifetime." Like a portal to the past, each has a story to tell—of human hankering after the latest model and the inescapable passage of time.

But I take particular pleasure in finding new life for an old part. Whenever I can take something discarded and give it new life in a restored vehicle, it feels like a small victory against time and decline.

It sometimes makes me think of Jesus's words at the end of the Bible: "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:5). These words refer to God's renewal of creation, which includes believers. Already, all who've received Jesus are a "new creation" in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17).

And one day we will enter into His promise of unending days with Him (John 14:3). Age and disease will no longer take their toll, and we will continue the adventure of an eternal lifetime. What stories each of us will have to tell—stories of our Savior's redeeming love and undying faithfulness. **James Banks**



The Testing

Genesis 22:1–3, 6–12

Some time later God tested Abraham. —Genesis 22:1

The first time I took my sons to hike a Colorado Fourteener—a mountain with an elevation of a least fourteen thousand feet—they were nervous. Could they make it? Were they up to the challenge? My youngest stopped on the trail for extended breaks. “Dad, I can’t go any more,” he said repeatedly. But I believed this test would be good for them, and I wanted them to trust me. A mile from the peak, my son who’d insisted he could go no further caught his second wind. He beat us to the summit! He was so glad he trusted me—even amid his fears.

I marvel at the trust Isaac had in his father as they climbed their mountain. Far more, I’m undone by the trust Abraham had in God as he raised his knife over his son (Genesis 22:10). Even with his confused and wrenching heart, Abraham obeyed. Mercifully, an angel stopped him. “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” God’s messenger declared (v. 12). God never intended for Isaac to die.

As we draw parallels from this unique story to our own with caution, it’s crucial to note the opening line: “God tested Abraham” (v. 1). Through his test, Abraham learned how much he trusted God. He discovered His loving heart and profound provision.

In our confusion, darkness, and testing, we learn truths about ourselves and about God. And we may even find that our testing leads to a deeper trust in Him. **Winn Collier**

Live Wire

Mark 9:2–10

We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. —2 Peter 1:16

“I felt like I had touched a live wire,” said Professor Holly Ordway, describing her reaction to John Donne’s majestic poem “Holy Sonnet 14.” *There’s something happening in this poetry*, she thought. *I wonder what it is.* Ordway recalls it as the moment her previously atheistic worldview allowed for the possibility of the supernatural. Eventually she would believe in the transforming reality of the resurrected Christ.

Touching a live wire—that must have been how Peter, James, and John felt on the day Jesus took them to a mountaintop, where they witnessed a dramatic transformation. Christ’s “clothes became dazzling white” (Mark 9:3) and Elijah and Moses appeared—an event we know today as the transfiguration.

Descending from the mountain, Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone what they’d seen until He had risen (v. 9). But they didn’t even know what He meant by “rising from the dead” (v. 10).

The disciples’ understanding of Jesus was woefully incomplete, because they couldn’t conceive of a destiny that included His death and resurrection. But eventually their experiences with their resurrected Lord would transform their lives. Late in his life, Peter described his encounter with Christ’s transfiguration as the time when the disciples were first “eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

When we encounter the power of Jesus we touch a “live wire.” There’s something happening here. The living Christ beckons us. **Tim Gustafson**



JANUARY 10

Always Alert

Psalm 121

He who watches over Israel will neither
slumber nor sleep. —Psalm 121:4

For a man who lives by a code, so to speak, it felt like a major failure. What did I do? Well, I fell asleep.

Our kids have a curfew to meet when they're out for the evening. They're good kids, but my practice is to wait up until I hear their hands turn the front doorknob. I want to know they're home safe. I don't have to do this: I choose to. But one night I awoke to my daughter saying through a smile, "Dad, I'm safe. You should go to bed." Despite our best intentions, sometimes fathers fall asleep at their posts. It was very humbling—and also very human.

But that never happens with God. Psalm 121 is a reassuring song about Him as guardian and protector of His children. The psalmist declares that God who watches over us "will not slumber" (v. 3). And for emphasis, he repeats that truth in verse 4: He "will neither slumber nor sleep."

Can you even imagine? God never falls asleep at His post. He is always keeping watch over us—the sons and daughters and aunts and uncles and mothers, and even fathers. It's not so much that He has to do this, but rather that, out of His great love, He chooses to. Relax. Our God is always alert. **John Blase**



THE WRITERS

James Banks, pastor of Peace Church in Durham, North Carolina, often enjoys a three-mile workout he does with his dog Max. Back at the house, James enjoys tinkering with old diesel engines with the goal of keeping them running for hundreds of thousands of miles. James is the author of several books, including *Praying Together*, *Praying the Prayers of the Bible*, and *Prayers for Prodigals*. He and his wife, Cari, have two adult children.

John Blase is a poet, adjunct seminary professor, literary agent, and part-time UPS employee. John and his wife live in Hot Springs, Arkansas. His books include *The Jubilee: Poems*; *Know When to Hold 'Em: The High Stakes Game of Fatherhood*; *Touching Wonder: Recapturing the Awe of Christmas*; and *All Is Grace: A Ragamuffin Memoir*. He says he's a fortunate man with a beautiful wife and three kids who look like their mother.

Dave Branon was for several years a high school English teacher and basketball coach before entering the publishing world at Our Daily Bread Ministries as an assistant editor for *Our Daily Bread*. Later, Dave spent eighteen years as managing editor of *Sports Spectrum* magazine, which features top Christian athletes and their testimony

of faith. Dave has written twenty books, including Zondervan's *Sports Devotional Bible*, *The Lands of the Bible Today*, and *Beyond the Valley*. Dave and his wife, Sue, have four children and eight grandchildren and live in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Winn Collier and his family live in Holland, Michigan, where Winn teaches at Western Theological Seminary and directs the Eugene Peterson Center for Christian Imagination. Winn writes for magazines and is the author of five books: *Restless Faith*, *Let God: The Transforming Wisdom of François Fénelon*, *Holy Curiosity*, the epistolary novel *Love Big, Be Well*, and *A Burning in My Bones: The Authorized Biography of Eugene H. Peterson*. Winn and his wife, Miska, have two sons.

Bill Crowder is a Bible teacher and writer with a deep love of sports. He played intercollegiate soccer (goal-keeper) followed by decades of slow-pitch softball, and now he plays golf. He also follows college and professional sports—especially Liverpool Football Club of the English Premier League. He and his wife, Marlene, live in North Carolina and have five adult children and a growing number of grandchildren. Bill has written several books, including *One Thing Is Necessary*, *For This He Came*, *My Hope Is in You*, and *Windows on Christmas*.

Lawrence Darmani has enjoyed bird-watching since he was a kid growing up in Ghana. Lawrence also loves to drop a line in the water and see what is biting. Over the years, Lawrence has established himself as an award-winning author. His first novel, *Grief Child*, won a British

Commonwealth Writers Prize. His books include *One for the Road*, *Strength for the Journey*, and *Palm-Tree Parables*. Lawrence and his wife, Comfort, have two daughters. The family lives in Accra, Ghana, where Lawrence is editor of *Step* magazine and CEO of Step Publishers.

Tim Gustafson had the special privilege of growing up as a missionary kid in Ghana. Tim would accompany his dad on hunts in Ghana, where Pop would carry a .308 and an eight-gauge shotgun (“Hey, the critters could be large,” Tim says). Back stateside, Tim graduated from Michigan State University before serving in the US military (Active Army plus Army and Navy Reserves for many years). He served in places such as the Philippines, Turkey, Singapore, and the Caribbean. Tim is currently a senior content editor and writer for Our Daily Bread Ministries. He and his wife, Leisa, have eight children.

Adam Holz is the director of Focus on the Family’s media review website, Plugged In. He has also served as associate editor at *Discipleship Journal*. He’s the author of the NavPress Bible study *Beating Busyness*. Adam is married to Jennifer, and they have three children whose passions include swimming, gymnastics, drama, piano, and asking dad what’s for dessert. In his free time, he enjoys playing electric guitar.

Arthur Jackson served as a pastor in the Chicago area for nearly thirty years. In addition to being an *Our Daily Bread* author since 2016, he has also been on staff at PastorServe, where he assists pastors and churches through coaching, consulting, and crisis care. Arthur and Shirley

(his wife of over fifty years) reside in Kansas City, Kansas. They're the parents of five adult children and the grandparents of seven grandsons.

Leslie Koh was born and raised in Singapore. Leslie spent more than fifteen years as a journalist in the busy newsroom of local newspaper *The Straits Times* before moving to Our Daily Bread Ministries. Switching from bad news to good news has been most rewarding, and he still believes that nothing reaches out to people better than a good, compelling story. He currently serves as an editor for the Our Daily Bread Ministries Singapore office.

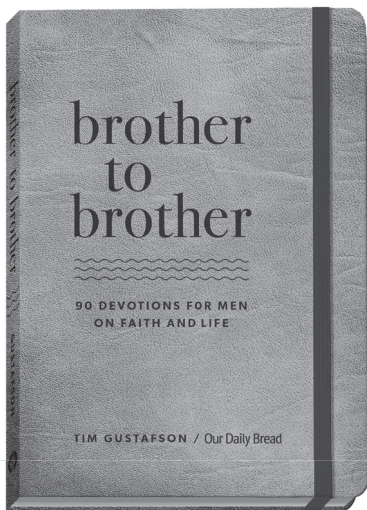
Albert Lee served admirably in the Singapore Armed Forces, earning the Best Recruit and Best Non-Commissioned Officer awards while completing his national service. In his youth, he was also a rugby player. Among Albert's other interests are swimming, art, and photography. Albert has been the national director of Singapore Youth for Christ and the director of international ministries for Our Daily Bread Ministries. He and his wife, Catherine, have two children.

Sheridan Voysey is an author and broadcaster on the subjects of faith and spirituality. His books include *Resilient: Your Invitation to a Jesus-Shaped Life*; *Resurrection Year: Turning Broken Dreams into New Beginnings*; and the award-winning *Unseen Footprints: Encountering the Divine Along the Journey of Life*. He is a regular contributor to Britain's largest national network BBC Radio 2. He also speaks at conferences and events around the world. Although born in Australia and living

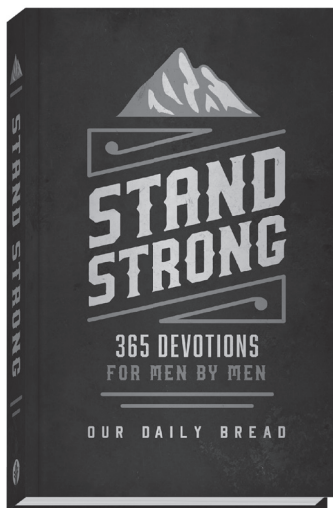
in England, he never did get the cricket bug. But he keeps that a secret from the neighbors. Sheridan is married to Merryn, a medical researcher, and they reside in Oxford, United Kingdom.

Marvin Williams should write an autobiography called *My Life at 11,000 Feet*. That number seems rather significant, since he has jumped out of an airplane at that height (and survived), and he has climbed to the height of 11,000 on Mt. Kenya, the highest mountain in Kenya. Earlier in his life, he was a martial arts champion. Marvin is senior teaching pastor of Trinity Church in Lansing, Michigan. He and his wife, Tonia, have three children.

Mike Wittmer's down-to-earth writing style and his sense of humor as a speaker belie his position as a noted Bible scholar. Mike did his undergraduate work at Cedarville University, and he received his doctorate at Calvin College. He is a longtime professor at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, and he is pastor of Cedar Springs Baptist Church near Grand Rapids. He likes to cross-country ski, ride his mountain bike, kayak, and play backyard whiffle ball. Mike has written several books, including *The Last Enemy*, *Despite Doubt*, *Becoming Worldly Saints*, and *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*. Mike and Julie have three children.



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HOLD FAST

HEBREWS 10:23

From men who understand the everyday struggles of living with integrity and purpose, this collection of 5-minute devotions will strengthen you to hold fast to God amid the challenges and uncertainties of today's world. Spending time with God's Word, you'll discover practical ways to live out what you believe in your homelife, workplace, and community, and draw ever closer to the God who will never fail or forsake you.

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