

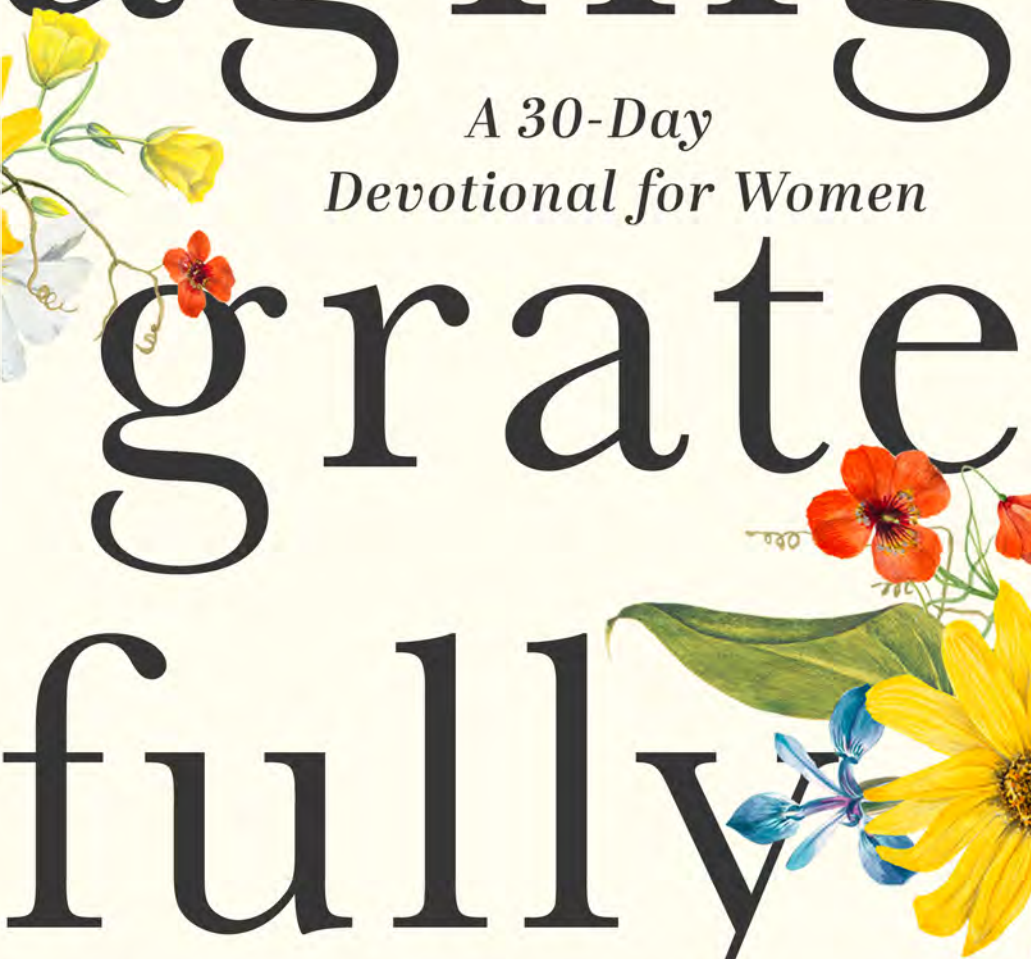
aging

*A 30-Day
Devotional for Women*

grate

fully

Heather Creekmore



Aging Gratefully

A 30-Day Devotional for Women

Heather Creekmore



Our Daily Bread
Publishing.

Aging Gratefully: A 30-Day Devotional for Women

© 2024 by Heather Creekmore

All rights reserved.

Published in association with Books & Such Literary Management, 52 Mission Circle, Suite 122, PMB 170, Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5370, www.booksandsuch.com.

Requests for permission to quote from this book should be directed to: Permissions Department, Our Daily Bread Publishing, PO Box 3566, Grand Rapids, MI 49501, or contact us by email at permissionsdept@odb.org.

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked GW are taken from *GOD'S WORD*®. Copyright © 1995, 2003, 2013, 2014, 2019, 2020 by God's Word to the Nations Mission Society. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Interior design by Michael J. Williams

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Creekmore, Heather, 1974- author.

Title: Aging gratefully : a 30-day devotional for women / Heather Creekmore.

Description: Grand Rapids, MI : Our Daily Bread Publishing, [2024] | Summary:

“With 30 devotional readings, Heather Creekmore invites women 45 to 65 to find delight in the Bible’s perspective on aging, to embrace God’s grace for living joyfully, and to thank God for the gift of getting older” -Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023041720 (print) | LCCN 2023041721 (ebook) | ISBN 9781640702325 (paperback) | ISBN 9781640702370 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Christian women--Prayers and devotions. | Aging--Prayers and devotions. | Devotional calendars. | BISAC: RELIGION / Christian Living / Women's Interests | SELF-HELP / Aging

Classification: LCC BV4527 .C777 2024 (print) | LCC BV4527 (ebook) | DDC 242/.643--dc23/eng/20231023

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023041720>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023041721>

Printed in the United States of America

24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 / 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

	<i>Introduction</i>	9
Day 1	The Secret to Flourishing after Forty: <i>How to Praise as We Age</i> (Psalm 92:14–15)	13
Day 2	Wisdom of Years: <i>Age Is Not a Disadvantage</i> (Psalm 90:12)	19
Day 3	Seeing God’s Statistics: <i>Embracing the Opportunity to See God’s Faithfulness</i> (Philippians 1:6)	25
Day 4	Thriving in a New Season: <i>Thanking God for the Next Season of Life</i> (Ecclesiastes 3:1)	29
Day 5	Unwavering Confidence: <i>Trusting the One Who Never Fails</i> (Joshua 1:9)	35
Day 6	Over Obsession: <i>The Joy of Being Free from the Ideal Me</i> (Psalm 91:1–2)	41
Day 7	The Greatest Beauty: <i>Recognizing the Most Beautiful Thing about Us Is Inside, Not Out</i> (1 Peter 3:4)	47

Day 8	Zippers, Snaps, and Other Annoyances: <i>Understanding Body Image as You Age</i> (Proverbs 20:29)	51
Day 9	Gaining Wait: <i>Making Peace with Your Body</i> (Isaiah 46:4)	57
Day 10	Wisdom Creases: <i>Why Wrinkles Aren't the Enemy</i> (Psalm 34:5)	63
Day 11	Crown of Grays: <i>The Splendor of Hair-Color Freedom</i> (Proverbs 16:31)	67
Day 12	Learning Who's Really in Control: <i>The Sweet Surrender of Knowing Who's Boss</i> (Proverbs 31:25)	71
Day 13	The Hottest Person I Know: <i>Menopause and Midlife Change</i> (James 1:4)	77
Day 14	Dressing Your Age: <i>Scripture's Suggestion for Dressing Well as You Age</i> (Colossians 3:12–13)	83
Day 15	Why Did I Pick Up My Phone?: <i>Encouragement for Aging Brains</i> (Job 12:12)	87
Day 16	Can God Still Use Me?: <i>You Are Never Too Late for His Purpose</i> (Hebrews 11:1)	93
Day 17	Mission Accomplice: <i>Partnering with God on His Mission for Your Life</i> (Proverbs 19:21)	99
Day 18	Who Stole My Energy?: <i>Using Time Wisely</i> (Joel 2:25)	103
Day 19	Ladies Who Lunch: <i>Finding Community in Midlife</i> (Galatians 6:2)	109
Day 20	Coming Out of Your Shell: <i>The Blessings of New Friendships at Midlife</i> (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10)	113
Day 21	Marriage in Midlife: <i>Changing and Growing Together</i> (1 Peter 4:8)	117

Contents

Day 22	Empty Nest, Full Heart: <i>Fresh Grace for When the Flock Flies</i> (Psalm 103:5)	121
Day 23	“Grandma” Status: <i>Promotions to Roles of Influence</i> (Titus 2:3–5)	125
Day 24	Cleaning Out the Junk Drawers: <i>Putting the Past to Rest</i> (Isaiah 43:18–19)	131
Day 25	Freedom of Forgiveness: <i>Embracing God’s Grace for Mistakes</i> (Ephesians 4:31–32)	135
Day 26	Sandwiched: <i>Caring for Children and Parents</i> (Psalm 55:22)	139
Day 27	Recipe for Rest: <i>True Rest Is Rooted in Trust</i> (Psalm 62:1–2)	143
Day 28	Saying Goodbye: <i>Holding on to Faith in the Season of Goodbyes</i> (Isaiah 41:10)	149
Day 29	All Those Candles: <i>How Age Helps You Burn Bright for God’s Kingdom</i> (Colossians 3:2)	153
Day 30	Not Done Yet: <i>God’s Promise of Abundant Life Is Not Just for the Young</i> (John 10:10)	157
	<i>Notes</i>	163

Introduction

On the game show *Supermarket Sweep*, contestants rush through the aisles of a grocery store with a checklist, tossing in items as they try to beat the clock. Their faces reveal the blend of stress and excitement that comes with racing to a big finish. My life has felt like that game show. I rushed through school, skipping my senior year of high school to go to college early. When I learned I could start working as an intern while finishing my bachelor's degree, I skipped out of college early too. Check the box. Move on. What's next on my list?

In my mid-twenties I landed my dream job—campaign manager. It was up to me to get my boss elected to Congress. I worked seventy hours a week. Even when I wasn't at work, my mind never left campaign mode. For eleven months I immersed myself in the political process. The morning after election day, I was unemployed. We'd lost. Game over.

A year of my life had been donated to a cause that evaporated the second the news channel declared a winner. I was untethered. What was I doing with my life?

I jumped to the next thing, then the next. I met my husband at thirty and thought the marriage milestone would free me to slow down and savor the years. But it didn't. By our fifth anniversary, we had four children aged four and under. My

life goal changed from finding the next career opportunity to getting babies to sleep through the night. As soon as this one could walk or this one could buckle his own car seat, then I'd be able to rest.

But as every mother knows, rest doesn't come when you stop buying diapers. As the kids progressed into tweens and teens, my drive to get on to the next season of life and my desire to stop the clock became constant competitors. Now, as I watch my children continue to age, I'm reminded daily of how I am aging too. I've suddenly surged into a new stage—midlife. Some days I'm still racing so hard, I don't recognize it or stop to be grateful for it.

Unless we are intentional, our life will continue on like the frenzy in those last few seconds before a buzzer signals the game show is over—and we'll miss what's most important in life's second act. Life keeps ticking away, and the number of boxes to check only grows. Get them graduated. Get them out of the house. Get the next promotion. Celebrate the big graduations, birthdays, and anniversaries. Take care of parents. Be present for grandchildren. And while we may long for a pause in our pace, the only pause that comes is hormonal, which can further complicate everything!

Keeping pace in the middle of the race is key to a solid finish. A racer doesn't slow down as they approach the finish. Midlife is our time to celebrate where we're at, contemplate what we've traveled past, and anticipate joyfully what lies ahead. Knowing our purpose in this race propels us to keep moving with both calmness and confidence.

I'd never title myself a runner. I've only finished one official race in my life: the Jingle Bell Run for Arthritis. Christmas music blared through the streets of Washington, DC. Runners wore red and green. Some were dressed as elves or wore Santa caps, and everyone wore bells on their running shoes. It was

barely forty degrees outside, but when you're running with hundreds of other people, the chill disappears.


A 5K wasn't like trying to run a marathon. But the energy around me inspired me to run at a much faster pace than usual. When I saw that finish line—though I was exhausted—I didn't slow down. With my goal in sight, I took off in a sprint.

God willing, there's so much life still ahead. We're not winding down—we're figuring out how to enjoy life. What if the attitude we take during these midlife years and beyond sets the tone for however many breaths we're allowed?

Popular culture has conditioned us to think negatively about aging. We're called "over the hill" by age forty. Even the term "middle-aged" is used more often for mockery than applause. The mention of another birthday elicits a comedic groan. It's as if we race to the midway point then question whether or not we're still in good enough shape to keep running.

But instead of listening to the near panic of those who notice their first smile line or invest in every new pricey product to stop signs of aging (if that were even possible), instead of assuming our best years are behind us, what if we use our hard-fought wisdom to change our approach? What if, rather than settle for aging gracefully, we decide to age *gratefully*, looking both behind and ahead with thankful hearts?

No, I'll never be the accomplishment-seeking, naive twenty-five-year-old I once was. But I'm grateful for that. What a gift to be alive right here, right now, with more decades worth of wisdom to inform my daily living. Though my physical body



**What if, rather
than settle for
aging gracefully,
we decide to age
gratefully, looking
both behind
and ahead with
thankful hearts?**

notices unwanted changes nearly every day (I give you chin hairs, temperature fluctuations, and gravity's pull), I can look ahead with joyful anticipation when I understand that midlife is a season to flourish. I hope that as you read, you'll be convinced to see midlife with fresh eyes (even if your vision now tops the list of things that have changed).

I don't know about you, but I wasn't comfortable in my own skin even before it sported its first wrinkle. Science tells us our skin starts to age at twenty-five.¹ Our brains start to age at twenty-four.² Some say the aging checklist countdown begins when our bodies become adult. We can either focus on those factors or focus on living. It isn't hard to imagine which approach brings more joy and satisfaction.

During the pages that follow, you'll find encouragement and inspiration to discover delight in midlife, later life, or anywhere in between. Aging is more than transitioning to comfortable shoes and monitoring the Weather Channel for rain. We don't slow down as we see more years behind us than ahead of us. We speed up. Not with the kind of frenetic flurry that characterized our twenties. Not like we're contestants on a grocery store game show, desperately accumulating possessions and experiences before time runs out. Instead, we run with purpose.

For some of us, the word *run* is now only metaphorical.

As our trust and faith in Jesus grow, so does our ability to thrive. Because we can look back on His faithfulness and look ahead with hope, we can move forward with greater confidence than ever before. For the next thirty days, let's explore what Scripture says about what it means to embrace aging gratefully.



The Secret to Flourishing after Forty

How to Praise as We Age

They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh
and green, proclaiming, “The *LORD* is upright; he is
my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.”

PSALM 92:14–15 (emphasis added)

For more than a decade, I lived outside of Dallas, Texas. The area was all new development—a region that had previously been family farms now boasted residential housing, a Chili’s restaurant, and a Walmart. Land that once grew crops and hosted cattle morphed into a proverbial concrete jungle. Mature trees were nowhere to be found.

When we moved into our new home there, the builder planted a tree out front. “Someday,” he told us, “it will provide lots of shade for the sunny front window of your daughter’s room. But until then, keep the blinds closed.”

The first year we had to use props and ropes to keep that little tree upright. Texas is windy in the spring. One giant storm with straight-line winds could knock out billboards and street signs. Our little tree would have to survive adversity before it would ever provide the promised shade.

Year after year my husband cared for that tree. When we moved out of that home, the top of the tree was almost as tall as my daughter's second-floor window. I recently saw a picture of that house online, and guess what? The tree is taller than the roof!

Now we live near Austin, in the heart of Texas Hill Country. Mature trees abound. We have a difficult time maintaining them. They grow quickly and without regular pruning can invade our neighbors' yards. The trees take over the roof, the fence, and anything else in their air space.

These mature trees are one of the reasons we love living here. Today as I look out at the beautiful oak in my front yard, I'm able to visualize and understand some benefits of aging I might have once resisted. Tiny, tethered trees don't have a lot to offer. But mature trees have an unmatched dignity and confidence.

What I see outside my window is impressive: a sturdy trunk, three main branches, each with multiple smaller shoots reaching into the air. Though it's December as I write this, leaves still cover the limbs. Oak trees in Texas don't lose their leaves until the spring. That's right—they flourish right through the winter.

As majestic as this tree is to the eye, I have to imagine that what I don't see is even more impressive. Some of the shallower roots peek through our grass and stretch a full six feet from the trunk. Underneath, there is an even more extensive root system to support this twenty-foot-tall tower and its way to becoming even taller.

The years behind me have allowed me to grow stronger. With solid grounding, I'm free to explore and use my gifts and walk in God's purpose for my life. In my twenties, thirties, and

beyond, I floundered internally. Like a sapling, I bent with the wind. I'm grateful God protected me and kept me tethered to Him.

Now, I feel sturdier. I can age gratefully because I know that the more years I've had to mature in Christ, the stronger I am to withstand the storms, stand tall, and flourish for Him.

We've all encountered evidence of trees whose shallow roots made them susceptible to the ravages of drought, pummeling winds, and vandals. How do we invest in the practices that ensure we're deeply rooted for this next season of life's journey?

As always, we take our best cues from Scripture.

God thought the tree metaphor significant enough to choose it throughout Scripture. Psalm 1 tells us the one who delights in the Lord will be like a tree planted by the river. In Psalm 92:12–15 we see the tree in the context of aging:

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."

What's a biblical tree's secret to aging well? How do they stay fresh and green, youthful, and strong? Earlier in the psalm and then again in verse 15 we find the answer: they praise the Lord.

That can be an important secret of our maturing too—developing deep roots so that we stay connected to our spiritual and emotional "water supply" and turn to praise God, who gave us the privilege of years.

Feeling down about growing older? Praise eases depression (Isaiah 61:3). Feeling restless or anxious, like there's something

missing or unaccomplished yet? Praise satisfies our souls (Psalm 63:5). Praise increases our faith and keeps our focus lifted higher—on God and His kingdom instead of the little world we’ve built around us. It urges our thoughts away from our culture’s misunderstanding of the value of aging and toward the only One worthy of a lifelong pursuit.

It’s easy to disparage advancing age. I grumble when my knees remind me my running days are long gone. I hesitate to tell my age out loud—not because I’m embarrassed but because it startles me. *Am I really that old?*

What if I turned every opportunity to recognize the fullness of my years into an opportunity to praise God? Could I whisper a prayer of thanks every time I see a picture of the younger me, thanking God for the lessons I’ve learned since then? What if I could wake up each morning and simply praise Him for a new day? The joy praise brings may snuff out those “I feel old” sighs.

Look at what Paul says about our need to praise in Hebrews 13:15–16: “Through Jesus, therefore, let us *continually* offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (emphasis added). May we continually offer our praise to God and view our maturity of years as the blessing God intended it to be.

Today I can be grateful that the roots of my faith, the trunk of my confidence, and the branches of my courage have grown to help me flourish.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, please help my heart to be grateful for the privilege of aging and the opportunity I have to continue to grow in and through you. Remind

*me often of the sturdy tree and the foundational work
you've done. Teach me to praise you continually.*

Aging Gratefully in Action

Commit to intentional praise each day. Stay rooted in praise as your whole self stays rooted in God. Choose a favorite worship song to sing, or declare your thanksgiving and admiration for God out loud while you drive, or whisper your praise to Him while you work. He is worthy of our praise, and praising Him as we age is key to flourishing.



Wisdom of Years

Age Is Not a Disadvantage

So teach us to number our days that we
may get a heart of wisdom.

PSALM 90:12 ESV

Isn't it ironic how we spend a significant portion of our youth anticipating our next birthday, only to reach some elusive number and wish for youth again?

As children, we corrected adults who dismissively captured age in whole numbers. “Excuse me—I’m nine and a half!” The teen years come, and we count the minutes until we can get behind the wheel or cast a vote. Sixteen, eighteen, twenty-one—they’re not just milestones, they’re rites of passage. For a while, happiness swells with more candles on your cake.

Only the young round up.

One day we stop counting years and start adding decades. Soon we have to check the county’s fire risk report before we dare make the number of candles accurate on that birthday

cake. When someone asks our age, we don't intentionally mislead. We forget how old we are because—at some point—we stopped keeping track.

I've often wondered why Scripture instructs us to count our days. It's hard enough to tally the years. In Psalm 90:12 we read, "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (ESV). A heart of wisdom sounds great, but is there an app for that counting part? Math is harder than it used to be.

When I think of counting days, I picture a prisoner marking slashes on his cell wall to track the passing time. This can't be what the psalmist meant. Surely the intended tone isn't one of doom and dread or one more day (or year) stuck in the cell. We're not checking off dates like finished items on a to-do list.

The origins of Psalm 90 are unique. The chapter is titled "A prayer of Moses the man of God." It's the only song of Moses found in the Psalms. The lyrics recount the greatness of God. Moses remembers how powerful God has shown himself to be and how He had led His people out of slavery and toward the promised land.

Then Moses juxtaposes how God counts time versus how we do. Poetically he compares God's infinite greatness with a human's short life span. In Psalm 90:9–10 he writes, "For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away" (ESV). (All the octogenarians I know would probably remind me that, regarding life span, this was written in a different era. And not for Americans. Moses rounded down.)

Moses had wandered around the wilderness for decades, and in fact, he was 80 before he began his trek, and he died at 120! He toiled. He labored. He suffered. And yet he sees the insignificance

of anything we do on earth, any years we exist, when compared to God and His bigger picture of time and space.

But if the message is that God is big and endless and I am not, how does tracking my life in even smaller increments help? Perhaps He wants us to remember that our journey through this life is precious. Unless we make extra effort to count, consider, and pay attention, we'll miss the moments as we number the years.

I grew up in Pennsylvania. Every summer we took at least one trip south to Florida. By the time we hit Virginia, I knew exactly how far it was to the South Carolina line because of the advertising efforts of a rest-stop-meets-tourist-trap called "South of the Border." It was tacky and culturally insensitive. But their billboards were hard to miss and even harder to forget. You'd see signs for their snack bar and gift shop at least a hundred miles before you'd see their signature giant sombrero.


As a child I diligently watched for these signs along the highway. Each featured the official spokesman, Pedro, touting the virtues of making a stop. Thirty miles to clean restrooms! Ten miles to ten-dollar T-shirts! Pedro says, "You need candy!" Each amplified my anticipation. Isn't this what most of us do on road trips? We focus on the milestones and not the mile markers.

Now that I'm older, I see how I have the same tendencies when traveling through life. I focus on calendar days that are full, not empty. I too often live from event to event, missing what's in between. I'm tempted to focus on the next holiday weekend, vacation, or celebration and miss the everyday opportunities God grants me. What would it look like to treat weeknight dinners, trips to the grocery store, or walks to the mailbox like God-ordained moments?

Maybe this is why Moses encourages us to enumerate the

ordinary. When we count only the milestones, we miss those mile markers—the minutes, the hours, and the days that characterize our lives. Granted, it may have driven my parents mad

if I'd read every little green sign along the highway. Yet how much do I miss because I'm dreaming about what's fifty miles ahead?



**When we count
only the milestones,
we miss those
mile markers—
the minutes, the
hours, and the days
that characterize
our lives.**

The apostle Paul reiterates Moses's message in Ephesians 5:15–16 when he says, “So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days” (NLT). It's easy to get so caught up in life that we miss out on living it for God and

His kingdom. We steward our time well when we see it as a gift God's granted us to use for Him.

Today I can be grateful for the freedom to live each day—both the ordinary and the extraordinary—to the fullest for God's glory. I can be thankful for each milestone and mile marker I've passed, knowing they are gifts from God. I can find rest in the knowledge that He holds each day, each month, and each year securely in His hands.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, help me see you in the day-to-day, minute-to-minute life I lead. Father, show me how to make the most of each day for your kingdom and glory. Help me not to overlook the ordinary but to look for your beauty in it.

Aging Gratefully in Action

Being fully present is difficult in our era. It's easy to get caught up in other worlds through our entertainment and our media. But being in the moment, especially when we're with others, is a beautiful gift. Younger generations chronically struggle to put down their screens and engage, but we are not immune. If you find yourself spending a lot of time staring at electronic devices, consider these suggestions. Try implementing a no-phones-at-the-table rule for meals, take a screen sabbath on a Saturday afternoon, or, if you're married, talk to your spouse about creating a screen-free hour to connect before bed. The nonstop availability of distractions can keep us from fully experiencing some of the most meaningful moments of our lives.

Aging. Grateful. Those are two words you don't usually see in a sentence together. Culture tells us that aging involves wrinkles, extra pounds, arthritis, and graying hair. And its answer to aging's many problems? Fight back!

And we do, wearing ourselves out physically, emotionally, and spiritually in the process. But the Bible speaks about aging differently—that each year is a gift from God.

Aging Gratefully offers humorous encouragement and sincere hope for this stage of life. In 30 devotional readings, Heather Creekmore points each day to something you can be thankful for in your current season. She guides you in prayer, giving words to your practice of gratitude, and then gets you moving to put your thanksgiving into action. You'll find reasons to laugh out loud, reminders to live abundantly, and a solid rationale for why *aging* and *grateful* really do belong together.



HEATHER CREEKMORE speaks hope through her books and podcast, inspiring women to stop the treadmill of comparison and start living in the depths of God's grace. Heather and her fighter-pilot-turned-pastor husband, Eric, have four children and live in Austin, Texas. Connect with Heather at comparedtowho.me.

JS020

RELIGION / Christian Living / Women's Interests



**Our Daily Bread
Publishing®**

COVER DESIGN BY PATTI BRINKS
COVER PHOTO BY RAWPIXEL

ISBN 978-1-64070-232-5



9 781640 702325