

the ONE YEAR®
LifeVerse
devotional

365 STORIES of remarkable people
and the Scripture that changed their lives

JAY K. PAYLEITNER



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The One Year Life Verse Devotional

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To Alec,
Randall,
Max,
Isaac,
and
Rae Anne



I humbly
pray
you've
seen
God's Word
reflected
in your
old dad's
life.

acknowledgments

This is not one of those books created in a vacuum by a single writer tapping on a keyboard for hours uninterrupted. Lots of folks added to this devotional in lots of ways. The artistic touch of Justin Ahrens helped me initially to visualize the life verse concept. Marketing guru Dan Balow was the first to suggest it would make a great One Year product. Chris Hudson helped me get my arms around the scope of the project. At Tyndale, Jon Farrar and Ron Beers immediately caught the vision and offered great encouragement. This past spring, I spoke at Tyndale's Thursday morning chapel, which morphed into a celebration of life verses. Webmasters Andy Keyes and Josh Force designed the user-friendly Web site into which poured scores of stories. Two on-air interviews with radio legend Wayne Shepherd helped thousands of listeners see the value of knowing and sharing their life verses.

Thanks also to Debra White Smith, Marita Littauer, and Jerry Jenkins for encouraging colleagues to share their stories. A special shout-out of gratitude to the proficient and gracious executive assistants in this world like Sue, Sherry, Francine, Norrine, Daphne, and Tracy, who helped me gather stories from Josh, Jim, Shirley, Chip, Patrick, and Skip. Contributing invaluable research and "wordsmithing" were Carol Smith, Patricia Lorenz, Kathy Pride, Linda Walstrom, Scott Kirk, and Randall Payleitner. The gifted Sue Taylor polished every paragraph and helped me plow through some roadblocks to get to the final manuscript. And, of course, thanks to my bride, Rita, for tolerating since high school this quixotic and mercurial creative.

Is there a verse from the Bible that has special significance for you?

Maybe it's one particular piece of Scripture that God has used to inspire, challenge, or rescue you at a turning point in your life. Maybe it's a verse you learned as a child from a Sunday school teacher or a grandparent. Or one you recite each morning to begin your day.

In these pages we have assembled 365 short stories of real people and the powerful verses that helped define their lives. Many of the names and verses will be familiar: Dr. James Dobson, Chuck Colson, Josh McDowell, Joni Eareckson Tada, Stuart and Jill Briscoe, Randy Alcorn, and others. Other names you won't recognize, but the heartfelt stories will stay with you for a long time.

We've included a variety of prominent present-day theologians, authors, leaders, and visionaries, as well as their counterparts down through history. Selecting the right "life verse" for past heroes of the faith, such as William Booth, Rosa Parks, and John Bunyan, was cause for debate, and we examined their writings, orations, and courageous actions for clues. We pray that the portions of Scripture we chose to illuminate the lives of these men and women will help you to understand who they were and what they can still teach us today.

In *The One Year Life Verse Devotional*, you'll read the words of present-day sports figures, musicians, clean comedians, and gifted artists who are eager to share the stories of their faith journeys and their favorite Scripture verses. We've also included a number of biblical figures.

The term *life verse* is not found in any Bible translation with which I'm familiar. But it's fascinating to consider the impact of God's Word on those who lived it. For example, did you know that John the Baptist actually quoted the Old Testament prophecy about himself (see John 1:23)?

Some days you'll read first-person testimonies from the individual contributors. Some days you'll read stories gathered through hours of research. You may

notice that some verses and contributors appear more than once, because the truth is, God's Word cannot be put in a box.

The research and writing and the contact with hundreds of willing partners have been gratifying. As I gathered these stories, I've seen how God can use a passage of Scripture to heal a marriage, save a child, launch a ministry, transform a continent, rebuke Satan, and announce the coming of the Savior of the world. The power of God's Word can still surprise me, even though by now, I should expect to see that power again and again. After all, in Isaiah 55:11, God promises, "It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it."

Of course, every believer should dig deep into the entirety of God's Word. Every word of Scripture—from Genesis to Revelation—has something to say specifically to you. Still, there is something very satisfying and enriching about uncovering one small portion of the Bible and claiming it as your very own. When you find it, let us know. I encourage you to go online to www.oneyearlifeverse.com and share your story.

JAY K. PAYLEITNER

a lifetime of thoughts and words

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be
pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Psalm 19:14

I have prayed—and often spoken right out loud—Psalm 19:14 every morning for more than forty years. My Sunday school teacher once asked every teen in the class to choose a life verse and to quote it the following Sunday. I quite arbitrarily chose this passage from Psalms and was challenged by my teacher to quote it every day for the rest of my life. I decided to give it a try.

For a young teenager who had lost his father in a coal-mining accident just a few years before, that small portion of Scripture had a profound impact. Young men, as you know, are often driven by thoughts and words, and every morning, here I was, taking a moment to ask God to guide mine. That's probably why I do what I do today.

Not surprisingly, the verse continues to work on my heart and mind. Recently, in the middle of a sermon (after preaching some 9,600 sermons), God reminded me of that passage, and I stopped short of saying what I was about to say. Once again, I was redeemed by God.

Dr. Stan Toler, senior pastor of Trinity Church of the Nazarene, Oklahoma City, is the author of more than sixty books, including *God Has Never Failed Me, But He's Sure Scared Me to Death a Few Times*.

strength for the remnant

“In that coming day,” says the LORD, “I will gather together those who are lame, those who have been exiles, and those whom I have filled with grief. Those who are weak will survive as a remnant; those who were exiles will become a strong nation.” Micah 4:6-7

I’ll be forty-nine in the near future, but I found this Scripture passage some years ago during a Bible Study Fellowship class on the Minor Prophets. Pastors frequently preach on the first five verses of Micah 4, and I only skimmed them, as they were already familiar, but when I read verse 6, I was brought up short.

I was born prematurely. As a result, I have cerebral palsy and therefore qualify to be counted among the biblically lame. This has moved my life out of the usual social pattern, and I frequently feel like an exile. So I went to my concordance and looked at other verses about God’s “remnant” and his view of them. What I learned made me eager for the day this promise is fulfilled. I still have difficulty reading Micah 4:6-7 aloud without tearing up. I do not know what the Lord will permit me to accomplish in my lifetime, but this passage is marked to be read at my memorial service. I wish I had known it much sooner in life.

Heidi Dru Kortman, a Calvin College alumna, apprentice student of the Christian Writers Guild, and member of American Christian Fiction Writers, has published poetry and devotionals. A book of devotionals for the mobility handicapped is in progress.

a world of problems

[Jesus said,] “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Coming to know the Lord at thirteen was a turning point in my life. The adolescent years were filled with deep grief and turmoil for me as our family faced life with my father, who was an abusive alcoholic. Each day as I was learning everything I could about a heavenly Father, I had to face my worldly father. There were times when the alcohol and abuse seemed too much to bear, and those days of trial and tribulation were extraordinarily difficult.

One day while reading my Bible, I came upon John 16:33. I remember weeping as I experienced a sense of the Lord’s presence. At that very moment, God revealed to me that through him I could have peace in all things and that although we live in a fallen world, I could have joy through him because the world has no power over God. He has overcome the world. He is the conqueror, defeater, and deliverer, and he reigns over all things. That Scripture verse carried me through my high school days until I left home to find healing. God used it to give peace to my heart during my toughest days.

Oh yes, and this is no small thing: My earthly father now serves the God who reigns over the world. He never misses church on Sunday.

Tina Samples is a music therapist, worship minister, speaker, singer-songwriter, pastor’s wife, and mother of two boys.

perfect, permanent love

No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:39

I was the youngest of three children and a perennial class clown, so I don't think anyone really expected much from me. In first grade I was assigned to the reading group that ate paste. In my mom's ninetieth year, she finally confessed that when I was in high school, she had prayed for a C on my report card as a sign that my life wouldn't be a total loss. During my senior year, a gray-haired math teacher finally called my bluff: "Kevin, when are you going to stop playing that game of yours—the game in which you're the best at being the worst?" Her insightful words didn't completely snap me out of it, but at least they got me thinking.

It wasn't until ten years into my walk with God that I stopped playing that game. I knew my mom loved me. (That's her job.) I knew my wife loved me. (Thank you, God!) I even came to realize that the old math teacher had loved me. Still, I was so afraid of getting things wrong that I couldn't do anything right. You might say I spent my youth rebelling against my legalistic tendencies. That's when I heard a radio talk-show host speak about grace. *Whoa! God loves me—no matter what?*

Since then, I've come to enjoy flaunting my imperfections for an entirely different reason: They point to the only One who actually is perfect—Jesus.

Dr. Kevin Leman is a psychologist and speaker and the author of more than twenty-five books, including *The Birth Order Book*, *Sheet Music*, and *First-Time Mom*.

an alaskan garden

“Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. . . .” This is what the LORD says: “You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again.”

Jeremiah 29:5, 10

The move to Alaska for my husband’s job was exciting at first. But after three years, the novelty of the Last Frontier had definitely worn off! I cried into the night for family and friends thousands of miles away and struggled with overwhelming feelings of isolation. Then God whispered, and I opened my Bible to Jeremiah 29. I am not an Old Testament scholar, but I understood that these are words written to the people of Judah during their captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah told them to plan on staying a long time, build homes, and even make peace with their new community.

I read the passage again. This was my home? For seventy years? That’s not exactly the time frame I had in mind. But when I read that word—*home*—a sudden peace filled me. God heard my cry and promised I would be “home again” someday. But in the meantime, my husband and family needed my best, and I would not let them or God down.

I still don’t know if “home” will be the homeland of my youth or the homeland of my soul, in heaven. But I do know that God sees me in Alaska today. The God of Abraham, the God of my fathers, is still as mighty and able to move people and make miracles as he was then. As for me, I have a garden to plant!

Jennifer Von Bergen, writer, keeper of goats, chickens, and rabbits, and homeschooling mom, lives in Alaska with her husband and four children.

living. moving. being.

In him we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:28, NIV

One morning in a theology class, my professor gave an assignment: “I want you to pray and meditate on a verse from Acts 17 for a month.” Of course, my classmates chose a variety of verses, but I settled on Acts 17:28. I remember faithfully praying, *In him I live and move and have my being*, every morning. Living with these words brought fresh insights throughout each day. As I wrote my reflections at the end of the month, I realized the words of that verse would stay with me until the end of my days here on earth. That was more than fifteen years ago.

Since that time I have experienced many of life’s sorrows and joys, from the loss of loved ones to the births of four grandchildren. I have returned to this amazing and rich portion of Scripture many times during these years—especially when I have been discouraged—for it refocuses my attention on who I am and more important, on *whose* I am.

Emily Tipton Williams, a violinist, Stephen Minister, and retreat leader, is the author of *Restless Soul*, a novel.

rock, rescue, and refuge

Praise the LORD, who is my rock. He trains my hands for war and gives my fingers skill for battle. He is my loving ally and my fortress, my tower of safety, my rescuer. He is my shield, and I take refuge in him. He makes the nations submit to me. Psalm 144:1-2

In spring 2004, I went on my first international mission trip—one in an Islamic country (which is obviously hostile to Christianity). As I read the Bible one morning, I came across this psalm and was struck at the power of these verses. God is my Rock, who prepares me for war. And here I was, a bona fide rookie, smack in the middle of a war zone.

I'd always pictured God as my Rock to help me stand strong against the storms of life, but that morning I learned he is also the Rock I can use as a hiding place to obscure my actions from the enemy. Militarily speaking, large rocks make good cover for concealing troops as they advance or fortify their positions. With agents of the evil one continually around us, how we need God to protect us from their sight!

Psalm 144 became my meditation for the six days we were in the country, and I watched in wonder as God opened doors and met our team's needs, using a people who do not call him Lord. Foremost, I gained a new appreciation for overseas missionaries who rely on him every day to clear their paths and cover their tracks as they serve in such countries. Only with God as their Rock can they advance the cause of Christ in such hostile territory.

Gary Chevalier is a pastor of worship arts and founder of the Transforming Worship Conference for Small Churches.

desire to obey

If a Christian woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him.

1 Corinthians 7:13

Things had not turned out the way we hoped. Our ten-year marriage seemed beyond repair. We both had failed. Divorce looked like the only solution, and we separated.

One Sunday I sat alone in an adult class, knowing our divorce would be final in a few days. As the teacher taught from 1 Corinthians 7, I read along from my Bible. I paused at the verse about staying together if the husband consents. My heart said, *No, I don't want to do that. I like the relief from conflict that separation brings.* But desiring to obey God, my will said, *Yes, God, I'll do that if you ask.*

Several days later my husband said, "Do you think we should try again?"

Without hesitation I said yes.

After reuniting, we heard a popular song on the radio claim, "I'm the happiest girl. . . ." My husband asked, "Are you?" Today I can answer a second yes. God's work is so apparent in our lives. I laugh at my husband's quips. We delight in exchanging private, knowing glances about our grandchildren's antics. Together we marvel at a hummingbird family nesting in our urban ficus tree. God has abundantly blessed our forty-four years of marriage through his word in Corinthians. I'm thankful that I said yes to God first, and then yes to my husband.

Peggy Morris is a school counselor and the author of *Character Education: Three Minutes a Day*.

saved and **called**

God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 1:9

You might think that as the cofounder of Awana I would take 2 Timothy 2:15 as my life verse. As any Sparky can tell you, the word *Awana* is an acronym for that verse: “Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed.” But the truth is that before we can have workmen, we need to bring people to a point at which they are both saved and called.

For as long as I can remember, my passion has been to see people accept Christ as their Savior and then listen carefully so they can fulfill the ministry to which God has called them. When Lance Latham, pastor of the North Side Gospel Center in Chicago, and I started Awana, we didn’t know what we were getting into. But we were clear on one thing: We were both individually called to create an environment in which kids could and would come to know Christ.

Staying true to your call is paramount. So many ministries and Ivy League universities were founded on a clear calling from God, but they have since lost their focus. That breaks my heart. At Awana, we pledge to recruit only people with a clear calling and passion for reaching kids.

Art Rorheim is the cofounder and president emeritus of Awana Clubs International.

trusting through the storm

When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. Psalm 56:3

As the sirens blasted, I hurried through the daytime darkness to seek shelter. Afraid? Yes, I was very afraid. I was driving alone, and a category F4 tornado was getting closer. I gave myself a pep talk to calm my nerves and keep my head together. It didn't work. As I took a deep breath, I became filled with the words When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. I sought shelter in the bathroom of a downtown building and curled up under a chair. As the tornado passed directly overhead, I felt as if the air was sucked right out of me. With the exception of my bathroom refuge, the entire building was damaged. Every neighborhood and all of downtown was hit hard. Lives were lost, and many people were injured.

Before, during, and after the storm, I must have repeated that verse a thousand times. In my personal terror and as I comforted others waiting for medical help, the words never left me.

Many storms of life have come my way since that day, and I find comfort and strength in God's words as each one approaches. Though I cannot see through the darkness, I can feel his presence with every wind that blows.

Anna Marie Warren is a worship leader, speaker, writer, and team member of CelebrateMoms.org.

If you would like to read more about some of the people included in this book, you can find additional information from the following sources:

Lord Shaftesbury (February 5)

<http://www.lastdaysministries.org/articles/contract2.html>

<http://www.victorshpherd.on.ca/Heritage/earlof.htm>

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Jonathan Edwards (March 15)

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Amy Carmichael (July 6)

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Abraham Lincoln (July 26)

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Dante Alighieri (July 30)

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Catherine Marshall (August 20)

<http://www.christianbook.com/html/authors/107.html>

www.intouch.org/myintouch/mighty/portraits/catherine_marshall_146663.html

Jim Elliot (August 22)

http://www.intouch.org/myintouch/mighty/portraits/jim_elliot_213678.html

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www.swordofthelord.com/biographies/TorreyRA.htm

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George Frideric Handel (September 3)

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Hudson Taylor (September 26)

<http://www.christianbook.com/html/authors/107.html>

<http://ctlibrary.com/4176>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/special/131christians/htaylor.html>

http://www.intouch.org/myintouch/mighty/portraits/hudson_taylor_213660.html

Fanny Crosby (September 28)

http://www.intouch.org/myintouch/mighty/portraits/fanny_crosby_213693.html

Martin Luther (October 8)

www.intouch.org/myintouch/mighty/portraits/martin_luther_213632.html

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Keith Green (October 23)

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Polycarp (November 7)

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Genesis 4:7 . . . April 6
Genesis 9:13 . . . July 13
Genesis 15:5 . . . February 8
Genesis 15:6 . . . August 1
Genesis 16:13 . . . July 18
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1 Samuel 3:8-9 . . . November 14
1 Samuel 3:11-13 . . . November 2
1 Samuel 12:24 . . . January 16
1 Samuel 13:14 . . . September 15
2 Kings 20:5 . . . February 7
2 Chronicles 5:13 . . . May 25
2 Chronicles 7:14 . . . May 1
2 Chronicles 20:12 . . . February 28
2 Chronicles 31:21 . . . February 24
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Job 38:1-2 . . . February 10
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Psalm 46:10 . . . June 20
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Psalm 51:12 . . . June 15
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Psalm 57:1-2 . . . February 9
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