

The ONE
YEAR[®]
MINI



FOR
Busy
Women



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The One Year Mini for Busy Women

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Hopes and Dreams

We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Ephesians 2:10

As the clock rounds midnight and another year closes, a new year rushes to greet us. A new 365 days are waiting to fulfill our hopes and dreams. In this new beginning, we can receive each day like a gift waiting to be unwrapped. Discover the possibilities by becoming more aware of God's great love for you.

God has made you unique, unlike anyone else in history. You are a precious individual, with gifts that no one else can offer. You are a masterpiece of the master Creator, who longs for you to become the person he made you to be.

Does this new year hold new beginnings, a new path toward fulfilled dreams? Only you can set your goals and chart your course. Write down your intentions and hang them on your mirror. Talk to God about your hopes, for God's desire is to bless you as you live out the dreams he has placed in your heart.

Unwrap the gift of the present by living your dreams!



Out of the Icy Rut

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

2 Corinthians 5:17

I was entranced. As I rose quietly above the snow-covered treetops, the serenity of the Rockies captivated me. The air was crisp and clean, the sky was blue, and the snow glittered like a dusting of diamonds. Skiing down each powdery run was an adventure.

This time, about halfway down, my skis locked up. They were pointing straight down . . . in a rut. My brain kept telling my legs to turn, but my skis did not respond. Then I fell. My equipment kept racing to the bottom of the next hill, so I was surprised when my skidding, snow-covered body came to a rest on a mogul below.

In our lives, we must decide to make every day count. If we do not intentionally choose to enjoy each day, our lives too quickly get stuck in a rut.

We are made new in Christ. Through him, we are able to enjoy life fully. Point your path away from life's ruts. Dream big, and make the most of every day.

Break a new trail.



Joy Is a Choice

This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.
Psalm 118:24

Toddlers are interesting little creatures. It doesn't take much experience with two-year-olds to realize that their main concern is with themselves. "Me" is everything, and "me" is great until something happens that wasn't the toddler's idea—such as a diaper change or being buckled into a car seat.

As adults, we sometimes have similar dysfunctions. Life is great until it doesn't go our way. When we don a bad attitude in response, we encounter a dilemma. Life is meant to be celebrated, with each day lived as a gift. Yet most days we act as if we have nothing at all to be glad about.

God gives us each day, asks us if we will rejoice in it, and leaves the choice to us. The outcome of each part of our lives comes down to a daily choice of attitude. If we choose joy and thankfulness, each day becomes a priceless treasure. If we remain focused on ourselves, our world will close in on us. Take up the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enjoy the gift of today.

Choose joy today!



Who We Are

I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. . . . You are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you.

Isaiah 43:3-4

The middle-school years are a hard part of growing up, for a young teenager's self-worth is based on the opinions of others. I was extra tall and gangly, with a metal-mouthed smile. I tried to wear the right clothes and not be too smart, but I was never in the "in" crowd.

So much of what we do is based on what we imagine others want from us. However, all that we strive to be and do in pleasing others is still rarely enough.

God takes us "as is" and loves each of us for who we are. We can do nothing to make him love us more or less. God knows that we are not perfect, but to him, we are precious, honored, and loved.

Feast on the richness of God's love today. Allow this truth to saturate your life: God loves me for who I am. His perfect love will transform your days.

God loves us for who we are.



Larger Loving

Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.

Ephesians 5:2

Some people are easy to love, such as the huggable baby on the television ad who coos and smiles, never has a dirty diaper, and never makes a mess. The perfect people we conjure up in our minds are easy to love, but in real life, no one is perfect.

Sometimes it is hardest to show love to those we really love the most. At work and in our social lives, it is easy to put on a smile and a mask that hides our true selves. When we get home and take the mask off, our true selves show through. Our families often get the raw edges of our hearts, the rough places that we hide in public.

It is hard to love others on our own. Yet when we are tired, disappointed, frustrated, and harassed, we can draw on Jesus' love to help us love our families. God's strength and love are enough, but we have to ask for his help.

The only way to love others is to receive love from God. Ask Jesus to enlarge your loving heart today!

Grow in love.



Hard-to-Love Neighbors

Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Romans 12:10

Daily life allows us to cross paths with many types of people. Though most of us prefer being around fun-loving people, we all encounter people who make life much more difficult. Be it the quick-to-judge neighbor with the perfectly manicured lawn or the coworker engrossed only in bettering her bottom line, certain people offer criticism freely and belittle others who don't measure up.

Following Jesus by honoring others instead of being quick to criticize is unnatural for humans. However, we can learn to honor others by allowing them to be themselves and by putting ourselves in their shoes before we criticize. If we are not perfect, how can we pass judgment on others?

With the help of God's love, we can encourage our children to uncover their God-given interests without forcing our own ideas on them. We can learn to see our neighbors through God's eyes. God will help us to love our spouses even when they come home late or leave their socks on the floor. Genuine love and honor can replace self-interest and bring delight and joy to each day.

God helps us to love difficult people.

Hunger and Thirst

Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."

John 4:13-14

I love to cook meals that take longer than six hours to make. My old friend the Crock-Pot, filled with simmering garlic, Italian dressing, and a pot roast, makes an irresistible dinner. As it cooks all day, hunger also builds, and snacking to suppress the hunger doesn't satisfy. It remains until we eat the pot roast, the source of the wonderful Crock-Pot aroma.

We humans are born to be dissatisfied . . . until we identify the source of our need. We can search our whole lives for something to fulfill our longings, but we often don't know what we're looking for. Different days bring different ways of attempting to satisfy the thirst—shopping, church activities, relationships. Our culture encourages indulgence in more money, success, and power. But the satisfactions of having more things, perfectly controlled relationships, a position on the church board, or a completely filled schedule are only temporary.

Jesus created our thirst, and only he can satisfy it.

Jesus satisfies our longings.



Broken Arm

The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles.

Psalm 34:17

One night after dinner, our oldest son fell from the monkey bars while playing in our backyard with his brothers. His fall initiated a grueling string of events: rushing to the hospital, struggling through X-rays, and enduring a two-hour emergency surgery for a severe break through his elbow. Life changed in an instant.

Life often brings suffering. It is tough to deal with the unexpected pains of life, and as we endure, we cry for help.

As parents, it is hard to see our children suffer. It must also be tough for God to see us, his children, living through pain. We are fragile, but he is powerful. When we feel that we cannot endure, he strengthens us.

The Lord hears us when we call on his name. Our Lord God knows our pain, grief, and sorrows, and he promises to rescue us in his time. God is as close as the air we breathe.

Recognize God's presence in everything you do. Call out to him, and he will draw near. Ask him for help, and know that he is with you. God's presence will bring you peace.

Take courage in God's presence.

Intentional Thankfulness

Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Every single day, we are faced with a choice. We can see the things we have to be thankful for, or we can focus on what we don't have and say, "Poor me!"

It is so easy to fall into the self-pity trap. Discontent can arise over anything—the big house we don't have, the nicer vehicle, better figure, longer vacation, better job, or more attentive loved ones—when we compare our lives with others'.

Instead of a pity party, God wants us to experience thankfulness in all circumstances. *All circumstances!* That means that even when we think we need something more, we must practice being thankful for what we already have.

Each day is a gift! Break free of the self-pity trap. Concentrate on what you have been given rather than on what you don't have. Make this a great day by counting your blessings. You will receive the incredibly fulfilling gift of joy!

Then take your real needs to the Lord, who promises to provide everything we need.

Choose to give thanks.



April Fools

Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent; with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent. Proverbs 17:28

April Fools may be a fun day, but playing the fool isn't usually a good idea. Years ago, when I was pregnant with our first child, I remember feeling quite vulnerable since I felt as big as a house. I will never forget two comments that I heard that year. One neighbor matter-of-factly stated that she knew we would have a boy because my behind was so large! Ouch! A well-meaning relative said loudly, "Well, how's the big momma doing?" I wanted to melt away into my maternity clothes.

As women, we have an amazing ability to speak before we think. Surely we all make comments that we don't really mean, and we try to catch the words on the way out. Open mouth, insert foot—the damage has already been done. Thoughtless words can be very hurtful.

Solomon writes that the fool's downfall is her mouth! Everyone knows a fool by the way she talks. Resolve to speak only after you've considered the other person's feelings. Put yourself in that person's shoes and speak words of life and encouragement. Bless the world with your words; ask Jesus to help you build others up.

Think before you speak.



Eagles' Wings

Those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. Isaiah 40:31

God had a good sense of humor when he created earth's animals. Some animals inspire wonder, such as the chameleon, with its ever-changing colors. We are amused by the antics of monkeys and chimpanzees, and the lion and the cheetah arouse awe. Eagles are able to soar effortlessly, far above the earth. I'm convinced that our souls were made to soar through the heavens and rise above it all.

In order to soar, we must be willing to spread our wings. It is difficult to take the risk, but we won't know how high we are able to fly until we try. The eagle does not soar by any effort of its own, but by riding the thermal currents. We can only soar when the Lord provides the lift under our wings.

Whether you are trying a new hobby, reconciling a rough relationship, or making some other new venture, put your trust in the Lord. He gives us wings to fly and loves to lift us up. His love will carry you higher than you dreamed possible!

Trust God for strength.

April 3



Pruning Time

I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.

John 15:1-2

Gardening is a favorite part of my life. I love to dig in the dirt, get my hands dirty, and plant a scene of beauty from materials that don't seem beautiful at all. For a garden to flourish, dead plant material has to be pruned in early spring.

Nearly every plant in our extensive gardens needs some sort of pruning. Each plant answers the question of how much to remove by its growth. In early April, new leaves and flower buds are forming and can easily be seen. The best pruning cuts off the dead matter where the growth stops so that the live part can keep growing, unhindered.

In John 15, Jesus talks about the master Gardener's pruning. God prunes off every bit of deadness in our lives so that we may continue to grow and reach our full potential. Though the pruning is never pleasant, the results in greater growth always make it worthwhile.

God guides our growth.