

The ONE
YEAR®

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FATHER

Daughter

DEVOTIONS

Jesse Florea
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PROMISES, PROMISES

January 1

WELCOME to a new year. *Woo-hoo!* Time for new beginnings, new calendars, and new promises. Some people call them New Year's resolutions. And they're not such a bad idea. Sometimes they inspire people to try new things, learn a new skill, create new habits, or develop new disciplines. But many, many times these promises are quickly broken, disappointing the promise makers until they forget about it. One researcher found that about eight out of every ten people who make New Year's resolutions break them before the month is over. *Time* magazine once published a list of the most commonly broken resolutions, which included

lose weight and get fit;
eat healthier and diet;
get out of debt and save money;
spend more time with family;
be less stressed; and
volunteer.

Sounds like a good list of promises. So why do many people break them? The most common reason for failure is that people think too much about failing. Weird, huh? By focusing on the consequences of failing, instead of looking at the benefits of success, people fail. In addition, most people try to accomplish these goals through individual effort. They don't pull in a friend to help, and they don't rely on God.

Jesus made an important point about our futures and our promises. In Matthew 6, he ends with these words: "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries."

Today might be the start of a new year filled with new resolutions for you and your dad. If so, that's terrific! Pray that this year will draw the two of you closer to God and each other. Just remember that seeking God is not just a resolution . . . it's a lifelong pursuit. Go for it together!

DADDY-*Daughter Time*

Does your family make resolutions? Talk together about some things you would like to achieve this year. Figure out how you might work together and encourage each other in those pursuits.

Now look at your list of resolutions and see how it compares to Matthew 6:33-34. Are there any resolutions you could make that are more important than seeking God this year? Make a plan on how you'll grow closer to him. (This book can help!) And don't forget to ask God to help you both.

WHAT'S THE WORD?

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today. MATTHEW 6:33-34

FOOTBALL fans are pretty excited this time of year. College football bowl games are being played, the National Football League play-offs are under way, and the Super Bowl is a few weeks away. Each game is important, but to some people they can become too important.

A credit-card company once produced a series of television commercials about a unique group of football fans. They had been to every single Super Bowl. One commercial featured a man named Larry. The Super Bowl was so important to him, he said, “I’ve missed weddings; I have missed babies being born; but I have no intention of missing a Super Bowl—ever.”

A 2011 newspaper article featured a story about Ben. He loved his football team and had a ticket to the final regular season game. A win meant his favorite NFL squad would make the play-offs. Ben couldn’t wait for the game. But the day before the contest, Ben’s wife went into labor. Their baby was born on the day of the game. Where was Ben? Right there with his wife and baby girl, Aubrey. His team made the play-offs without Ben cheering them on. He had no regrets, calling Aubrey’s birth “a better surprise.”

Two men . . . two different priorities.

God told his people long ago how important family is. He told parents to love him, then pass their knowledge of his love to their children every day (see Deuteronomy 6:1-9).

Later in that same book, God explained that each family had a choice: to choose life or death, blessings or curses, for their family. By choosing life and focusing on him first, God said it would help future generations to live with him. The choices we make about our families now can affect generations of family members to come.

DADDY-*Daughter Time*

How do others know if your family is important to you? List what evidence people can see in your everyday life that shows your family is a priority. Discuss if you would be willing to miss an important family event for something else. What would that be?

Pick a father you know who shows that his family is a priority. Together, choose a little card and “prize” to share with him, honoring his commitment to his family.

WHAT’S THE WORD?

Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. . . . Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! . . . This is the key to your life. DEUTERONOMY 30:19-20

BAD TIME FOR A DEAD BATTERY

January 3

HAVE you ever been in a car when the engine won't start? The key turns—*click, click, click*—nothing. Usually that happens at the worst time. Late for school. Late for work. In a hurry to get somewhere.

Many times when a car won't start, the problem is a dead battery. It's a common issue with an easy solution. To make a dead battery come to life, all you have to do is connect it to a battery with plenty of power. Maybe you've seen two cars with their hoods up attached by jumper cables. By linking the batteries together, the weak battery gets the juice it needs to fire up the engine.

King David once had a dead battery of sorts. After God's prophet confronted David for serious sins and enduring the death of his baby boy, David realized his heart had not only drifted away from God . . . it was on empty. No spark. No energy. No power.

So what did he do? He asked God to “jump-start” his heart. David repented, asked for forgiveness, and acknowledged his bad choices (see Psalm 51). He didn't sugarcoat things with God. He honestly admitted his faults. But he didn't just beat himself up. He realized God had an everlasting battery that could recharge him. So David humbly asked God to do for him what he couldn't do for himself.

Purify me.

Wash me.

Give me back my joy again.

Let me rejoice.

Remove my guilt.

Create in me a clean heart.

Renew a loyal spirit within me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation.

God answered David's humble, honest prayer. God reignited David's spark, and the battery of David's heart became so strong that he is remembered as a man after God's own heart. Now that's real cranking power.

DADDY-*Daughter Time*

Ask your dad to pop the hood and show you where the battery is in your family car. Ask him to explain how the battery is vital to the car, to the computer in the car, to the radio, etc. If neither of you is familiar with how a car battery works, go online and search for videos to learn about it together.

Are there things sapping your energy? Is your battery empty? Pray together a prayer similar to David's. Ask God to show you what you need to recharge with his help. He'll do it!

WHAT'S THE WORD?

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

PSALM 51:12

January 4

DADDY'S HOME!

HAVE you heard the saying “Home is where the heart is”? That seems especially true when you’re a father who has been away from your family for a long time. Some dads travel a lot for their jobs. They can be gone days or weeks at a time. Military fathers might be gone even longer—for over a year. Maybe that’s what makes the reunions of military families so special. It’s not hard to find videos online of returning soldiers who surprise their children by getting home earlier than expected. By the time the video ends, most people find themselves dabbing tears from their eyes.

What is it about these scenes that makes them so powerful? Maybe it’s the fact that the wait is over. The soldier has safely returned. They are, simply and beautifully, together again. Reunions like these melt our hearts, but they absolutely thrill God. His heart longs for families to be together, for hearts to be turned toward each other, especially between dads and their children.

Did you know God talked about this in the Bible? In Malachi, God told his people that another prophet would be coming soon to do something very special: “His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers” (Malachi 4:6). God really cares about the love between a father and his daughter! He wants dads to see their girls as special treasures, worthy of their time, attention, and love. He wants girls to turn away from other distractions in life to honor and respect their dads. It’s beautiful and powerful when God’s people have their hearts turned toward home.

DADDY-*Daughter Time*

Do you ever have to spend long amounts of time away from each other? If so, how do you spend time together when you’re reunited? Search for videos on the Internet that show military dads surprising their kids. Pick a favorite and discuss what makes it so special and interesting to you.

Plan how you might set aside some special daddy-daughter time the next time you have to be apart. Think of ways to surprise each other with a little note, poem, or other little gift. When you give your gift, start by saying something like “I want you to have this to show you that my heart is with you, because . . .” and explain what you’ve missed most about the other person.

WHAT’S THE WORD?

His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. MALACHI 4:6

YESTERDAY'S INTERESTS

January 5

WHAT did you receive for Christmas this year? We're only a handful of days into the new year, but chances are a majority of your Christmas presents are already being unused or ignored. It happens every year. Something you wanted so badly winds up being boring way before you thought it would be. Even your all-time most-loved, well-used toys and gifts eventually lose their shine. They break. You outgrow them. And soon your favorite gifts are discarded.

Ask some adults what their favorite toys, videos, music, video games, or hobbies were when they were younger. You'll get some fun answers. Occasionally, you'll find someone who discovered a lifelong passion from that time in his or her life. But more often you'll get stories of nearly forgotten toys. Disney's *Toy Story* movies show this. The plots often center on the toys' desire to be played with versus an aging child who's discovering new interests. First Corinthians 13 explains this natural part of growing up. The writer, Paul, points out that when we mature, we naturally think, talk, and play less like children. "When I was a child," Paul writes in verse 11, "I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things." It's not that being young is bad. But as we mature in our love for God, his Word, and each other, we'll naturally see the world in a different way, and that change will impact how we live.

So next time you find yourself less interested in a toy or game you used to love, think about this passage. When we make God most important in our lives, the joy we find in other things will be replaced by the joy and love we feel for him and others!

DADDY-*Daughter Time*

Daughters, make some guesses about what your dad's favorite gifts, toys, and games were when he was your age. Were you right? Which things still interest him? Now share with him some of the things that used to be your favorites but aren't anymore. Any recent Christmas gifts on that list?

Pray together and encourage each other in gaining clarity to let go of things that aren't as important as your relationship with God and others.

WHAT'S THE WORD?

When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. 1 CORINTHIANS 13:11-12

January 6

YOU WANNA WHAT?

HAVE you ever realized as you were speaking that your brain and your tongue weren't working together? Sometimes a misfiring synapse can cause you to say something really silly. Other times it allows words to escape that you immediately regret. Our words can be powerful—for good or for bad—especially in our families.

One evening, after a particularly long, tiring day, a dad realized he must've left his brain at work. He arrived home to eat dinner with his family. His wife had other commitments, so Dad served the meal and sat down to eat. However, his five-year-old started complaining. Usually not a picky eater, she fought against eating her dinner, which was usually one of her favorites. The dad tried again and again to explain that she was complaining about something she usually liked! Finally, his patience wore thin. He stood up, raised his voice, and said, "Do you wanna *fight* me about *this*?" What he *meant* to say was "Do you wanna *argue* with me about *this*?" But his brain and his tongue weren't cooperating. His daughter stared silently, too stunned to speak. Her fear, which was not the response Dad was expecting, forced him to rewind the words in his brain. Once he realized what he had said, his daughter's response melted him. He faced a choice: apologize for his carelessness, or pretend that her stubbornness caused him to lose his temper.

He apologized.

Today, his family laughs about this story, knowing that what he said and what he meant were two different things. The Bible warns fathers not to aggravate their children (see Colossians 3:21). Some versions of that verse say not to "embitter," "provoke," or "make your children resentful."

The words a dad uses can build up or provoke his children. We have to be willing—dads and daughters—to apologize and make things right when our mouths and minds don't work together. There may be nothing more important than for a family to learn repentance, grace, and forgiveness with each other.

DADDY-*Daughter Time*

Daughters, now would be a good time to share if you have any past hurts that have not been settled between you and your dad. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:26 that we shouldn't let the sun go down on our anger. It's better to deal with these hurts as soon as possible.

Dads, ask God to give you a heart willing to say, "I'm sorry." Without your willing heart, some hurts can last far too long.

WHAT'S THE WORD?

Fathers, do not aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged.

COLOSSIANS 3:21

BUT I WAS DOING IT FOR GOD!

January 7

IS it possible to do the wrong thing for the right reasons? The answer's not as simple as you think. For thousands of years, people have blamed their sins on having good intentions.

Of course, sometimes our disobedience is blatant. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve basically had one rule: Don't eat the fruit on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What'd they do? Ate the fruit. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. The serpent hissed—well, probably. But other times in the Bible, people tried to reason away their wrongdoings, saying, "I was doing it for God."

- Abraham was promised more descendants than all the stars. But he was getting old and didn't yet have a child. So he started a family with his wife's servant. That did not go well.
- God told Moses specifically to *speak* to a rock to make water come out for the thirsty, desert-wandering Israelites. But whether out of anger or pride, Moses *struck* the rock. That did not go well, either.
- Then there's the disciple Peter. When Jesus was arrested, Peter, wanting to protect Jesus, drew a sword and cut off a servant's ear. (Jesus quickly healed the man.)

What do these stories show us? Our good intention to do something for God doesn't make a *wrong* action *right*. God is not honored when we sin, no matter our intentions. Just like it says in Psalm 139:23-24, we should ask God to test our motivations and to lead us "along the path of everlasting life."

DADDY-*Daughter* Time

The popular radio drama *Adventures in Odyssey* featured a great game that showed this concept. In the episode "Rights, Wrongs & Reasons," Whit, Connie, and Jenny discuss real or pretend situations and see if they agree if there's both a right action and a right motive. If you'd like to hear that show, you can download it at whitsend.org. Just search for "Rights, Wrongs, Reasons."

Our goal in life should be to honestly assess when an action and a motive are both right. If not, you may end up doing the right thing for the wrong reason or the wrong thing for the right reason. Then there's the wrong thing for the wrong reason—but that should be obvious.

WHAT'S THE WORD?

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. PSALM 139:23-24