



*Good Morning, Lord...  
Can We Talk?*



A YEAR OF SCRIPTURAL MEDITATIONS

CHARLES R.  
SWINDOLL

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*Good Morning, Lord . . . Can We Talk? A Year of Scriptural Meditations*

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## INTRODUCTION

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**B**EFORE YOU GET STARTED on this journey with me, let me tell you what prompted me to write this one-year devotional book. I'm a real believer in spending some time every day doing what's important rather than doing what's urgent. I've made that a priority in my life.

My wife and I have been married since June of 1955. Both of us were young, and neither of us knew much about marriage—or life, for that matter. But we knew this for sure: we really loved each other, and we couldn't bear the thought of spending our lives with anyone else for the rest of our years. So we married young and not only grew up together but grew closer from one year to the next.

That didn't just happen; it was the result of setting aside time for each other. Time to listen—really hear each other. And also time to talk—to open up and speak our minds. Those times also included time to think—to think about what the other person was saying and, equally important, what the other person was feeling. And then there were times we'd pray with and for each other. Occasionally, there would be laughter—loud, spontaneous laughter—other

times, there would be tears. Those times together have become the defining moments of our day.

We've spent intentional time connecting almost every morning throughout our marriage. We began our day with each other when our children were infants, while they were growing up, after they married and left the nest, and even when grandchildren started to fill our home with their delightful lives. To this very day, we still sit together every morning, mainly just to be with each other, to listen, to talk, to think together. And the result? A depth of love for each other and a true understanding of each other that only time together like that through the years can provide. Every morning we're there—together. We put whatever is urgent on hold as we address only what is important.

This has enabled us to cultivate a bond in our relationship that is both meaningful and unbreakable.

So when I sat down to write a book that might help others choose to do what's important instead of what's urgent, I realized that this would be my opportunity to address the kinds of things that Cynthia and I have been spending every morning talking about over the course of more than sixty years. The only difference is that you'll be spending these important moments with the Lord, listening to Him and talking with Him as you seek to develop a relationship with Him that is deep—hopefully deeper than it has ever been before.

I'd like you to think of these brief times with Him as very special yet comfortable, relaxing opportunities for the two of you simply to meet together. That's what prompted me to give this book its title, *Good Morning, Lord . . . Can We Talk?* As you meet and talk, I hope you will take time to listen well. It's amazing how much you can glean from quiet moments together, especially when it's the Lord who is speaking to you!

I'm grateful for the sensitive presence and assistance of my longtime friend Mark Tobey, who served as my editor as I was shaping my thoughts for this book. I knew from his help with other literary projects that he had just the touch I would need when trying to squeeze ideas into just the right words. Thank you, Mark, for the time and commitment you invested in these pages. Thank you for caring so much that each line be crafted well.

I should also express my thanks to many of my friends at Tyndale House Publishers for encouraging me to write this book and for their assistance in accomplishing the task. I am especially grateful for senior acquisition editor Jon Farrar, as well as Erin Gwynne, Kara Leonino, Jennifer Schindler, and Stephanie Rische, who have helped take the grind out of such an extensive literary goal. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each of you.

Now that the book is in your hands, I hope it will become your close companion. Just as Cynthia and I have set aside time each morning to be together, I hope you will do the same with the Lord through these pages.

Let me urge you not to miss one day in the year ahead as you read and think, ponder and pray your way through the book. Do your best to make each meeting with the Lord the defining moment of your day. Don't hurry; take your time as you meet quietly with Him, sharing what's on your heart, and then listen carefully as He responds to you—not just at that moment, but at random times through the rest of your day.

Hopefully, by the end of the year, you and He will have cultivated a bond in your relationship that is both meaningful and unbreakable.

*Chuck Swindoll*  
Frisco, Texas





JANUARY 1

# *What's God up to in Your Life?*

*Romans 8:28*

OUR WORLD HAS become a large, impersonal, busy affair. Social media and the technological age have caused us to become alienated from each other. We're connected but not in community. No longer do neighbors visit across the backyard fence, chat in the driveway, or catch up on the kids at the mailbox. Those days are long gone. Our well-manicured front lawns and meticulously landscaped perimeters have become modern-day moats that keep barbarians at bay. Hoarding and flaunting have replaced sharing and caring. It's like we are occupying common space but have no common interests, as if we're on an elevator with rules such as: "No talking, smiling, or eye contact allowed without written consent of the management."

Painful though it may be for us to admit, we're losing touch with one another. The motivation to help, to encourage, yes, to serve our fellow human beings is waning. People have even observed crimes in progress but refused to help so as not to be involved! Our foundational values are getting lost in these confusing days. And yet it is these things that form the essentials of a happy and fulfilled life.

Listen to God's vision for our lives:

We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

ROMANS 8:28

Maybe you've never stopped to consider what "His purpose" is. Briefly put, God is committed to *one* major objective in your life: to conform you into "the image of His Son." One of the many ways I've seen Him do that is through interaction with others.

He's up to something by placing you in a small group at church with a family with a special needs son, or forcing you to work closely with an office manager whose life is coming unglued. Those interactions may be awkward, even unpleasant at times, but they could be what God's up to in forming you into the image of His Son.

Consider today how you might join God in that purpose. Make yourself available as a dispenser of His kindness, a giver of His grace to someone who might need both.

JANUARY 2

# *A Servant, Not a Celebrity*

*Mark 10:45*

**E**VER WONDER if Jesus would have agreed to star in His own reality TV show? Let's allow Him to answer in His own words:

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many. MARK 10:45

No mumbo jumbo. Just a straight-from-the-shoulder response. Jesus came to be a servant. Being a celebrity wasn't in His DNA.

Nothing is more refreshing than a servant's heart and a giving spirit. This is especially true when such Christlike qualities are displayed in a person tagged as celebrity. Years ago, my wife and I attended the National Religious Broadcasters convention in Washington, D.C. That year one of the main speakers was Colonel James B. Irwin, a former astronaut who was part of the Apollo 15 crew who had walked on the moon. That made him famous. He spoke of the thrill connected with leaving this planet and seeing it shrink in size. He mentioned watching "earthrise" one day . . . and thinking how privileged he was to be a member of that unique team. On the flight back to earth, it hit him that many would consider him an international celebrity because of what he'd experienced.

Humbled by the awesome goodness of God, Colonel Irwin shared his true feelings, which went something like this:

As I was returning to earth, I realized that I was a servant—not a celebrity. So, I am here as God's servant on planet Earth to share what I have experienced, that others might know the glory of God.

I love that! God allowed this man to break loose from the small cage of Earth, to reveal to and instill in him the high value of becoming *a servant, not a celebrity*.

Caught up in the fast-lane treadmill of the twenty-first century—making mad dashes through airports, meeting deadlines, homeschooling high-achieving kids, and coping with the stress of people's demands mixed with our own high expectations—it's easy to lose sight of our primary calling as followers of Christ. But let's not forget our goal. Instead, let's focus on becoming servants, not celebrities.

JANUARY 3

## *The Way up Is Down*

*Matthew 20:21, 25-28*

JOURNEY BACK WITH ME for a moment to one of the many scenes that demonstrated just how ordinary Jesus' disciples were. What makes this account interesting is that mother of two of the disciples. She's Mrs. Zebedee, wife of a Galilean fisherman and mother of James and John. Her bold request still makes me smile:

In your Kingdom, please let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left.

MATTHEW 20:21

Isn't that typical? Can't you just picture this bold Jewish mother taking over the meeting and venturing her whopping request? She wanted her sons to have prominent places in the new kingdom startup. Now don't be too tough on Mama Zebedee. She's proud of her two sons . . . obviously! Her motive was probably pure. But the occasion presented a teachable moment Jesus used to show what *greatness* looks like in God's eyes.

Jesus said:

You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.

MATTHEW 20:25-28

My friend and ministry mentor, the late Howard Hendricks, often said: "The church doesn't need any more leaders—what the church needs today is *followers!*" I wholeheartedly agree.

In God's Kingdom, the way up is always down. Next time you call a meeting and feel tempted to sit at the head of the boardroom table, consider sitting somewhere in the middle. You'll not only model Christ's example of humility, you may create a teaching moment of your own.

## How's Your Attitude?

*Philippians 2:3-4*

I LOVE THE STORY OF a sea captain who, while navigating his ship through a storm, found himself on a collision course with what he thought was a large vessel in the distance. He ordered the approaching vessel to alter its course ten degrees south. The reply came back: “Alter *your* course ten degrees north.” Incensed, the captain shot back, “Alter your course ten degrees south. This is the Captain! I am a battleship!” The reply came back: “Alter *your* course ten degrees north. This is ensign third class. I am a lighthouse!”

It's the *attitude* that is most important. We can choose to *preach* ourselves and pull rank and risk a shipwreck of all our relationships. Or we can choose to avoid disaster, realize there are some things we simply do not know, and humbly alter our course.

Perhaps the finest model of humility, other than Christ Himself, was that young Jew from Tarsus who was radically transformed from a strong-willed Pharisee named Saul to a bond servant of Jesus Christ called Paul.

It's possible you have the notion that the apostle Paul rammed his way through life like a fully loaded battleship at sea. Blasting and pounding toward objectives, he was just too important to worry about those who got in his way. Frankly, when he was *Saul* that pretty much summed up his approach. So, what happened? He met the Savior—and that changed everything . . . especially his attitude toward others.

Take a moment to reflect on Paul's advice:

Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

That's more like it!

Do you know that your attitude today could very well determine if someone around you resists God's invitation to bow before Him in repentance? Maybe it's time to stand down and defer rather than stand up tall and pull rank. Perhaps this would be a good opportunity for you to reconsider your approach to the situation you face today. Before you make another move or say another word, bow before the Lord in prayer.

Ask Him to make you more like Paul than Saul.

## Who's on First?

*Colossians 1:15-16, 18*

**I**N MANY CHURCHES, Christians tend to get so caught up in a success-and-size race that the primary calling of following Jesus gets lost in the journey. We have skidded into a pattern where the “haves”—the most influential or financially successful individuals in life—and not the “have-nots” call the shots. Truth be told, it is difficult to *follow* when you're used to being out front leading the pack.

Maybe I need to clarify what I mean. In the body of Christ, there is one and only one Head. Christ Jesus is Lord. Take a moment to reflect on these magnificent words:

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. . . . Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-16, 18

No human being dare take that position. A man named Diotrephes, mentioned in 3 John 1:9-10, attempted to do so and was openly rebuked by the apostle. Diotrephes's account is a warning to anyone who desires to become the “church boss.”

It may be a board member, a pastor, a teacher, a musician, or a former officer or former pastor in a church. No matter who, the Diotrephes mentality has no place in the church. Diotrephes wanted to be first. But that place is already taken in the body of Christ—and in the home and in the marriage and anywhere else where Christ is named and ordained to be the rightful leader. Only Christ is the Head. All the rest of us are in the class Jesus modeled: *followers*.

I urge you to bow before the Lord and ask Him to examine the attitude of your heart today, especially if you're in a place of leadership within your local church or ministry. Be willing to admit your secret ambition to be first and then humbly surrender to the authority of Christ. Trust me: everyone among whom you serve will be grateful for your change of heart.

JANUARY 6

## *Where the Real Power Resides*

*1 Corinthians 2:1-5*

**T**HE GREAT APOSTLE PAUL was just like you and me. He had a love for God blended with feet of clay. Great passion . . . and great weakness.

The longer I thought about this blend, the more evidence emerged from Scripture to support it. Read Paul's words to the Corinthians:

When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

I CORINTHIANS 2:1-5

"Aw, the guy is just being modest," you answer. No, not when you compare these words with the popular opinion of Paul in his day:

For some say, "Paul's letters are demanding and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speeches are worthless!"

2 CORINTHIANS 10:10

Clearly the apostle Paul struggled with human weakness just as you and I do. He didn't have it all together—he wasn't perfect—and (best of all) he didn't attempt to hide it! He admitted to his friends in Corinth that he was weak, fearful, and even trembling when he stood before them—and that he relied completely on the Spirit's power. I admire such transparency. He didn't want the people he served to continue to trust in their own resources. He wanted them convinced of the power and provision of God.

Feeling powerless in your own weakness? Frustrated by your inability to bring something to pass? Follow Paul's example. Embrace your weakness and put your trust in the Holy Spirit. That's where the *real* power resides.

JANUARY 7

# *An Enduring Mercy*

*1 Timothy 1:12-14*

**E**VEN TOWARD the end of his life, the apostle Paul had not gotten over the great mercy he had received from Christ:

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him, even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus.

I TIMOTHY 1:12-14

The longer Paul served Christ, the more generous and gracious he became. He never recovered from the mercy he had been shown by the Lord. In fact, it transformed him from a rigid, rule-demanding Pharisee into a humble and gracious servant of the Savior.

How often I hear from older believers something like this: “That’s just who I am. It’s how I was raised. I’m too old to change now.”

How sad. That was not Paul’s experience. The mercy and kindness shown to him by the Lord at his conversion made him a different person. And the older he got, the more tender mercies mellowed his life and generosity marked his ministry.

When he picked up his stylus to pen a note to young Timothy, his beloved disciple who would one day succeed him in ministry, his message in his sixties remained just as compelling as it was decades earlier: *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work.*

I love that. No mention of retirement or the prospect of spending his remaining years chilling at a Sinai desert resort. Not Paul. He never recovered from the mercy he received from Christ.

The question is, “Have *you*?”