



DEVOTIONS

for a well-tended heart



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flourish

DEVOTIONS FOR A WELL-TENDED HEART

MIKE BEAUMONT & MARTIN MANSER





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Flourish: Devotions for a Well-Tended Heart

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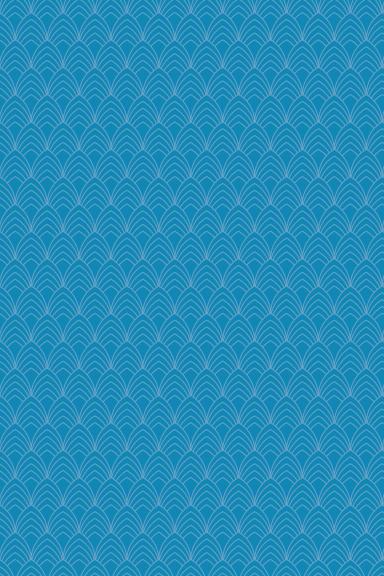
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The godly flourish like leaves in spring.

PROVERBS 11:28





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Mew Beginnings

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.

The old life is gone; a new life has begun! 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

THERE ARE FEW who aren't moved by a newborn baby. Perhaps it's their freshness, or helplessness, or the fact that everything seems so perfect. Little wonder they can make us think, If only I could make a brand-new start!

At such times we need to remember the Bible's promise that we can—because when we trust in Jesus, the old life really has gone, and a whole new life begins!

So here you are, beginning this book of devotions and perhaps longing for a new beginning in your relationship with God. Such beginnings can't happen by self-effort or self-improvement, but only with the Holy Spirit's help (Romans 8:26).

If you haven't yet been "born again" (John 3:3), today is a good day to ask Jesus to bring that about. But if you have, remember that you can keep enjoying this new birth by constantly being "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

And remember, too, that even if you've made a mess out of your life or find yourself in a dry place, God can always give you a fresh start—again! Don't listen to the devil's accusations or his lies—listen instead to the promises of God's Word.

Resolve to let a song of worship well up within you today as you take hold of this new beginning with your Lord. With him, what has been does not need to shape what will be! Believe that today.

The one sitting on the throne said, Look, I am making everything new!" REVELATION 21:5 MAIDEN PINK Dainty, fringed maiden pink flowers create a beautiful ground cover that deer don't bother but bees and butterflies love. They're native to Asia and Europe.

THE GOD

Who is Eternal

All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King,
the unseen one who never dies: he alone is God. Amen. 1 TIMOTHY 1:17

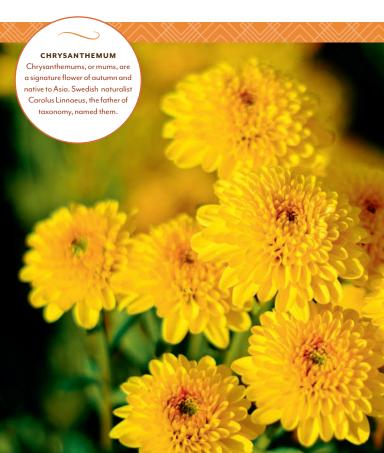
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONFUSED by all those dates stamped on food in stores? "SELL BY..."; "USE BY..."; "DISPLAY UNTIL..."; "BEST BEFORE..."—phrases designed to give you the freshest of food, but oh-so-confusing at times. Or have you witnessed seeing the latest technology sitting alongside the heavily discounted previous model, now so clearly out of date? What a fast-changing world we live in!

In light of this, it's incredibly reassuring to remember that our God is "the LORD, the Eternal God" (Genesis 21:33). In other words, he has no "SELL BY" or "BEST BEFORE" date; there is no new model due out soon that will replace him. He is eternal! This not only means he is without beginning and without end—for that in itself might be rather boring—but also that he is unchanging and unchangeable, yet at the same time always up to date and ever new.

And because God is eternal, he shows eternal love (1 Kings 10:9), gives eternal blessings (Psalm 21:6), offers eternal life (John 3:16), and rules an eternal kingdom (Daniel 4:3). Yes, everything about him is eternal. Remembering this makes such a difference in life.

Today, don't be small minded or short term in your thinking. Your God is eternal—and so are his purposes for you. Thank him for that and ask him to take you further along the path of those eternal plans.

The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you. DEUTERONOMY 33:27



Knowing Christ

I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. PHILIPPIANS 3:10

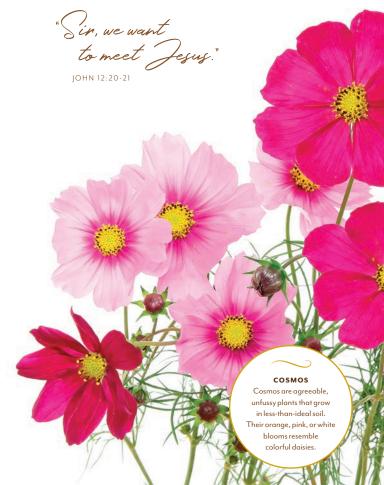
WE ALL HAVE DEEP LONGINGS, some of them known only to ourselves. Paul's deepest longing was known by everyone: It was simply to know Christ. Yet didn't he already know him? Oh yes! But his desire was to know him better and better, even (especially!) when life wasn't going well.

When Paul wrote Philippians 3:10, he wasn't participating in a joyful worship service or a happy midweek group with friends; no, he was in jail. Most of us would have wanted to escape so we could get on with life, but Paul stayed right where he was, confident that Christ was there with him. In fact, wherever Paul was, he knew that Christ was always present, so he simply kept focusing on his Lord.

The trouble for many of us is that our spiritual perception quickly gets blurred when the kids start acting up, or the cake gets burned in the oven, or the car won't start, or the money won't stretch. But that's when we simply need to stop—and activities such as personal daily devotions and weekly corporate worship force us to do that. They give us a clear vision of Christ once again so we can press on to knowing him better and trusting him more.

Don't settle for anything less than his presence, right where you are. Whatever you are facing, it can't be worse than suffering in prison for your faith! Reset your focus on Christ, for it is only in knowing him that we can also experience the power of his resurrection.

Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said,



The Helpen

The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. ROMANS 8:26

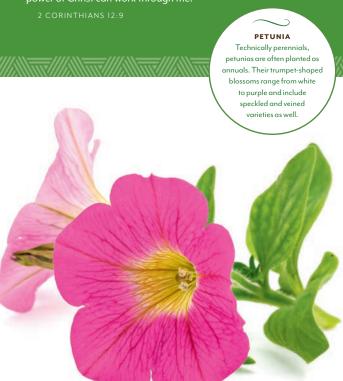
"CAN I HELP YOU?" How often has someone asked you that question when you truly needed assistance, but you simply replied, "That's fine—I can manage"? Or maybe later on a friend heard that you had needed help and inquired, "Why didn't you ask me?" But you brushed her aside, explaining, "I didn't want to trouble you." For many of us, talking like this is a way of life.

Unfortunately, we give similar answers to God as well. When the Holy Spirit offers us help, we say, by our actions if not by our words, "I can manage, thanks!" But as Christians, we shouldn't respond to God in such fashion—because Christians *know* they need the Holy Spirit's wisdom, guidance, comfort, and power to experience the abundant life Christ promised.

Paul learned this lesson the hard way. He had always been an independent guy, able to stand on his own feet. So God had to knock the independence out of him. Paul went through many hardships as a Christian (2 Corinthians 1:8; 11:21-29), but he recognized these things happened so he would stop relying on himself and learn "to rely only on God, who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9). Perhaps this is why we find so much emphasis in Paul's letters on the ways the Spirit helps us. He had learned he couldn't do life on his own.

The Holy Spirit still wants to be our Helper, but there is a condition: We must acknowledge our weakness! Only then can he come with his strength, just as Jesus promised.

"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.



Always Beside You

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. PSALM 23:4

THERE ISN'T ONE OF US who likes going through hard times. Given the choice, we would certainly prefer a smooth and comfortable journey through life. Yet at some point, we will face illness, or pain, or bereavement, or marital challenges, or financial problems, or family strains . . . the list could go on. And even if we were to somehow escape these common struggles, we would certainly face death one day.

Yet in light of these challenges, God makes a promise—a promise to always be there, to always be with us in every situation, encouraging us in our difficulties, comforting us in sorrows, strengthening us when we are weak, helping us in times of need.

David went through some dreadful experiences on his journey to fulfill his calling to be king, but he found God's promised presence in them all and discovered the truth of our opening text—a verse that has helped millions over the centuries. Like David, Paul faced all sorts of hardships on his journey to fulfill his call to be an apostle; but he, too, found God's promised presence in them all, discovering for himself that "my grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Whatever situation you face, remember that God really is beside you.

Take comfort in knowing that his presence will never fail to find you.

The LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.

DEUTERONOMY 31:8



Who Meeds Church?

The church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself. EPHESIANS 1:23

WHEN YOU ASK PEOPLE what they think of when they hear the word *church*, most replies will almost certainly involve a building associated with weddings or funerals or a weekly worship service.

But the Bible doesn't define *church* as either of those things! It describes the church as nothing less than a family: *God's* family, made up of all who put their faith in Jesus—a family that spreads through time and space; that cuts across boundaries of color, race, and class; and that bursts through even the barrier of death itself.

Of course, you don't have to be part of a church to be a Christian. Or do you? It seems the New Testament knows nothing of freelance Christians who drift here and there or nowhere. It knows nothing of Christians who claim to be part of "the" church without being part of "a" church.

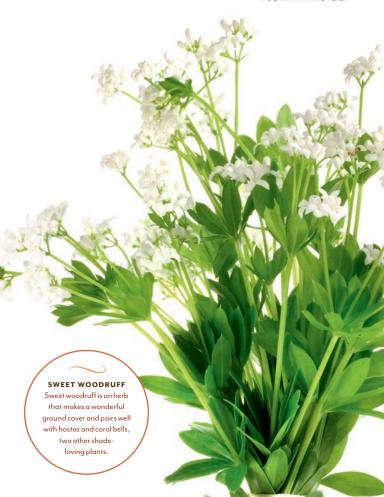
And once we start to see what church really is, we can see why. For it's not only God's family but also a living expression of Christ's body, with all his life, love, and power flowing down from him as head to all the members. And that's why church is the sphere of exciting adventures with God and his people!

Don't neglect—and don't despise—the body of Christ. Resolve to be as committed to the church as he himself is. You need it—and it needs you.

All of you together are Christ's body,

and each of you is a part of it.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27



Rich in God

This same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:19

PROBABLY ALL OF US have moments when we think, I wish I had a bit more money. But how much more is enough? When does our desire for more stop? Yes, money is required to live, but focusing too much on money is a sure sign it's becoming our god.

Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money" (Matthew 6:24), while Paul warned that "people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:9-10). The Bible is not against money, of course. In fact, God often promises to provide for our needs, though not necessarily for our wants.

But the Bible also gives practical guidelines to help us keep money in perspective: It tells us to (1) get our money honestly, not through deceitful or shady practices; (2) use our money wisely by providing for ourselves and our family; (3) handle our money faithfully, understanding we're stewards, not owners, of what God has entrusted to us; and (4) share our money generously, remembering that "'God loves a person who gives cheerfully'" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

If you want to be rich—certainly in spirit and soul—then take some time to reflect on whether these four principles are firmly embedded in your own life today. When they are, God will provide!

