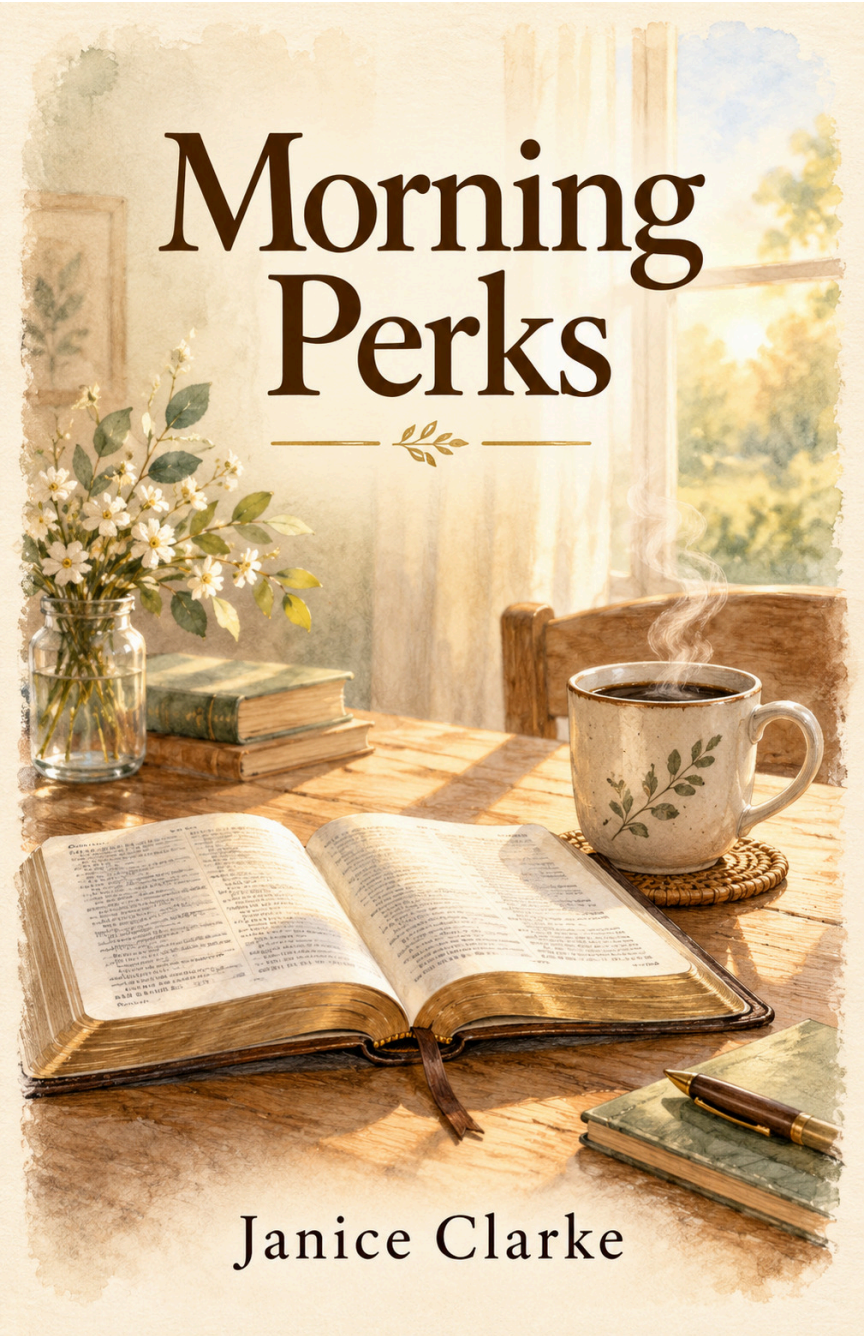

Morning
Perks
Janice Clarke

A Prayer to Begin Your Walk with Jesus

If you have never made Jesus the Lord of your life, you can begin today. He loves you, and you are invited to know Him personally.

Romans 10:9 tells us that if we confess Jesus as Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved.

This prayer is a way to express that faith. It isn't about saying perfect words—it's about sincerely turning to Him.

Lord Jesus,

I believe that You are the Son of God. I believe that You died for my sins and that God raised You from the dead.

Please forgive me for my sins. I turn to You and receive Your love and forgiveness. Today, I confess that You are Lord, and I surrender my life to You.

Thank You for saving me and giving me new life. Help me to know You, trust You, and follow You each day.

Amen.

Welcome to Morning Perks

As you begin your walk with Jesus, my hope is that these devotionals will encourage you along the way. Take time to read the scriptures, think about the reflection questions, and talk to God in prayer. You don't have to understand everything at once. Keep getting to know Him one day at a time.

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DAY 1

God's Soothing Presence

2 Thessalonians 3:16 (NLT, excerpt)

> Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation.

I remember going through a real trying time in my life… a time when I did a lot of crying… a time when I felt I could barely eat… a time when my mind was racing everywhere and I couldn't even seem to enjoy pleasurable things.

During that difficult time, I found comfort in reading the Bible. The Psalms were a lifesaver for me!

I would go to my computer and write… I'd copy and paste scriptures… I'd write my thoughts… I'd even write some poetry. I have many pages of journal entries.

Those journal entries became the beginnings of the booklet you are holding today.

I also found tremendous peace by listening to certain songs. Some songs, I would sing in my mind over and over. There was one particular song

called *Under the Blood of Jesus* that helped me get through this rough time.

As I would remember the lyrics of this song, I felt like the angels of the Lord were surrounding me.

The presence of God, my friends, is absolutely wonderful. Fear, torment, worry, anxiety can't stay in the presence of God. If you are experiencing any type of turmoil in your life, I encourage you to start listening to music with lyrics that glorify God… I encourage you to praise and worship God. Your whole being will be soothed.

God bless you today.

Reflection

What scripture or song has brought you comfort in a difficult time? Take a moment to remember its words and talk to God about what is on your heart.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for the comfort of Your Word and Your presence. You know the thoughts and worries that trouble me. As I read, pray, and worship, help me to turn my heart toward You and find rest in Your love. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 2

What Are You Hiding?

Psalm 119:11 (NLT)

> I have hidden your word in my heart,
> that I might not sin against you.

Usually when we hide something, we are hiding something negative, like a bad habit or an addiction. Or maybe you've purchased too many shoes and have them hidden in your closet! (LOL)

But here in Psalm 119, the psalmist is hiding something good: God's Word. He has hidden it in his heart to help him resist sin and live in obedience to the Lord.

We hide His Word in our hearts by reading it, meditating on it—taking time to think about what it means—and putting it into practice.

How do we know what's hidden in our hearts? Well, usually when a stressful situation comes along, we find out what's in our hearts by what comes out of our mouths. There's another Scripture that says, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34, KJV, excerpt). When you're in a long line-up, when your flight is delayed, or when somebody says

something nasty to you, you find out what's hidden in your heart by how you react—by what comes spilling out.

My encouragement for you today is to have your heart aligned with the heart of God. You need to have His Word hidden in your heart. When Jesus faced very difficult situations—people mocked Him, people spit on Him—how did He respond to these things? He said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34, NLT, excerpt).

Let's follow the example of Jesus. Let's speak His Word and have His Word hidden in our hearts, so that when we face difficult times, what comes spilling out is the love of God.

God bless you today.

Reflection

Choose a Scripture, or bring to mind one you already know. Take time to think about what it means. How can you take its truth to heart and put it into practice when you face temptation or a difficult situation?

Prayer

Lord, help us to hide Your Word in our hearts. Help us to understand it and put it into practice, so that we can overcome temptation and sin in our lives. Teach us to follow the example of Jesus, responding to difficult situations with Your love and forgiveness. May what comes spilling out of our hearts reflect You. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 3

Wonderful Gifts

Scripture reading

Matthew 7:9–11 (NLT)

> "You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? 10 Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! 11 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

When I was a little girl, one day it was announced over the speaker at school that there were puppies available for free. My Dad and I had already discussed the idea of getting a puppy. When I went home that day, I was confident that we were going to get a dog! I basically told Dad about the puppies and we went and picked one out. From what I remember, I did not have to beg him to get me a puppy… I didn't have to cry or plead… I knew Dad was willing and able to get me one. And that's exactly what he did.

I remember another time, when I was a teenager, that Dad and I went into a store. I tried on a

beautiful green coat. It was fairly expensive, but my father loved the way it looked on me. And you know what? We came out of the store that day with the coat!

If my father loved to give me wonderful gifts, how much more does our Heavenly Father want to give wonderful gifts to His children!

Our heavenly Father knows how to give wonderful gifts to His children. I believe some have a false impression of God. They may think He wants to spoil all the fun. From what I've heard, without God, people often get themselves in a big mess. I believe God wants to protect people from much pain, heartache and sorrow. God wants you to do what you were born to do! He wants to set you free to be who He called you to be! He will give you what you need to accomplish His purposes in your life.

God bless you today.

Reflection

How does remembering your heavenly Father's goodness change the way you bring your needs to Him?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me and knowing what I need. Help me to trust Your goodness and bring my requests to You with confidence. Give me what I need to do what You have called me to do. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 4

He Will Never Abandon You

Scripture reading

Hebrews 13:5 (NLT)

> Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

When I was a little girl, my father would take me to the playground. I loved swinging in the swings! We would stay there for a while, but eventually the time would come where Dad said we had to go home.

I didn't want to go home.

My father would play a trick on me – he would hide. When my eyes would scan the playground, I couldn't see my father anywhere. Panic. I'd starting running in a mad tear towards home.

Then my father would come out of his hiding spot and I would see him. Phew! He was still there. Guess what I would do next? I would run right back to the playground area again!

When I think about this situation in my life, I think about the fact that although we may feel alone, God will never leave us or abandon us.

Many people today have been abandoned by their earthly fathers. When they come in contact with a heavenly Father, they experience difficulty because they are afraid that He, too, will leave them. We can be totally assured that God is always with us and He will never leave us. We will never be fatherless. Even if our parents have deserted us, God is always there close by.

Psalm 27:10 is a beautiful verse depicting the heart of Father God:

> Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.

Psalm 27:10 (NLT)

This is a great comfort for those who have been rejected by their natural parent(s).

I could chuckle when I think of my actions when I saw my father come out of the hiding spot. I would run right back to the playground again! Aren't we just like that with God? He wants us to follow Him and we want to go our own way. Thank God He doesn't give up on us! Just like my father was right there waiting for me, so the Father waits for us.

I can't help but think about the *Parable of the Lost Son* (Luke 15). This son had wasted his inheritance and realized that he ought to return home to his father's house.

> And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming.

Luke 15:20 (NLT, excerpt)

His father had been waiting and watching for his precious son to come home!

As Christians, we need to understand how loving, gracious, merciful and compassionate our heavenly Father really is!

God bless you today.

Reflection

When have you felt alone? How does God's promise never to abandon you encourage you to trust Him?

Prayer

Father, thank You that You will never leave me or abandon me. Help me to trust Your love even when I feel alone. Draw me close to You, and give me a willing heart to follow where You lead. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 5

Let Him Take Your Burden

Scripture reading

Matthew 11:28–30 (KJV)

> Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

It's not unusual in Newfoundland to wake up in the morning with a lot of snow in your driveway. I remember one occasion when our snowblower wasn't working properly. It would have been a struggle to get rid of all that snow with just a shovel! Then our neighbor came by with his giant tractor and cleared out the driveway.

I think that's a great illustration of the way God is… He is so good at clearing our paths… making rough places smooth and crooked places straight.

Some of us are still out there trying to do it all on our own with our little shovel. Let Him take your burden. Let Him bear the load. Let Him clear the way.

God bless you today.

Reflection

What burden are you trying to carry with your own “little shovel”? Take a moment to name it and bring it to Jesus.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for inviting me to come to You when I am weary. You know the burden I am carrying. Help me to bring it to You, receive Your help, and learn from You. Teach me to rest in Your care as I take the next step. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 6

My Comforter

This is a comforting scripture:

Isaiah 51:11 (KJV)

> 11 Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

When I was a girl, my grandmother White, Dad's mother, made me a comforter. It was covered with flannelette and filled with wool. In the deep cold of winter, I could cover myself with this blanket and be warm… cozy even.

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit our Comforter.

> But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 14:26 (KJV)

Now I have my Comforter wrapped around me. He lives in me. The Holy Spirit is my helper and comforter.

God bless you today.

Reflection

Where do you need comfort today? What hope do you find in this promise of gladness and joy?

Prayer

Holy Spirit, thank You for being my Helper and Comforter. You know the sadness and burdens I carry. Help me to receive Your comfort and hold on to the hope You give. May I also share Your kindness with someone who needs encouragement. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 7

God Watches Over Us

Scripture reading

Psalm 121:7–8 (NLT)

> 7 The Lord keeps you from all harm and watches over your life.
> 8 The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.

As parents, there are times when we need someone to watch over our children. We want someone we can trust—someone who will pay attention to their needs and keep them safe. It brings us peace to know that our children are in good hands.

Isn't it wonderful to know that the God of the universe is watching over us, His children? He knows us. He loves us. We are never out of His sight.

God watches over us, and nothing catches Him by surprise. He doesn't panic. When we don't know what to do, we can turn to Him and trust His care.

We need to stop and think about that for a moment. The God of the universe is watching over us!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What concern is weighing on your mind? How does Psalm 121 encourage you to trust God with it?

Prayer

Lord, thank You for watching over me. Nothing in my life catches You by surprise. When I feel anxious, help me to remember Your care and rest in Your peace. Help me to trust You as I go through this day. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 8

Legacy

Scripture reading

Paul is talking to Timothy and he says:

2 Timothy 1:5 (NLT)

> I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you.

My grandmother, Nellie Farwell, loved to shop. In fact, I believe I inherited that gene from her. She liked to collect china cups and saucers. These cups were passed on to my mother and her three sisters. They each have many pieces of the collection.

As a parent, I want to pass on good things to my child. I really love purses and clothing, but I don't think my son would enjoy these too much. What I would like to pass on to him, however, is a Godly heritage. I want him to understand the importance of trusting in God and living your life for Him each day. If I can do that, I believe that my role as being his mother will have been a great success!

Determine in your heart today to be a Godly example for those around you. This can be your grandchildren, students, co-workers, family, friends. Don't live foolishly. Be wise!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What would you like to pass on to those who look up to you? How can you show them what it means to trust God?

Prayer

Father, thank You for those who have shown me what faith looks like. Help me to be a Godly example to the people around me. Let my words and actions encourage others to trust You and live for You. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 9

Learn From Mistakes

Scripture reading

Joshua 1:8 (NLT)

> Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

Just because you've failed doesn't make you a failure. When you fail, you need to evaluate where you've gone wrong and fix the problem so you won't continue to fail. You need to learn from your mistakes and try not to press the repeat button!

Also, I believe it's important to learn from the mistakes of others. You don't have to learn things the hard way – if you've witnessed someone who has made terrible mistakes, can't you learn from that? I think you can.

You can avoid making mistakes, as well, by reading the wisdom in the Bible. Proverbs is full of wisdom. Read the Bible, meditate on it and apply it… this is a wonderful way to avoid much distress and turmoil in life. This is the path to Godly success.

Success can be yours!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What have you learned from a mistake? What wisdom from God's Word can help you make a different choice next time?

Prayer

Father, thank You that a failure does not have to define my life. Help me to learn, accept correction, and make wise choices. Teach me to put Your Word into practice instead of repeating the same mistakes. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 10

The Sacrifices We Make

Romans 12:1 (NLT)

> And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

I remember when I was working in Stephenville and I was dating Steve. Steve was still in St. John's... long-distance relationship. I remember one evening he had a ride as far as Gander. He wanted me to pick him up in Gander and then we'd spend some time together in Springdale.

What did I do? I worked all day, then got in my car and drove to Gander. Then we made our way home to Springdale. Crazy what we'll do for love! hahahaha

When you truly love someone, you will make sacrifices for them. We often hear about how much God loves us, but how much do we love Him? Just how far would you drive for Him? What would you be willing to sacrifice?

Remember this hymn?

> All to Jesus I surrender;
> All to Him I freely give;
> I will ever love and trust Him,
> In His presence daily live.

> I surrender all,
> I surrender all;
> All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
> I surrender all.

From “I Surrender All,” Judson W. Van DeVenter, 1896. Public domain.

God bless you today.

Reflection

What might loving God require you to give or let go of? How can you respond to Him with a willing heart?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for Your great love for me. Help me to love You with more than words. Show me what it means to surrender my plans and serve You willingly. May my choices reflect my love for You. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 11

He Loves You Back

Scripture reading

Ephesians 3:18–19 (NLT)

> And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

I met Steve when we were in Grade 1. For me, it was love at first sight! I remember giving him a large valentine on Valentine's Day when we were in elementary school. I remember pretending to be married to Steve Clarke – I would pretend to be April Clarke, married to Steve Clarke. (I think April was a character on the soap opera *The Edge of Night* that I used to like… hahaha)

Unfortunately, Steve didn't share the same feelings that I did until much later – around a decade later. Men are slow, aren't they?

It's difficult when you love someone and they don't love you back.

The wonderful news is that when you love God, He always loves you back. In fact, He loved you first. He loves you when you don't even deserve His love. God's love for you is deep and without limit!

The other good news is that Steve and I got married. God is so good. I have been blessed with a wonderful husband who loves me very much.

God bless you today.

Reflection

What do these verses tell you about the depth of God's love? How does knowing that He loved you first encourage you?

Prayer

Father, thank You for loving me before I ever loved You. Help me to understand more of the width, length, height, and depth of Your love. Let that love settle deeply in my heart and shape the way I love others. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 12

God Holds Your Hand

When I was growing up, my father and I would go for walks together. I especially remember walking together in the wintertime. My father would always hold my hand. I was probably wearing gloves or mittens to keep my hands warm. However, on those cold days, Dad would not only hold my hand, but he would take my hand in his and place them in his pocket. I always found this to be so comforting – my hand in his hand in his pocket! What security!

This security is expressed so well in the hymn *He Leadeth Me*. I love the following verse:

> Lord, I would place my hand in thine,
> nor ever murmur nor repine;
> content, whatever lot I see,
> since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

From *He Leadeth Me*, Joseph H. Gilmore, 1862. Public domain.

We can trust God fully. We place our hand in His hand. He then walks with us and leads us where we need to go.

Let Him lead you!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What decision or situation do you need God to lead you through? How can you place your trust in Him?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the security of knowing You. I place my hand in Yours. Lead me in the way I should go and help me to follow You with a willing heart. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 13

A Personal God

Psalm 139:1–6, 13–14, 16–18 (NLT, excerpts)

> 1 O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.
> 2 You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.
> 3 You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do.
> 4 You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord.
> 5 You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head.
> 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!
> 13 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.
> 14 Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.
> 16 You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.
> 17 How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!

> 18 I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand!

Holding hands is an intimate gesture. It's a sign of togetherness. Sometimes when a person is sick, we will hold their hand to let them know we're there. When a couple walks down the street, they may hold hands.

I remember going to a Diana Krall concert with Steve. I felt like we were in our living room and she was playing for us. It was a wonderful experience. At one point, if I recall correctly, Steve reached over and took me by the hand. It was such a personal, intimate moment, that I believe I started to cry. (No big surprise there!)

We need to understand that God knows us better than any person ever could. He knows everything about us! Despite our weaknesses, He still loves us. We can share our hearts with Him. We can trust Him with anything. He is a personal God and He wants to have a personal relationship with us. He wants to hold our hand because He wants to be involved in our lives.

Now that's something to think about!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What would you like to share with God today, knowing that He already knows you completely and loves you?

Prayer

Lord, thank You for knowing me completely and loving me still. Help me to speak honestly with You and to trust You with what is on my heart. Thank You for wanting a personal relationship with me. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 14

True Equality

Scripture reading

1 Corinthians 12:18–21 (NLT)

> 18 But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. 19 How strange a body would be if it had only one part! 20 Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. 21 The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”

People who have naturally straight hair, often desire curly hair. Those that have curly hair, want straight hair. Why aren’t we ever satisfied? Why do we compare ourselves to others and are discontent with what we have?

This type of activity often occurs in church settings, you know. People want to be able to sing like so-and-so or play the piano like Joe. People think that others are so gifted and they don’t have much to offer.

This isn’t the truth! This is not how God designed the church to operate!

Everyone is *equal* in the body of Christ! The worship leader isn't more important than the one who vacuums the carpet! The pastor isn't more important than the Sunday School teacher! Isn't that liberating?!

Follow Jesus and do what He calls you to do. Stay close to Him. Love Him with all your heart, mind and strength. Stop comparing yourselves with others. Be concerned about what He thinks about you. You will never be able to please people, but you can please God.

God bless you today.

Reflection

Have you been comparing your gifts or your role with someone else's? How can you faithfully do what God has called you to do?

Prayer

Father, thank You that each person matters in Your family. Help me to stop comparing myself with others and to serve You with a willing heart. Give me wisdom to know Your will and live in a way that pleases You. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 15

Everything Works Out for Our Good

Romans 8:28 (NLT)

> And 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.

Bad things happen all around us. Bad things happen to us. God does not cause these things to happen. The painful things we face do not mean that God has stopped loving us. We have an enemy, the devil and his demons, that create chaos and evil in the world.

God is a good God. He's a good Father. He will take every situation that we face and bring good out of it.

Let's consider the story of Joseph. God had given Joseph big dreams. His brothers did not appreciate the dreams that Joseph shared with them. At first, they were going to kill their brother, but he ended up being sold as a slave. Imagine being sold by your own family!

And the story doesn't end there! Joseph was wrongly accused of a crime. He was put into prison. He was there for years!

But after Joseph rose to power in Egypt, he told his brothers:

> You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good.

Genesis 50:20 (NLT, excerpt)

God works out everything for the good of those who love Him, who are called for His purpose!

Maybe you are in a very difficult situation. Maybe you have faced tragedy, broken relationships, pain, discouragement.

Be assured that if you love God and have entrusted your life to Him, He is at work—even when you cannot see it. We may not understand how or when, but we can trust Him to bring good out of what we face, for His honor and His glory.

God bless you today.

Reflection

Is there a difficult situation in your life that you don't understand? What encourages you about Joseph's story? Take a moment to bring your situation to God and ask Him to help you trust Him, even while you're waiting.

Prayer

Father, thank You that You are a good Father. You see what I'm going through, and You know how I feel. Help me to trust You when I don't understand what is happening or cannot see a way forward. Give me strength for today and patience as I wait. I place this situation in Your hands. Bring good out of it, and let my life bring You honor and glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

My Reflections

DAY 16

You Can Count On Your Father

Scripture reading

Deuteronomy 31:8 (NLT)

> 8 Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.

We have a wonderful heavenly Father. He promises never to leave us. He is with us through monumental happy times. He is also with us through the most trying storms of life.

I remember my Dad walking me down the aisle at my wedding. It was such an emotional time. I was so confident that I was making a good decision. Arm in arm, Dad walked with me. Dad was right there by my side.

As a girl, I remember encountering such a terrible snow storm on one of our drives to Grand Bank. The roads were closed on the Burin peninsula and we had to turn around and head back towards home. You know you're in horrible driving conditions when one minute there's a transport truck in front of you and the next, the truck is gone… off the road. My Dad was an excellent

driver. He was in control of the vehicle. From what I remember, I never had a care or worry. Dad was right there by my side.

Through it all, my father was there. I could count on him.
Through it all, my Father is there. I can count on Him.

Never forget that!

God bless you today.

Reflection

When have you known your heavenly Father's care through a happy time or a difficult one? What do you need to trust Him with today?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for being with me through the joys and storms of life. Help me to remember that I can count on You. Whatever I face today, give me confidence in Your faithful care. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 17

God Is Closer Than Your Breath

Romans 8:38–39 (NLT)

> 38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 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.

I was working as a French teacher in a school in St. John's. One day, I received a very unexpected call from my mother. She said that my father had had a heart attack and that he was taken to Grand Falls hospital. By the time Steve and I got to the hospital, Dad had been stabilized. What a relief!

However, very late one night, we received a call that he had taken a turn for the worse.

I remember when I entered his hospital room, I could see that his heart was beating wildly. I could literally see his chest moving because his heart rate was so elevated. I was really afraid that he wasn't

going to make it. I remember saying this over my father: “You shall live and not die, and declare the works of the Lord.” (Based on Psalm 118:17.)

I am very happy to say that my father recovered from that ordeal!

I am telling this story because of one of the things my father shared with me afterward. I recall asking him if he was afraid of dying. He said that he wasn’t fearful.

He also helped me understand this profound thought – He said that although he was unsure that he would draw another breath into his lungs, he was sure that God was there with him. “God is closer than your very breath!”

This truth comforts me when I feel afraid. Have you ever heard the song *He’s as Close as the Mention of His Name* by Gordon Jensen? I believe He’s even closer than that. God is there when we can’t even utter a word. God is there when your next breath isn’t!

Not even death can separate you from God’s love! To have this peace of mind is priceless.

God bless you today.

Reflection

When have you felt afraid or unable to find words to pray? What does knowing that God is near mean to you?

Prayer

Father, thank You for being near, even when I cannot find the words to pray. When I feel afraid, remind me of Your love. Help me to trust Your presence through every uncertain moment. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 18

Last Resort

Scripture reading

I love this passage:

Lamentations 3:22–23 (KJV)

> It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

Have you ever had the experience where someone called you to do something and you were not the first one asked? Maybe you were way down on the list… and they called you because they were stuck.

I think we treat God like that at times. When all else fails, we turn to Him.

We should turn to God first. No matter what situation we face, we need to pray about it. We need to trust Him with it. If you need answers, ask Him for guidance. Read the Bible and it will help you make the right choices.

Don't put God off… the earlier you start to serve Him, the better. Let Him help you choose your career in life… let Him help you choose your

spouse… Life would be smoother, I believe, if we allowed Him to help us make the right choices in the beginning, rather than having to ask Him to get us out of the tangles we get ourselves trapped in!

If you're in a tangled mess, don't despair! God is faithful. He will help you. This is a brand new day. Choose Him today.

Let God be your first choice. Don't make Him your last resort.

God bless you today.

Reflection

What situation do you need to bring to God? What guidance can you find in the Bible as you seek His help?

Prayer

Father, forgive me for the times I have turned to You only after trying everything else. Thank You that Your compassion never fails. Help me to seek You first, listen to Your guidance, and trust You with the choices before me. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 19

God Carries Our Burdens

1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

> Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

When I was younger, I used to go fishing with my father and brothers. Do you know the feeling of hooking onto a big fish? I do. At least I thought it was a big fish. Too big for me to handle! Dad would come to my rescue and reel the fish in for me.

Just like my father would reel in the fish for me, we need to let God carry our burdens for us. God doesn't want us to bear the load. It's not a sign of weakness to give it over to God. I believe it's a sign that we are aware of our human limitations. He's the only one who can get us through the chaos and crises of this life.

Talk to God about your problems. As soon as you feel distressed, depressed, anxious, overwhelmed, confused, let Him know about it. Arrange a meeting with your *Wonderful Counselor* and discuss everything that's on your heart (Isaiah 9:6).

I agree with the hymn writer when he penned these words:

> What a friend we have in Jesus,
> All our sins and griefs to bear!
> What a privilege to carry
> Everything to God in prayer!
> Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
> Oh, what needless pain we bear,
> All because we do not carry
> Everything to God in prayer!

> Have we trials and temptations?
> Is there trouble anywhere?
> We should never be discouraged—
> Take it to the Lord in prayer.
> Can we find a friend so faithful,
> Who will all our sorrows share?
> Jesus knows our every weakness;
> Take it to the Lord in prayer.

From *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, Joseph M. Scriven, 1855. Public domain.

We carry our stuff… our pain, sins, griefs, worries, and we don't even have to! Let Him have your stuff. Cast all your stuff on Him. He cares so much about you, He wants to carry it for you!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What burden are you carrying today? What would you like to tell your heavenly Father about it?

Prayer

Father, thank You that I can bring all my burdens to You. I cast all my cares, all of my burdens, all of my troubles, all of my anxiety on You today, because You care for me. Help me to speak honestly about what troubles me and to trust Your care. Give me wisdom and strength for what I face today. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 20

Crutch

> Leaning, leaning,
> Safe and secure from all alarms;
> Leaning, leaning,
> Leaning on the everlasting arms.

From *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*, Elisha A. Hoffman and Anthony J. Showalter, 1887. Public domain.

Some people call God a crutch. They think that only the weak need God. Only the unintelligent rely on a God that they can't see or touch.

Is a crutch a bad thing? Your leg is broken and you can't walk. What do you do? You get a set of crutches so that you can get around. The crutches are your source of stability and mobility. I think it would be silly for me to sit at home with my broken leg and not avail of that set of crutches… I am better off with the crutches!

I guess what I'm getting at is that, in myself, I am weak. I will admit that. I am broken. I am flawed. I am sinful. I am fearful. The list goes on.

I will state it boldly that I *need God*! I can't make it without Him. I don't want to live life without Him.

So if you think I'm weak because of that, so be it. I need this crutch. I need Him to walk with me through this journey called life. (Sometimes, I need Him to carry me!) I need His support. I need the strength He provides.

There's an old chorus called *I Don't Know What I Would Do Without the Lord*. And frankly, that's exactly how I feel!

God bless you today.

Reflection

Where do you need God's strength today? What would it look like to depend on Him in that part of your life?

Prayer

Lord, I need You. Thank You that I can come to You with my weakness and my fears. Help me to rely on Your strength and receive Your support. Walk with me through each step, and carry me when I cannot carry on alone. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 21

God Is With Me

My mother took me to church from the time I was an infant. I asked Jesus to be my Saviour as a little girl. Growing up as a teen, I served the Lord. I went to university. The Lord went with me. I got married and had a son. God has been my faithful friend. God is with us in our marriage.

I have come to the realization that I don't know what life is like without God in it. I will go a step further and say that I don't want to live my life without God in it!

God is not someone I visit on Sunday morning. He is right here with me 24/7. My goal is to include Him in every part of my life… to let Him be Lord of everything.

> All to Jesus I surrender,
> Humbly at His feet I bow;
> Worldly pleasures all forsaken,
> Take me, Jesus, take me now.

From *I Surrender All*, Judson W. Van DeVenter, 1896. Public domain.

God bless you today.

Reflection

What part of your everyday life would you like to surrender more fully to Jesus?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for being with me in every part of my life. Help me to surrender all of my decisions, all of my relationships, and all of my plans to You, Lord. I offer You my heart and all that I am. Be Lord of everything. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 22

Beautiful Words of Life

Scripture reading

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 (NLT)

> 16 That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. 17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! 18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

I love the scriptures. I find the Bible inspiring. The Bible helps me know how to live. It helps me find my way through complex situations. I find that the advice given in the Bible works. It works like no other self-help book can, because the Bible is God's words to me. Imagine that! God has written words of life for me to read. I shouldn't ignore what He has to say.

The Bible gives perspective. It helps me see situations in my life the way God does.

Take, for example, the troubles you may be going through right now. For you, there may not seem to be any end in sight – you can't see the light at the end of the tunnel or the silver lining of the cloud. Maybe you are trying to do what God is telling you to do, but you are very discouraged. Maybe people are talking about you. Maybe you are questioning why you're in the place you're in!

When I read scriptures like these, I have hope. Many times, it is not easy to do what is right. It is not always easy to stand for the truth. It is often difficult to obey what God tells you to do because it often goes against the grain… you're not just going with the flow.

No matter what persecution and trouble you may face today, stand up for what God wants in your life! If you do this, you will reap a glorious eternal reward!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What passage from the Bible has given you hope in a difficult time? How can it help you see your present situation?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the words of life You have given us in the Bible. Help me to turn to Your Word for wisdom and hope. When I feel discouraged, strengthen me to do what is right and keep my eyes on what lasts forever. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 23

Miracles

Scripture reading

Acts 10:38 (NLT)

> 38 And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

I believe in miracles! I believe in supernatural changes in people and their situations. I have witnessed miracles in my own life.

When I was growing up, my feet turned over and the result was that I walked on the insides of my shoes. I would actually wear out the sides of my shoes. One evening, a gentleman prayed for me and I felt something like I had never felt before – I actually felt an adjusting/pulling sensation in my legs. The result was that I walked differently. I have difficulty wearing out a pair of shoes now! This was a miracle.

Also, growing up, my father had issues with alcohol and smoking. He wanted to stop these addictions, but was unsuccessful on his own. One night, he

went to a prayer meeting in Springdale and surrendered his life to God. The pastor prayed that he would be set free. He came home a changed man! Believe me, his family knew it! He did not have a problem with cigarettes or alcohol after that.

I believe that God can do a miracle for you. Have faith. Trust Him. Pray.

God bless you today.

Reflection

What has God done in your life that you can remember with gratitude? What would you like to bring to Him in prayer today?

Prayer

Lord, thank You for the ways You have worked in my life. I bring You my needs and the needs of those I love. Help me to pray with faith and to trust You as I wait. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 24

Hospital

Scripture reading

Mark 2:17 (NLT)

> When Jesus heard this, he told them, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

A hospital is a place where sick people go to get better. The staff at the hospital do whatever they can to make patients feel healthy again.

I believe the Church should be like a hospital. Broken, wounded, imperfect people should be able to come to the Church and receive the help they need – love, forgiveness, grace, truth. It would be crazy for the Emergency Room to deny a person access because they were sick! In the same way, it is tragic if the Church would turn away any individual because they are too troubled or broken. Let’s not be guilty of sending people away.

Broken people who come to the Church shouldn’t be ignored either. Hopefully you don’t go to the hospital and be placed in a corner and forgotten about! To ignore the person’s sickness, could lead

to an untimely death. Patients need to be open to take the treatments and medicines they need. Patients should want to get better and that may mean adjusting a lifestyle or behavior. Sometimes, very messy issues need to be dealt with.

Let's do our part to open the doors of the Church and welcome those that need help and healing!

God bless you today.

Reflection

How can you help someone who is hurting feel welcome and cared for in your church?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for welcoming people who are broken and in need. Give me a compassionate heart and help me to offer love, grace, and practical care. Show me how to make room for others and walk alongside them as they seek Your help. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 25

What You Were Born To Do

Scripture reading

Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

> Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Several years ago, I was watching Celine Dion sing on TV. As she sang, I remember thinking that this woman was born to sing! I also recall praying a very dangerous prayer that day – I said to God that I wanted to do what I was born to do.

I believe things shifted in my life after that.

I challenge you today to seek after God with all your heart. It is a powerful thing to pray to the God of the universe and say, “not my will, but thine, be done.” (Luke 22:42, KJV, excerpt) Let Him use you to do what you were born to do!

God wants you to fulfill your destiny!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What gifts or desires could you bring to God in prayer? What step could you take as you seek His will for your life?

Prayer

Father, I want to do what You have called me to do. Help me to seek You with all my heart and surrender my plans to You. Give me the courage to follow Your leading and use the gifts You have given me. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 26

Growing in God

1 Corinthians 1:26–29 (NLT)

> 26 Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. 27 Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. 28 God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. 29 As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

Perhaps you've decided that you're going to make some changes to make your life better. Maybe you're going to eat healthier or exercise more. Maybe you've decided to read a challenging book or even take lessons to learn a new skill.

Most of you recognize that to have a healthy physical body, you need to exercise, eat nutritious food and get proper rest. You also need to see that to be healthy spiritually, you need to follow certain principles. Immediately, you're probably thinking

that you need to pray, read the Bible or go to church more. These are great things to do! But I would encourage you to take things further and start to work out more – spiritually speaking.

You may be wondering how to do this. Just take principles that you've learned and start applying them to your everyday life. Start small. For example, maybe you've been hurt by someone. Every time you see this person, your stomach sinks and you relive what has been said or done to you that has caused so much pain. You know that you're supposed to love your enemies, but you just can't seem to make progress in this area. My suggestion to you would be to start by praying for the one who has hurt you. After praying for the person on a regular basis, they won't be an enemy for long. Trust me. Something will happen in your heart and you'll start to feel those chains of hurt and unforgiveness fall off you. The final result will be that you'll be a more Christ-like person. That's the desired result. Some of you have given up your pursuit to change – you've tried so hard in the past to change and you feel you've failed miserably.

But there is hope for everyone! God has impressed upon my heart that there is absolutely no reason why He can't use ordinary people like you to do extraordinary things!

There are no rejects in God's Kingdom. No write-offs. No cast aways.

With God's strength and help, you can accomplish great things!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What principle from the Bible could you begin putting into practice today? What small step could you take?

Prayer

Lord, help me to put Your Word into practice. Give me the courage to begin with small steps and the strength to keep growing. Thank You that You can work through ordinary people like me. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 27

Roses Are Red

Song of Songs 4:9–10 (NLT)

> 9 You have captured my heart,
> my treasure, my bride.
> You hold it hostage with one glance of your eyes,
> with a single jewel of your necklace.
> 10 Your love delights me,
> my treasure, my bride.
> Your love is better than wine,
> your perfume more fragrant than spices.

Steve isn't what you would call a hopeless romantic. Our first date was actually a double date. I won't name the other couple. The guys decided to cook supper for the girls. The gourmet menu consisted of pizza and Jello… This is not a joke… The pizza toppings slid off the crust while it was being served, and the Jello didn't set.

During one part of the evening, Steve gave me a rose. We were in Grade 11 and Steve had done a research paper about the ozone layer. The card attached to my rose had the following words of poetry penned by Steve himself:

> Roses are red
> Violets are blue
> When the ozone breaks down
> This flower will die

—Steve, on the card with my rose

Who needs William Shakespeare when you can write such lovely things yourself? Now you know why I couldn't resist his charms!

Do you realize that the relationship between Jesus and the Church is compared to that of a husband and his bride? Jesus is the husband. We are His bride. The picture of love that is painted between this bride and groom is absolutely beautiful.

Jesus is in love with His bride. He has proven His love by His words and actions. Take the time to read the greatest love story of all. Try to fathom just how much He loves us!

Guys, you might even be inspired to write some lovely verse!

God bless you today.

Reflection

How has Jesus shown His love to you? What helps you understand how deeply He loves His people?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for loving Your people so deeply. Help me to understand more of Your love and to respond with a grateful heart. May my words and actions reflect Your love to others. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 28

Don’t Run Away

Psalm 51:10, 17 (NLT)

> Create in me a clean heart, O God.
> Renew a loyal spirit within me.
>
> ...
>
> The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.
> You will not reject a broken and repentant heart,
> O God.

What do you do when you’ve made some unwise decisions in life? The quicker you are to repent, the better off you will be. The sooner you start running toward God, rather than running away from Him, the easier it will be to get back on track. It is less difficult to shed 5 unwanted pounds than 50 or 100!

You need to realize that God still loves you even though you’ve made a mess of things. He can take what appears to be a hopeless situation and turn it around. But in order for Him to turn it around, you need to turn to Him!

If you've acquired some bad habits, "never quit quitting". Ask God to help you quit. You can do it with His strength!

Some people may be upset when you try to get your life back in order. Some people don't want you to change your old ways. They want you to stay in a rut. Please find people to encourage you to put your life in God's hands. Find people who will pray about your situation. Those are the people you need in your life when you want to get back on track.

God bless you today.

Reflection

Is there an area of your life you need to bring back to God? Who could pray with you and encourage you as you take that step?

Prayer

Lord, thank You that You still love me when I have made wrong choices. Help me to turn to You, receive Your forgiveness, and take the steps I need to take. Give me strength to change and the humility to accept encouragement and help. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 29

Don’t Be Afraid of your Future

My mom worked in the hospital. There was a woman named Katie Burton that she used to visit. Katie was in Springdale hospital for an extended period of time while waiting to get in the home in Baie Verte, I believe. I had the privilege of meeting this fine woman.

I had such a laugh while visiting Katie. I loved to tease her. She had such a wonderful sense of humor. I always said to myself that if I lived to be as old as her, I would love to have her attitude! She ended up living to be over 100 years old.

One of the hymns that Katie liked was called *Good Night and Good Morning*. Here’s an excerpt:

> Good morning up there where Christ is the Light,
> Good morning up there where cometh no night;
> When we step from this earth to God’s Heaven so fair,
> We’ll say “good night” here but “good morning” up there.

> When fadeth the day and dark shadows draw nigh,
> With Christ close at hand, it is not death to die;

> He'll wipe every tear, roll away every care;
> We'll say "good night" here, but "good morning"
> up there.

From *Good Night and Good Morning*, Lizzie DeArmond, 1922. Public domain.

I have to constantly remind myself that this life is only temporary… like a mist or vapor… it's so short. This world is not my home. We, as Christians, have nothing to fear. We'll say goodnight to this world and wake up in a world of eternal bliss with Jesus! What a glorious hope we have!

Don't be afraid of your future!

God bless you today.

Reflection

What encourages you most about the hope of being with Jesus? How can that hope shape the way you live today?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for the hope of eternal life with You. When I feel afraid of the future, help me to trust Your love and promises. Teach me to value the time You have given me and to share Your love with those around me. Amen.

My Reflections

DAY 30

Protection and Provision

Exodus 2:5–6 (NLT)

> 5 Soon Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river, and her attendants walked along the riverbank. When the princess saw the basket among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it for her.
>
> 6 When the princess opened it, she saw the baby. The little boy was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This must be one of the Hebrew children," she said.

Moses' mother placed her child in a basket among the reeds along the riverbank. Did you know that the Hebrew word for that basket is the same word used for Noah's ark? I love that connection! In both stories, God preserved life through a simple vessel.

When Pharaoh's daughter saw Moses, he found compassion in an unexpected place. The very household that posed a threat to his life became the place where he was protected and provided for.

I feel that we not only need to place our children in the basket, but we need to put ourselves in the basket!

God will *protect* and *provide* for you when fear and uncertainty are all around us.

God has placed His call and seal upon you. No enemy can harm you.

God bless you today.

Reflection

What person or situation are you finding difficult to entrust to God? What would you like to ask Him for today?

Prayer

Father, I place myself and my loved ones into the basket. Even if we find ourselves in enemy territory, I trust that You will protect us and provide for us. I will not fear what the enemy wants to do. I trust in You. Amen.

My Reflections

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Hymn excerpts (public-domain texts):

I Surrender All — Judson W. Van DeVenter, 1896 (Days 10 and 21).

He Leadeth Me — Joseph H. Gilmore, 1862 (Day 12).

What a Friend We Have in Jesus — Joseph M. Scriven, 1855 (Day 19).

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms — Elisha A. Hoffman and Anthony J. Showalter, 1887 (Day 20).

Good Night and Good Morning — Lizzie DeArmond, 1922 (Day 29).

Rose-card verse in “Roses Are Red” by Steve Clarke (Day 27). Used with permission.

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Janice and her husband, Steve, are pastors at 135 Main Community Church in Springdale, NL. They have one son, Christopher.

Janice loves to share stories with a splash of humor and encourage people of all ages to develop a personal relationship with God.

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