

Especially For

From

Date





GOD'S  
BEST

*for You*



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## Introduction

How can the heart draw closer to God? Where can we find inner peace, divine guidance, and genuine joy in the rush of modern-day life? What can satisfy our longing for spiritual sustenance? For assurance and stability? For values and truths that are real, relevant, and trustworthy?

These spiritual reflections invite you to grow closer to your loving God, strengthen your faith and trust in Him, and receive the joy He desires for you. . .to experience His best for you. A brief scripture verse is suggested for your personal contemplation.

As you meditate on these words and explore their applicability to your experience, you will realize that God's best for you is the same now as it always has been. Whether you're young or not so young, sitting in a cottage or skyscraper, turning a page or swiping a screen, God's message of love and grace remains unchanged. The secret of a blessed life is a relationship with Him. This brings a prayer that your relationship with Him will be deepened, strengthened, and enriched as you make these truths your own.



*Jesus Christ is  
the same yesterday, and  
today, and forever.*

HEBREWS 13:8 NIV





## God's Power

Say you're put in charge of an important project. "Now," you're told, "success or failure depends on you and you alone! You'll receive no help from anyone, so you must rely solely on your own effort and know-how." While you may have looked forward to taking on the work before, you're less confident now, and with good reason.

So often, though, that's the way we approach spiritual growth. We want to find our God-given purpose, get more joy out of life, and draw closer to God, but we think it's up to us to make it happen. We might spend hours sitting still, struggling to silence our thoughts, and waiting for inspiration. When nothing happens, we lose hope of ever developing a relationship with God or of bringing peace and joy into our lives. We may even conclude that we're just not a spiritual person!

Fortunately, God has put not us, but Himself, in charge of our spiritual growth. Our creator knows we're not capable of learning who He is, how He feels about us, and what



He has done for us without His help. Perhaps it's our natural inability to find Him on our own that He uses to point us to Him.

If there's a desire in your heart to know God better and receive the joy He offers, let Him help you. There's no reason to struggle because He supplies you with resources, mainly the Bible, where He reveals Himself to you. He exposes you to the reflections of spiritual thinkers and the example of godly people. Most of all, He sends His Holy Spirit to you. In fact, His Spirit is at work already—your desire proves it! Now open yourself to His presence; trust Him to guide you. Go forward in confidence: God is in charge.

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*I want you to know about  
the great and mighty power that  
God has for us followers.*

EPHESIANS 1:19 CEV



## Spiritual Heroes

Who's your spiritual hero? Perhaps Mother Teresa's name comes to mind. Her tireless work among the poor in India earned her worldwide admiration. Or you might be thinking of Billy Graham. He spent a lifetime motivating believers to make God real and visible in their lives. Or maybe there's someone in your family or community whose peace, joy, and purpose have inspired you to desire that same peace, joy, and purpose for yourself.

But then you realize you lack the ability, experience, opportunity, or heartfelt calling to do what this person is doing. Does that mean God has given you nothing to do? Certainly not. It means only that He has blessed you with different spiritual gifts and that He intends you to start using them right where you are, because they are needed. No matter how noteworthy someone else's work appears, or how much acclaim it receives, you have your own God-given work to do, and it is as important in His eyes as anyone else's.

Praise and thank God for your spiritual heroes. Let them

inspire and motivate you not to long for their position and influence, but to imitate their willingness to give their time and talents to change things for the better. God doesn't need you to be a clone of someone else, but to become more and more the unique individual He has made you, joyfully living the God-blessed life He has planned for you.

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*There are different kinds of  
spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit  
is the source of them all.*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4 NLT



## Genuine Growth

Perhaps you've heard the quip: A journey of a thousand miles begins with someone saying, "I know a shortcut!" While on the road, you might even have tried a few shortcuts yourself, only to find that the route you were sure went straight through to your destination didn't, but instead wound around for miles.

In our spiritual life, trying to take a shortcut yields no better results. Think of it this way: we would save time if, say, we could eat our week's meals all in one afternoon and be done with it, but we wouldn't remain healthy for long. That shortcut just won't work! Neither will a shortcut to sound spiritual health. There's no way to spiritual wisdom and maturity except through day-to-day living, God-centered thinking, and real-life experience.

God works through who we are and where we are. Our daily circumstances are what He uses to test our faith and give us opportunities to practice being loving, forgiving, patient, and kind in observable, practical ways. Suppose our

quiet time with God has opened our eyes to the importance of sharing with others, but until we're around others and share our attention and resources with them, our insight remains simply a pious thought.

God has put you on the road to eternal life with Him in heaven. With His Spirit doing the steering, you will make progress every day toward spiritual maturity. You aren't in the same place you were yesterday, and you won't be where you are today a week from now. Be patient with yourself! There are no shortcuts on this road because lasting, genuine, God-given growth happens slowly, quietly, and without fail every step along the way.

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*Grow in the grace and  
knowledge of our Lord and  
Savior Jesus Christ.*

2 PETER 3:18 ESV





## Real-Life Holiness

While inexcusable behavior of others annoys us, it's our own inexcusable behavior that can cause us the most distress. Beyond the unfortunate incident itself, we live with the anger that brought on our regrettable outburst; the malice that spawned our unkind remark; the discouragement that preceded our decision to quit. It's far easier to forgive others their imperfections than it is to forgive ourselves for not being the angelic people we would like to be!

You've heard it said that forgiveness is more for the person offering forgiveness than for the one receiving it. You know that by forgiving, you're letting go of anger and bitterness, as well as a desire for revenge that can so readily darken the heart. Even if the other person refuses your forgiveness, or circumstances make it impossible to speak to the person, your act of forgiving allows you to go forward, freed from a terrible burden.

Have you offered forgiveness to yourself, though? Complete forgiveness, as you would extend to a close friend

who has hurt you? Given to yourself as well as to others, forgiveness prepares your heart for the transforming work of the Holy Spirit as He nurtures seeds of patience, humility, and spiritual understanding within you. Forgiveness equips you to learn from what happened in the past and then let go of it and look to the future with wiser, more experienced eyes.

God has forgiven you completely. Now forgive yourself. Allow His Spirit to lead you into visible, real-life holiness in His own way and in His own time. Remain with Him because no one has the power to be holy apart from God, who is holy.

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*As far as the east is from the  
west, so far has he removed our  
transgressions from us.*

PSALM 103:12 NIV



## Here and Now

We cherish “someday” dreams. Our fantasies find us standing on the deck of a cruise ship headed for exotic destinations; owning the perfect home; enjoying active and healthy retirement years. “Someday!” we say, while adding, “God willing.” Because no matter how carefully we plan, we don’t know what the future may bring. We’re both wise and realistic to put “someday” hopes in God’s hands.

Putting today in His hands is different, though. If we’re unable to do everything we plan—we’re stuck in a traffic jam due to a collision a few blocks ahead, or we’re sitting in the doctor’s waiting room long past our appointment time—we’re upset and angry. It doesn’t cross our minds that perhaps our plans were not in sync with God’s plans. While most of us accept the fact that one of our “someday” dreams might not come true, we’re distraught when something we want to do today has to be delayed or put off until tomorrow.

Certainly, planning our day and making a God-pleasing, productive use of time is the smart and responsible thing to



do. Yet today's plans, like tomorrow's, are subject to God's will and guidance. Who's to say that a traffic jam isn't a God-sent invitation to pray for those involved in an accident? Or our time in the waiting room a chance to encourage another patient dealing with a health issue ten times more serious than our own?

God knows your time is valuable—He gave it to you! But remember, just as your future rests in His hands, so does your present. If today doesn't go according to your plan, ask God about His plans. You never know what opportunity the moment may hold.

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*What you ought to say is,  
"If the Lord wants us to, we will  
live and do this or that."*

JAMES 4:15 NLT





## Enjoy Life

Some see God as a stern old gent, forever demanding us to do things we don't want to do. We want to free ourselves from His rules so we can enjoy life.

Yet flouting God's rules brings not freedom, but bondage—bondage to the tyranny of limited human reason and changeable personal feelings. Suppose we take lightly God's rule about loving our neighbor as ourselves. Then, when tempted to hate someone who offends us or envy the person who outshines us, we give in. Now chains of our own making hold us tight, and we're imprisoned by malice, vengeance, and discontent.

Or suppose we agree, in general, that stealing is wrong. But then we're in a job where we have access to the company's funds. We're running short on money this month, and it occurs to us that no one will know if we were to take a little here, a little there. So now we're burdened not only with the fear that someone might discover our theft, but a nagging conscience to boot!

In contrast, we can rest at complete ease under the protection of God's rules. Our loving creator has given them to us to keep us from the pitfalls of shortsighted reasoning, situational ethics, and our own impulsive acts. By obeying His commandments, we're allowing Him to give us true and lasting freedom.

If you struggle with one of God's rules, why not talk to Him about it? Pour out your thoughts, and then let Him talk to you in the words of scripture and through the voice of mature Christian friends and advisers. Free yourself to really enjoy your life.

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*"You shall walk after the LORD  
your God and fear him and keep his  
commandments and obey his voice."*

DEUTERONOMY 13:4 ESV



## Cry Out!

If you have ever taken care of a baby, you know all too well that babies can't do anything on their own. When they need food, or warmth, or comfort, they simply yell! That's all it takes for loving hands to pick them up, caring hands to give them food, and tender arms to enfold them. All this takes place, even though babies contribute no income to the household (just the opposite, as any parent will tell you) or do anything in exchange for what's done for them.

As adults, however, we're often stubbornly reluctant to let others do things for us. We might not want to feel obligated; we believe we don't deserve it; or we're reluctant to admit we can't help ourselves. It's not uncommon for someone to struggle for years rather than ask for assistance.

This is true in the spiritual life too. We're uncomfortable going to our heavenly Father for all sorts of reasons! Is there any way we can return the favor? No. Have we done enough to deserve His attention? No. Do we like admitting we aren't all-powerful, all-knowing, all-competent? No, no, and no!

Yet to God, we are like infants, reliant on Him to initiate, maintain, and nurture our growth and our relationship with Him.

God comes to you with love, compassion, and tenderness not because of who you are, but because of who He is. Without ever being able to earn a place with God or repay Him for His kindness, you are of immeasurable worth in His eyes. Cry out to Him! That's all it takes for Him to bend down, pick you up, and hold you close to His heart.

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*God is love.*

1 JOHN 4:8 NIV





## Really True

You've probably heard the warning: If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. In God's world, though, things are different. When He gives you a gift, there are no strings attached. When He says it's free, it's free.

God offers love, attention, forgiveness, compassion, and eternal life with Him free of charge. Truly, there's no way we could pay for what God gives because everything we possess is from Him. It's as if a wealthy donor handed a million dollars to a poor family. Their sole healthy and productive response would be to love, thank, and respect their generous benefactor and honor him by using what they had received in a way that would please him.

On a grander scale, God is your generous benefactor. His plan of forgiveness and salvation for the whole world includes you. Jesus willingly came into the world to fulfill what His heavenly Father promised, suffer and die for all your sins, and rise again so you could know for sure that He has power over death. All this affects you! God's gift to

you is Jesus, and He pours on you riches not even millions of dollars can buy—the comfort of His presence. Freedom from guilt. The assurance of a relationship with Him. Hope in the face of death.

Too good to be true? When God is the giver, it's true. Receive faith in Him with open arms and a grateful heart. Possess it in joy. Share it with delight.

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*God's gift is real life, eternal life,  
delivered by Jesus, our Master.*

ROMANS 6:23 MSG





## Hopes and Dreams

Like many girls who grew up in the 1950s, Janet dreamed of marrying a handsome man, having two or three children, and being a stay-at-home mom in a safe, quiet neighborhood like the one she knew. She prayed that God would make her dream come true, certain that her future happiness depended on God's yes.

But things did not turn out Janet's way. No Prince Charming crossed her path, and there were no children and no home of her own on a leafy suburban street. So had God not heard Janet's innocent pleadings? Yes, He certainly had. But He said, *"Please wait, My beloved child, because I have something else in mind for you, something you can't even imagine yet. You will find great happiness and complete fulfillment. Trust Me on this one!"*

As Janet grew in spiritual knowledge and gradually yielded herself to God's guidance, she realized that God indeed had a very special plan for her, one just right for her talents, interests, and abilities. As she focused her attention on her real-life circumstances, her childhood imaginings



faded in importance, and she appreciated more and more her God-blessed reality. What He promised happened, and today her joy is complete.

Do you feel cheated because something you have desperately wanted is not yours? Then learn from Janet and countless others like her. Willingly release your hopes, dreams, and desires to God, trusting Him to know what will bring you happiness. Put your life in His hands, and then open your arms wide to receive His blessings. Will His blessings look like what you have always pictured? Maybe, maybe not. Either way, embrace what God, in His goodness, has given to you. Gladly throw yourself into today's circumstances because they are stepping-stones on your path to lasting joy.

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*“Test me in this and see if I don't open  
up heaven itself to you and pour out  
blessings beyond your wildest dreams.”*

MALACHI 3:10 MSG

