



180 DEVOTIONS
for When
LIFE IS HARD

— Encouragement for a Woman's Heart —



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❧ GOD'S WAY IS PERFECT ❧

“As for God, his way is perfect: the LORD’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.”

PSALM 18:30 NIV



God’s way is perfect. That sounds nice. . .but it also sounds a little cliché, especially when we’re in the throes of heartache and despair. If God’s way is perfect, why does it hurt so much? Is God cruel? Doesn’t He care about us?

God’s way is without flaw. . .but life has plenty of imperfections and shortcomings. As long as we’re on this earth, we will have trouble. Didn’t He say as much? But when we run to Him in that trouble, He is a Shield. He is a Refuge. He is our safe place. When we run to Him, He will love us, comfort us, and protect us. Life may not be perfect, but God always is.

*Dear Father, thank You for Your perfect love.
Remind me, when life is hard, that I can run to You.
Thank You for always being there for me. Amen.*

A MIGHTY WARRIOR

“The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”

ZEPHANIAH 3:17 NIV



Anxiety is defined as stress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune. Certainly this life is fraught with danger and misfortune. When we walk through our days without God we have every reason to be afraid. But we don't have to travel this journey alone! We have a bodyguard—as well as a spirit guard—who will never leave us nor forsake us. He is the Mighty Warrior who saves!

He takes great delight in those who love Him and stay close to Him. Surely we have nothing to fear with a hero who adores us. He loves us beyond description. He will protect us and save us. With God as our defender, we have no reason to feel afraid.

Dear Father, thank You for being the Mighty Warrior who saves. Remind me of Your presence, and help me not feel afraid. Amen.

HARD WORK

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,
as working for the Lord, not for human masters.*

COLOSSIANS 3:23 NIV



Work can be a drudge or a delight, depending on the day, depending on the circumstance. When we find ourselves in a job that fits our gifts and talents, working for people who appreciate us, work gives us immense satisfaction. But when we are in a job that doesn't fit our personalities or our skills, or when we work with people who take us for granted, it can feel like a never-ending prison sentence.

No matter what type of job we're in, God wants us to remember we're really working for Him. He will bless honesty, diligence, and a respectful attitude. We can pray for better opportunities, and acquire the skills to move us to a new position. In the meantime, we need to remember our *real* boss is loving and generous, and He will reward us for hard work.

*Dear Father, help me find satisfaction in my job.
I want to honor You in my work. Amen.*

GOD'S PLAN

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them. . .the LORD will keep you free from every disease.

DEUTERONOMY 7:12, 15 NIV



This entire passage lists ways in which God will bless those who live righteous, upright lives. Keeping us free from disease is just one of the ways God blesses the godly. Yet we all know godly people who are afflicted with some sort of terrible disease. So does God not keep His promises?

Of course He does. As long as we are in this world, we will never be entirely immune. However, living clean, upright lives does lead to a healthier existence. We are less likely to get cancer if we don't put bad things into our bodies. We are less likely to get STDs if we follow God's guidelines for sex within marriage. God's laws are put in place because they're good laws, and they bring about health and longevity. Even when disease does strike, righteousness still produces the abundant life that cannot be found outside God's plan.

Dear Father, thank You for Your perfect guidelines for healthy, righteous living. Please heal me. Amen.

GOD'S PROMISE

“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

DEUTERONOMY 31:8 NIV



God promised to never leave us nor forsake us. He is eternal, so He's already been to the future and back. He goes before us, smoothing the path, preparing the way. When we walk with God, we have nothing to fear.

Others in our lives may have failed in their promises to stand by us, but God cannot fail. He will never break a single vow; it's not in His nature. When we feel alone, we can remind ourselves that we're never alone. Breathe in His presence, for He is right there. When we fear the future, remember He knows what's ahead, and He will walk with us every step of the way. God promised to stay with us and take care of us, and He always keeps His promises.

Dear Father, thank You for Your promise to stay with me and care for me. I feel Your presence, and I know You're here. Amen.

GOD HEARS OUR CRIES

*May the LORD answer you when you are in distress;
may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.*

PSALM 20:1 NIV



We humans can be odd creatures. In all of nature, we're the only ones who hide our distress behind a smile. We hold our chins up and our shoulders back and press on, never letting on that behind our confident exterior, we're crumbling.

But God hears the cries of our hearts! He knows our suffering and feels our sorrow. When we call out to Him, even if through a silent seeping of our emotions, hidden behind the safety of our poised facade, He will answer! He loves us, and He will never leave us to trudge through troubled times alone.

There is never a need to hide our heartache from God. He sees us at our worst, and He thinks we are magnificent! He adores us. Whatever our source of distress, He knows. He cares. And He is there.

*Dear Father, thank You for hearing the cries of my heart.
I'm going through a hard time right now. I need to feel Your
presence in my life; I need You to rescue me. Amen.*

WITHOUT A DOUBT

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for
and assurance about what we do not see.*

HEBREWS 11:1 NIV



Seeing is believing. At least, that's what the world tells us. But God's ways are not our ways. God wants us to believe before we see. He wants us to be so certain of what we hope for, we don't even question the reality of it. After all, He calls us to a life of faith. Belief, after the fact, isn't really faith at all. It's just acknowledgment of something that has already happened.

Satan wants us to question our faith, or belief in the good God has in store for us. He whispers lies into our spirits. He tells us it's never gonna happen. If he can shake us at the core of our faith, we're giving Satan exactly what he wants.

But just as God promised Noah He would send a flood, just as surely as God told Abraham He would provide an heir, we can *know*, without doubt, that God will honor His promises to us. And His promises include such good things, beyond what we can imagine.

Dear Father, I believe. Amen.

GOD'S FAVOR

May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands.

PSALM 90:17 NIV



God designed work to be an immensely satisfying activity. Hard work may not be fun, but it does give us a sense of purpose, helps us pay the bills, and helps us sleep well at night. When we feel our work isn't making a difference, it can cause us to question our existence.

We all go through periods of dissatisfaction with our jobs. But when we go for long periods without finding joy or purpose in our work, we should ask God for wisdom. Perhaps we need to change jobs. Perhaps we need to change our attitudes. When we pray about our jobs, we should make sure we're pleasing God with our efforts. Then we can ask for His favor to rest on us, and trust that He will establish and bless our work.

*Dear Father, may Your favor rest upon me in my job;
establish the work of my hands. Amen.*

GODLY LEADERS

*Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them
from the hands of those who plundered them.*

JUDGES 2:16 NASB



Have you ever stood inside the voting booth with no clue which person to vote for? Have you ever wondered, in despair, if there is a single person who is both capable and willing to serve our country with sincere ethics and political skill? God's Word tells us not to worry. God will raise up the leaders He wants to use, in His time.

When the Israelites were being plundered, they probably felt like God had forgotten them. But He hadn't forgotten. God will never, ever forget those who call Him by name. In His time, He brought forth judges to deliver Israel from evil hands. In His time, He will raise up godly leaders who will deliver His children from those who use their power for personal gain, at the expense of the needy and helpless.

When all hope seems lost, we can remember the Israelites, and remind ourselves that God's got it all under control.

*Dear Father, I trust You to bring up godly
leaders. Please do it soon. Amen.*

GENEROUS PROVIDER

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 TIMOTHY 5:8 ESV



One of the reasons God created the family system is so we wouldn't be alone. It has always been God's plan—by His design—that we rely on our families during difficult times. But modern society encourages a look-out-for-number-one mentality. We often feel burdened and resentful when we are asked to help out a family member in need.

When we have opportunity to help out a relative, we should see it as a privilege, not a drain. At those times, we have the chance to step into God's shoes for just a moment. He is a generous, loving Provider, and He never turns His back on His children. By becoming a generous, loving provider for someone else, we become like God, or godly. And God always blesses those who try to be like Him.

Dear Father, teach me to be a generous, loving provider for the people in my family. Amen.

ON BORROWING MONEY

*The rich rule over the poor, and the
borrower is the slave of the lender.*

PROVERBS 22:7 NRSV



Money lenders can be slick operators. Credit companies often don't care if you can afford something or not. They want to loan you money because they know they'll get it back with exorbitant interest. That's why the Bible cautions against borrowing money, unless it's absolutely necessary.

Instead of buying a new car, we can often buy a used one for a fraction of the cost. Or we can take the bus, and save the money we would have spent on a car payment until we can afford to pay cash for a car.

Many things we think we need are really just wants. If we'll do without until we can pay cash, we'll avoid the stress and anxiety that comes with owing money. When we live within our means, instead of going into debt to live in a higher income bracket, we actually live more peaceful lives.

*Dear Father, thank You for the sound financial advice You give
in Your Word. Help me to live within my means. Amen.*

FILLED WITH JOY

But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever. Spread your protection over them, that all who love your name may be filled with joy.

PSALM 5:11 NLT



Joy is often confused with happiness. While joy may be similar to happiness, the two concepts have entirely different sources. Happiness is based on what's happening right now. Joy is based on an assured, victorious future.

When we're in trouble, we can take refuge in God, and we can rejoice! We can—and will—sing His praises forever. All who love God, all who are called His children will be filled with joy!

The reason for that joy is that we know, despite our present trouble, we have hope. We have the promise of a good future filled with love and peace, and absent from suffering and trials of every kind. Though we may not feel happy about our current circumstance, we can rejoice, because we know how our story will end.

*Dear Father, I love You, and I take refuge in You.
Fill me with Your joy as I focus on the wonderful
future You have planned for me. Amen.*

A RECKLESS FAITH

*By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land;
but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.*

HEBREWS 11:29 NIV



Sometimes, God brings us to unexpected crossroads in our faith. He longs for us to trust Him, so He pushes us to the point of no return. We must either rush into a towering wall of water and trust Him not to let us drown, or we must run into the arms of the enemy, who will certainly see to our demise. “*Which will it be?*” God asks.

Nothing in the Israelites’ past had prepared them to walk through a deep sea without getting wet. For all they knew, they’d die. Yet they knew it would be better to drown, following God, than to die—or even live—at the hands of the enemy.

So they rushed into the water, and God delivered them more fully, more faithfully than they could have imagined. Not only did they live, but their enemies were destroyed because of that one act of wild, reckless faith.

*Dear Father, teach me to have reckless faith.
I trust You. Amen.*

SAND ON THE FLAME

*In everything set them an example by doing what is good.
In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of
speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you
may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.*

TITUS 2:7-8 NIV



Everywhere we go, we will encounter difficult people. It would be nice if God only created *pleasant* people, but God loves diversity. And part of celebrating people's differences is accepting that some people are going to be harder to get along with than others.

We can't stop difficult people from being, well, difficult. We can, however, give them as little as possible to be difficult about. This verse tells us that in everything we do, we need to set an example. Don't cut corners. Give more than is expected. Show kindness, generosity, and class. Don't gossip or slander, show humility, and treat others with respect.

When we live upright, blameless lives, we throw sand on a difficult person's flame. When we continuously show love and kindness, we make God proud, and He will bless us.

Dear Father, help me to live a blameless life. Amen.

THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 NIV



The type of fuel we put into our vehicles determines how well they run. If we use top-of-the-line gasoline, our cars operate more efficiently than if we use cheap, watered-down petrol. The same is true for our minds. Our actions and emotions are often determined by our thoughts. When we feed ourselves positive, uplifting contemplations, those pure, noble thoughts turn into pure, noble feelings and actions.

If we struggle with depression, anger, fear, or other negative emotions, we should examine what we're feeding our brains. While some issues may require a doctor's care, we can certainly move our mental health in the right direction by controlling what we think about. We can push aside those damaging beliefs and replace them with God's Word and uplifting thoughts. When we do, we'll find everything in our lives takes on a more positive hue.

Dear Father, give me strength to say no to unhealthy thoughts and attitudes, and help me fill my mind with positive things. Amen.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another;
for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.*

ROMANS 13:8 NASB



There are many things in life we can't control. While we may have limited power to change our circumstances, we can certainly do our best to live by God's standards. We shouldn't borrow money for something if we can do without it. But we should be ever mindful of the debt of love we owe to God. He wants us to pay that debt forward, by loving other people.

When we love each other, that love comes back to us. It causes others to have good feelings about us, and they return the love. They help us when they can. It also pleases God, and He pours out His blessings on us. When we feel powerless to change our situations, we can look for ways to love other people. It may not solve all our problems, but it will certainly turn things around in the right direction.

Dear Father, thank You for this reminder to pay my debt of love forward. Show me who needs love today. Amen.

LOVING OURSELVES

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

GALATIANS 5:14–15 ESV



Some of the most difficult people to be around are people who don't like themselves. Oh, it may seem like they love themselves and dislike everyone else, but that's not usually the case. When we don't like the person we see in the mirror each morning, we usually don't care much for anyone else either.

When we're commanded to love others as we love ourselves, it's a given that we actually love ourselves. God wants us to take care of our needs, show kindness to ourselves, and be gentle with our thoughts about ourselves. And He wants us to treat others that way as well.

When we love ourselves the way God loves us, and we love others in the same way—by taking care of their needs and showing kindness, gentleness, and respect—our relationships become healthy and fulfilling.

*Dear Father, teach me to love myself,
so I can love others better. Amen.*

THE HEALER

“You shall serve the LORD your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you.”

EXODUS 23:25 ESV



God warned the Israelites—and He warns us—against the dangers of worshipping other gods. In a covenant contract with His people, He said, *“If you do this, I will do this.”* But if the Israelites chose to be unfaithful, the covenant was void. Often, God in His mercy chose to bless His people despite their sin, but they couldn’t expect the full benefits of His promises if they weren’t willing to keep up their end of the bargain.

The same is true today. Disease exists because sin exists in this world, and every one of us has sinned. When we choose faithfulness to God as a lifestyle, we may still be touched by disease. But that does not negate His overwhelming love for us. When we love Him with our whole hearts, we can cry out to the Healer, and He will bless us.

*Dear Father, You are the Healer. Please heal me,
and heal those I love. Amen.*

DO NOT BE AFRAID

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One.”

REVELATION 1:17–18 NASB



God is so awesome, so mighty and powerful, we can't help but feel afraid of Him. When we first stand in His presence, the essence of His greatness will overwhelm us. But this verse assures us, though we may tremble at the magnitude of His might, we have nothing to fear from Him.

God has existed in all His power since the beginning of time, and He will never cease to exist. Tied up in all that power is His overwhelming love for us, and He combines that love and power to work on our behalf through every season of our lives.

When circumstances leave us anxious about all kinds of things, we can pause, feel that gentle hand on our spirits, and hear His voice whisper, *“Do not be afraid.”*

Dear Father, thank You for this reminder that You love me, and I don't need to be afraid. Amen.

HONOR YOUR PARENTS

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first
commandment with a promise), “that it may go well
with you and that you may live long in the land.”*

EPHESIANS 6:1–3 ESV



By design, parents love their children. Although there are exceptions, most parents want what is best for their offspring. Even the ungodly will teach good things to their children in hopes that they will succeed in life. When we listen to our parents' wisdom, we avoid making the same mistakes they made, and our lives are better.

This verse contains both a promise and a principle. When we listen to the people God has placed in authority over us as our parents, when we choose to honor them and make them proud, we choose a path of wisdom, which leads to triumphant living. And we can always find wisdom by seeking God's input, for He is the ultimate parent.

Dear Father, thank You for being the perfect parent. Help me to honor my earthly parents, and help me honor You. Amen.

NO NEED TO GRIEVE

Now the LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons.”

1 SAMUEL 16:1 NASB



Elections can get pretty emotional. No matter where we stand on the political spectrum, the issues that are important to us seem crucial to our future health, happiness, and well-being. When our candidate or our cause doesn't win, we can feel devastated and without hope.

But we need to remind ourselves that God has it all under control. He knew the results of the current election before time began, and He's already put everything in place to bring His perfect plan to completion. There's no need to grieve the loss of an election or an unfavorable turn of the political tide. We just need to trust Him.

*Dear Father, please raise up a godly leader.
We need a David. Amen.*