

*“See what great love
the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are!
The reason the world does not know us
is that it did not know him.”*

1 JOHN 3:1



PRESENTED TO:

30 Devotions for WOMEN

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Credits:

Author: Audrey Ferris

Editor: Lora Schrock

Cover and Interior Design: RoseAnne Sather

Director of Content: Jennifer Hooks

Chief Operating Officer: Steve Foster

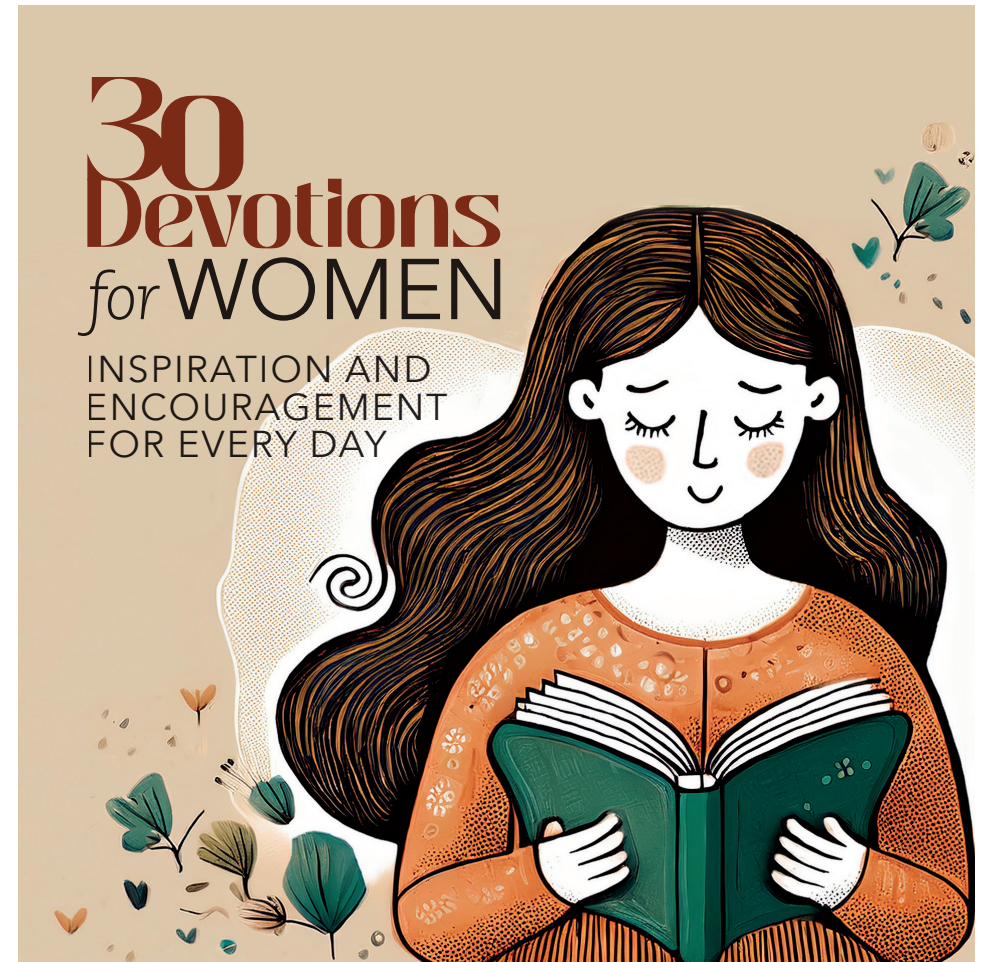
Chief Executive Officer: Scott Evans

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RECONSIDER *the Presentation Years*

Remember when you were dating and felt like you had to look and act perfect?

I think of those as my “Presentation Years.” I did my best to always smile, be attentive and have my makeup just right.

Thinking back, I’m not sure who I thought I was fooling. Even if I’d been homecoming queen and never made a faux pas, I wasn’t perfect. Nobody was or is.

And nobody includes you.

If you were perfect, you wouldn’t need Jesus. He took you on knowing you lose your patience with the kids, think bad thoughts when someone cuts you off in traffic, and makes an unkind remark about your neighbor. Even on your worst days, He loves you.

Today accept yourself as you are—imperfect but with a heart that beats for Jesus. Imperfect but with a desire to serve Him and others. Abandon hope on convincing anyone—including yourself—that you’re perfect. You’re not.

But at least as far as Jesus is concerned, you’re lovable.

Today, set aside any expectation
that you have to be perfect
and just be yourself.
It’s exactly how God made you.



CHOOSE LOVE

Let's be real: Sometimes life would be easier if other people weren't in it.

There are days even people you love can drive you crazy. And the people you don't love—that petty co-worker or rude store clerk—well, they have no idea you've added them to the endangered species list.

Today someone will round the corner with an unreasonable demand or sarcastic comment. Someone will find the last shred of your patience and tap dance on it.

And you'll have to choose how to respond.

Respond with love. Not because the person deserves it, but because you didn't deserve it and God lifted you with His love anyway. Do it because nothing shines God's love out into the darkness like caring responses in an uncaring world.

Maybe that love will look like a gentle response. Or a calm challenge. It may even look like you standing firm and setting a boundary.

But it never looks like you unloading a bucket of rage on the head of others.

So today when you're tempted to react...respond instead. Pause a moment and ask God to work in and through you.

*“Above all, love each other deeply,
because love covers over
a multitude of sins.”*

1 PETER 4:8



Make One Corner of Your World **BEAUTIFUL**

Create something beautiful in your world today. If you're a crafter maybe it's hot-gluing branches together to make museum-worthy wall art. If the kitchen is where you shine perhaps the perfect sweet onion omelet is in your future.

Or it might be a song...a poem...or a planted petunia out by the mailbox.

However you express your creativity, do it today to make some small slice of your world more beautiful.

And as you're energized by the act of creating, invite your Creator to make something a bit more beautiful out of you, too.

Perhaps He'll sand off a rough edge or soften your heart for someone who's long irked you. Maybe He will plant some seeds of compassion in your heart toward someone who is hurting. It's hard to know what He'll do until you invite Him to keep shaping you, to continue the transformation He's already started.

One corner of your world, one corner of your life.
It's going to be a great day.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

ECCLESIASTES 3:11



WOMEN OF FAITH:

Kendall Vanderslice

"It's tempting to look for God at work in big, spectacular ways, to assume that God's movement involves wild answers to prayer. But often God's movement is more subtle. Through the people around us, and through the bread we share, God whispers to us, *I love you. I'm with you. I care.*"

—Kendall Vanderslice

Look for the little miracles today.
Listen for the still, small voice.
How is God letting you know
He's with you?
Where do you see His footprints
as He walks alongside you?



QUIT *Listening to the Wrong Voices*

A study released by The WealthiHer Network reports 79% of women suffer with general self-esteem issues.

Hardly a surprise, is it? Given everything chiseling away at us in society, it's amazing more of us aren't struggling with a lack of confidence.

There are the unrealistic beauty standards we fail to hit (I'm looking at you, Barbie); the expectation we'll somehow juggle work, marriage, motherhood and laundry successfully; and the tendency to constantly compare ourselves to others.

It's a recipe for emotional disaster.

If you're feeling less than content with yourself, give something a try: Quit listening to the wrong voices.

Our culture doesn't define you—God does.

Hollywood doesn't set the standards for true beauty—God does.

Your family of origin doesn't have the last word on whether you're worthy of love—God does.

Your work supervisor doesn't get to decide if you're valuable—God does.

Social media doesn't tell you the truth about yourself—God does.

If you struggle with self-worth, switch off the voices telling you lies about yourself and embrace your identity in Christ.

Your ultimate value isn't determined by anyone but your Creator and He loves you and wants you to see yourself as He sees you: wonderful and beloved.

*“I praise you because
I am fearfully and
wonderfully
made; your
works are
wonderful,
I know
that full
well.”*

PSALM 139:14



Accept **NO SUBSTITUTES**

I'm hesitant to quote the Rolling Stones in a devotional, but when they sing "You Can't Always Get What You Want," they're onto something.

Because you can't, can you?

Our lives are a collection of compromises when it comes to getting what we want. Yes, it's a nice apartment, but you would have preferred a house. Your shoes look fine, but you wish you could have snagged those classy Italian boots.

Most people—and you're probably included—get very good at self-soothing when what you want is out of reach.

You wish you could visit Rome, but since you can't, you're a fan of travel TV shows. You wish your partner were more romantic, so you devour romance novels. You feel unfulfilled at work, so you go shopping.

They're substitutes, all second best. They don't satisfy and fail to fulfill.

Today, accept no substitutes.

Instead of wishing for a vacation, start saving for one. Rather than wishing your partner would share a deep conversation with you, tell them what you want. Instead of buying something new to lift your mood, ask God who you could help and see

what serving others does for you.

Go first to your Father and ask for what you need.

Then be open to receive what He has for you.

You may not get what you want but you can count on this: You'll get what you need.



DON'T WORRY *About Nests*

While breezing through her morning walk, Anji unexpectedly found herself weeping.

"I passed an elm tree I walk by every day," she said, "but today I happened to look up and there it was."

An empty nest.

That's all it took for my friend to have an existential crisis, right there in Potter Park.

"In a year all my kids will be grown and gone," she said. "Then what? I've been a mom for 20 years. Once they're on their own, what happens to me?"

To be fair, Anji is also an ER nurse, a library volunteer, a deacon, a wife, and a five-star friend.

But I get it, and maybe you do, too.

"Mom" has been at the center of her identity for decades. When she's no longer needed in the same way as when her kids were little, the loss she will feel will leave her brokenhearted.

In some ways, Anji's loss will be like the loss felt by those who suddenly exit a career that defined them.

They flounder, wondering what's next. And why they should bother getting up in the morning.

No matter what loss is rocking your world, you still have a

place in it. You have a purpose, and it doesn't depend on your profession or parenting.

You're here as a servant of God—and He's got stuff for you to do.

So, if you're suffering loss, do so while being comforted by your heavenly Father. And roll out of bed knowing today is a day worth living.

*“For we are God’s handiwork,
created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance
for us to do.”*

EPHESIANS 2:10



Top Off Your ENCOURAGEMENT TANK

It sometimes feels as if the entire universe is out to torpedo your enthusiasm for life. Things go sideways at work or home, aches and pains appear, unexpected bills come in for a landing.

Ugh.

But here's the truth: You're still a daughter of the King. You're still headed for heaven. You're still beloved and befriended by God.

That's a lot going right even if you can't find your keys.

Take a moment right now to pause and be grateful for all God has done, is doing, and will do for you in the future. Thank Him, and be specific. Name those blessings and let the reality of your situation sink in: You're part of God's family and nothing that comes at you today will change that.

Feel your spirits lifting?

Good.

Now good luck finding those keys.

*“I have told you these things,
so that in me you may have peace.
In this world you will have trouble.
But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

JOHN 16:33



WOMEN OF FAITH:

Corrie ten Boom

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow.
It empties today of its strength."

—Corrie ten Boom

What are your worries today?
What's sapping your energy
and holding your sleep hostage?
Tell God.
He's interested...and is waiting
to hear from you.

*“Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present
your requests to God.”*

PHILIPPIANS 4:6



Declare a Truce WITH YOUR MESSSES

You know who I resent in the Bible?
It's that woman described in Proverbs 31:10-31. Feel free to read about her if you enjoy feeling inadequate. She's an entrepreneur, a loving wife, a patient and insightful mother, a stellar household manager. She's sophisticated and successful.

I resent her because I'm not her. Do you ever feel that way?

Today declare a truce with the messes in your life, whether they're last night's dishes piled high in the sink or the project you have procrastinated starting at work. Yes, you fall short of perfection, but God isn't finished working on you. Through His Holy Spirit, He is still shaping you, still helping you grow into the woman He's created you to be.

Your messes are simply a sign God hasn't yet wrapped up your transformation.

Remember God loves you. So much so, in fact, that Jesus is busy preparing a place for you to share with Him in eternity.

*“...he who began a good work in you
will carry it on to completion
until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

PHILIPPIANS 1:6



Inch Toward **FORGIVENESS**

It's easy to shrug off some slights: a mean glance, a sarcastic comment, an eyeroll.

But other words and deeds cut deeper. And then there are those betrayals that leave scars and feel as if they are beyond forgiveness.

Especially when those who've hurt you think they've done nothing wrong.

Here's the problem: Failing to forgive others costs you. Not just the weight you continue carrying, but also the challenge of accepting God's forgiveness while refusing to grant the same grace to others.

Or maybe "refusing" is the wrong word.

Perhaps you've tried to forgive someone—but so far, it's just not in you.

If that's the case, talk with God about it today. Confess you can't forgive the man who left you. Or the woman who shredded your reputation and enjoyed doing it.

Tell God who's hurt you, and ask for His help forgiving them.

Maybe that's the best you can do today.

It's a start—and God is in it.

Who do you need to forgive...and why?

