

A photograph of a person from the waist down, wearing a vibrant blue, pleated, long-sleeved dress. They are walking barefoot on a large, dark, textured rock. The background is a lush garden with green foliage and trees, bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The overall mood is serene and natural.

5 Day Devotional

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DAY 1

Start Simple

I met God in the alley way of despair in 2012. He found me amongst all of my trash and dirty laundry. I was carrying my broken marriage on my back and shattered all around me were the hopes and dreams of my future. I caught a look at myself in a shard of a broken mirror at my feet and saw a pitiful, weak, worthless girl looking back at me. But God saw something totally different. He saw a project, and He was quick to put His creative talents to work.

I didn't even know who God was or how to approach Him, but He didn't hesitate to draw me near. Finally, my eyes were opened, and I was willing to listen, but I struggled knowing how to talk to Him.

One day, after hiding in a heap of laundry...crying uncontrollably, I headed up the stairs from my basement and wiped my eyes before returning to my kiddos who were probably wondering where mom had gone. I began to whisper, "Jesus, help me. Jesus, help me. Jesus, help me" over and over and over again. With each step, I repeated it again. I don't know what prompted me to say it...it was just an urge from the pit of my stomach...and out it came.

As I continued to say it, Jesus did in fact, help me. It wasn't the swoop of a knight in shining armor I was expecting, rather it was a quiet peace that relieved my fear and anxiety for just a few minutes.

With every repeated simple prayer, the peace covered me again and again. In the beginning, my prayer would get me through 15 minutes....then 30....later an hour and eventually, a day at a time. That simple call for help that came from the most sincere part of my soul, saved me over and over again as I began to navigate a new road with God.

When you don't know what to say or how to ask...remember to start simple, "Jesus, help me."

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

-Psalm 46:1

DAY 2

Building Trust Through the Small Things

It's not easy to hand life over to God when you have been steering the ship for so long. Our world values and admires self-sufficiency, success, and personal achievement, so the shame that you feel when it all comes crashing down is overwhelming. I've always been independent and, like my dad, have a very hard time asking for help. But when you are so full of yourself, there is little room for God to show you how incredibly faithful and good He is.

My sudden crash in life created an opportunity (a need actually) for me to allow God to provide the things I could not provide for myself. I was a stay-at-home mom with two young kids and my husband was unexpectedly no longer in the picture. Worry and fears over how to provide and keep us from sinking flooded my mind daily.

God tells us not to worry about tomorrow because He will provide us with our daily bread. I was worried about getting back to work as a teacher and refinancing my home along with a million other things that weighed on me daily, but God started with coffee.

Coffee? Sounds strange, but I have learned that God is not always orthodox in His ways. I was out of K-cups and a friend happened to show up the same day, with no knowledge of my coffee shortage, and brought me a box of K-cups. God moved onto the trampoline. I struggled getting it put together for my kids, and a friend of a friend stopped by offering to help. Time passed and my son was going through a growth spurt. Out of nowhere, a bag of clothes appeared on my back sunporch. God started with the little things to teach me how to trust Him.

God said, "I know you need a job. I know you need your home. I will take care of those things, but first, sit. Have a cup of coffee. Enjoy your children on the trampoline and make sure your boy has clothes that fit. I could trust Him with the big things because He was faithful in the small things. He expects that same in return. *Be faithful in the small things and He will trust you with much bigger, grander things than you ever imagined.*

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful."

DAY 3

Being Torn Between the Old and the New

When I began my journey with God, I clung to His word and surrounded myself with strong believers who helped shape and mold me into a new person. So long as I stayed in my house or gathered with my fellow believers, I was safe. But eventually God tested the foundation of my new faith by sending me out into the old world I used to live in.

They say people stay in bad situations for long periods of time because they are comfortable and familiar. People generally prefer knowing what to expect, even if it isn't good, over the uncertainty of change. The devil uses comfort to keep us stuck in old ways, while God calls us to become uncomfortable in order to lift us to higher places.

I remember my first experiences with old friends...returning to old situations where I used to be the class clown of the group...making inappropriate comments, telling obscene jokes, drinking too much and swearing as if it were my second language. It wasn't that I felt the need to abandon my old friends, but I definitely felt God calling me to a new expectation. Not through a judging eye, but through the tug of conviction. He knew I didn't need those old crutches to find worth in the crowd. I had Him now and His opinion of me surpassed all others.

Shedding my old habits and taking hold of the new ones is still a battle every day. Finding the balance between who God wants me to be and how He is using me (and all of my faults) to reach others is a slippery slope. Luckily, Jesus knows this temptation well. He walked these halls and faced the same challenges. He was sent because God knew I would fail, but He wanted me anyways.

So, while comfort and familiarity still beckon for me, I can count on God's grace to continually help me as I battle between old ways and new ones. It is His gift to me.. a gift I cannot earn.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not from yourselves, It is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast.”

-Ephesians 2: 8-9

Trusting in Silence

Let it be known that I am a bit of a control freak. And as if that weren't bad enough, I struggle with impatience. I have a very bad habit of taking control of things when I don't get the immediate response I'm looking for. Being still...waiting patiently...taking the back seat on a road trip....all push me beyond my fleshly inclinations. I think God looks deeply at our biggest weaknesses and carefully crafts His assignments for us. While God took advantage of every tiny opportunity to build my trust when I first met Him in the valley, eagerly answering me and building my faith, now I have grown as a Christian and matured in my faith. He requires more patience from me as He develops my character.

It is difficult to resist the urge to forge ahead to places I'm not ready for, or even places God isn't calling me to, when God makes me wait on His answers and direction. I have found myself back-tracking on more occasions than I'd like to admit thanks to giving into my own will and not waiting on His.

Silence is difficult. Like a young child, I get restless in the stillness, but I try to remind myself of the great work God does behind the scenes in the silence. God created the seasons with purpose and intent. The hibernation of winter brings forth a great appreciation of spring. God uses the silence to thaw hearts, to fertilize soil, to plant seeds and to prepare us to bloom.

We must trust in the silence, knowing God does some of His best work while we feel dormant. It's ok to rest. He is still working.

"Be still and know that I am God."

Psalms 46:10

Protection from Myself

"I am my own worse enemy. This more than any trait, proves my fundamental humanity" (Dean Koontz). We. Are. Human. This statement explains a lot about the messes we create and the trouble we get ourselves into. We are human and we are deeply flawed. So much so, that God knew we would never, ever be good enough to make it into Heaven. I picture Him looking down upon us, hand over his forehead, shaking his head back and forth in disbelief of the problems we create. Everywhere He looks, all day long, He sees little fires in our neighborhoods. "Look! There is Sara again...moving ahead when I clearly told her to stay still." He huffs and puffs, but then takes a deep breath and His eyes soften. I am His child and He loves me, despite my worst attempts to take charge of my life. Like any good Father, He only wants what is best for me and so He starts to devise His plan to get me back on track.

A plan I will most likely cling to at first and then derail again as my "humanness" overcomes me. I very well may be my own worst enemy, but I am eternally grateful that I have the very best protector anyone could ask for. Christ is my personal Savior and more times than not, He is saving me from myself.

Everything God does is good for me. It may not feel good. It may not look good. But I can trust that it *is* good. Whether I can see the goodness of His work immediately, this side of Heaven, or whether He reveals it to me face-to-face one day, I can trust in His goodness, His provision and protection.

He works all things for the good of those who love Him.

"He will cover you with His feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart."

-Psalm 91:4