

# MORNINGS *with* JESUS 2023

DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT *for your* SOUL

365

DEVOTIONS

**FREE**  
Sampler

## SATURDAY, JULY 1

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*You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you . . .*

*Deuteronomy 5:33 (NKJV)*

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AS MY SOON-TO-BE TWENTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER and I waited in the checkout line, I scanned the merchandise displays for impulse purchases. A bright, green-striped beach bag caught my attention. It would be perfect for our upcoming family vacation.

The tote was well constructed with room for towels, sunscreen, and snacks. I put the straps on my shoulder and remembered the days of traipsing through the shifting, white sand to a vacant spot down the beach, away from the crowd. When my daughter was young, her feet would sink in the deep sand. She struggled to walk as she tried to keep up with her father and me.

“Walk where Daddy stepped,” I said, as I bent down to her eye level and pointed to where her father’s footprints burrowed out the sand. She stretched her thin legs, hopping and jumping to match his stride. I followed behind, also taking advantage of the path my husband had made. It was easy and effortless for both my daughter and me.

Placing the beach bag on the checkout counter, I looked up at my daughter, who stands a head taller than me. She can now forge her own path through the deep sand, but my hope is that we both remember how much better it is to walk in the footprints of the One who goes before us. —KAREN SARGENT

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**FAITH STEP:** *Encourage a child or young person in your life to walk in Jesus’s footsteps.*

## SUNDAY, JULY 2

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*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13 (NIV)*

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MY HUSBAND AND I ARE happily married, but the “happy” part didn’t happen automatically. Early in our marriage, I blurted out my emotions without considering their impact. I was quick to judge his actions while making excuses for my own behavior. I would spend hours on tasks that consumed me, overworking and leaving very little time for us as a couple. Even though I was overly sensitive to his constructive criticism, I knew I needed to change. I wanted a second chance.

The Peter in Acts is very different from the Peter in Matthew. In Acts 4, Peter courageously and unapologetically preaches the gospel of Jesus, while back in Matthew 26, he denied knowing Jesus. So what made the difference? Jesus gave Peter a second chance. Peter learned from his mistake and reconciled with Jesus (John 21:15–19).

Change isn’t easy. We all make mistakes. It took practice and prayer, but, fortunately, after twenty years of marriage I’m a different (and, more importantly, a better) wife today than I was when I first married. I’m open to asking for and accepting feedback. I show more empathy toward my husband’s perspective. I take time to think before I speak and try to be fully present when we’re together. I’m thankful to my husband, and Jesus, for second chances. —ERICKA LOYNES

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**FAITH STEP:** *Do you need a second chance? Stop dwelling on your mistakes. Instead, forgive yourself, reflect on what you have learned, and have the courage to change.*

## MONDAY, JULY 3

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*Even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will hold me close. Psalm 27:10 (NLT)*

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ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS is when I see my little children climbing onto my husband's lap or snuggling by his side. Even though my youngest kids are ten and eleven years old, they want to sit near him, especially during family movie night. They like being close to their dad because of the relationship that he's built with them. Years of providing for them, hugging them, and listening to them have created a special closeness.

These moments are significant to me because I never had that type of relationship with an earthly father. Growing up, I didn't know my biological father and my stepdad was aloof and distant. Thankfully, I've discovered that I can draw close to my Heavenly Father. As I pray, I picture myself climbing onto His lap. Because I know He cares, it brings me peace and my heart floods with joy and love to imagine my Heavenly Father holding me close.

Even if we have felt abandoned by our fathers, mothers, or other family members, I know we can always trust that Jesus is forever faithful. Just as I picture little children turning to Jesus, I can turn to Him in the same way. Whenever I feel alone, I imagine climbing up into His lap. Jesus puts His arms around me, holding me close and loving me. —TRICIA GOYER

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**FAITH STEP:** *Picture yourself drawing near to Jesus. Can you see yourself climbing onto His lap and allowing Him to hold you close? Pause and find peace there.*

## INDEPENDENCE DAY, TUESDAY, JULY 4

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*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1 (NIV)*

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PICNICS AND FIREWORKS, MOSQUITO BITES and the scent of sunscreen—all conjure the memory of July 4th gatherings. I'm so grateful for the freedom I enjoy in my country. Liberty is a treasure worth celebrating with noisy fireworks and rousing marches from a local band.

But there is a far more amazing freedom that I've been gifted because of the grace of Jesus. I am free to be loved by my Creator, free of the penalty of sin, free of a sense of worthlessness that tries to dog my steps. And I'm free from the fear of death.

Galatians reminds me to stand firm in that freedom. Like the people in Galatia, I slip into thinking I need to do more, that perhaps Christ's grace isn't enough. I take on burdens that aren't mine to carry and forget the sufficiency of Jesus. I struggle to trust He has truly forgiven me for my mistakes.

So while I indulge in watermelon and corn on the cob, I'll also remember the deeper liberty of Independence Day. Shackles fall away. Doubts are swallowed up by joy. Grace gives my heart wings.

In Jesus, I am truly free. And that's something to celebrate.  
—SHARON HINCK

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**FAITH STEP:** *Blow a horn, use a noise maker, applaud, and cheer. Celebrate your freedom in Christ today.*



## WEDNESDAY, JULY 5

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*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12 (NIV)*

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ENGINE TROUBLE ON OUR SAILBOAT caused unexpected delays. My husband and I arrived at the mouth of the Fraser River as the wind was calm and the sun was setting. At dusk, we motored upriver. It was nearly impossible to see hazards in the water, but we had to keep going so we could find a place to moor.

I pulled out our big light. Gene steered the sailboat while I stood on the deck holding a three-thousand-lumen spotlight (equivalent to the light of three thousand candles). Steel navigational buoys located fourteen hundred feet apart dotted the length of that section of the river, marking the lanes in which incoming and outgoing vessels traveled. Colliding with one could seriously damage a hull, which is the body of the boat. My task was to find these markers and shine the light on them so Gene could steer away from them. Trying to navigate the river without that light would have been treacherous, foolish, and nearly impossible.

Jesus knew that navigating life successfully in spiritual darkness was impossible for mankind. He loved us so much that He came to earth and died for us (John 3:16). He revealed Himself as the light of life (John 1:4). He unveiled the enemy's tactics and lies so we could steer clear of them (James 4:7). I can't imagine navigating life apart from the light of Jesus any more than I can motor safely upriver in the dark. —GRACE FOX

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**FAITH STEP:** *Recall an instance in which Jesus saved you from a potentially painful situation.*

## THURSDAY, JULY 6

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*Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy,  
LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is  
praying in your presence this day. 1 Kings 8:28 (NIV)*

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*GOOD MORNING FROM THE BRONX! Hello from Birmingham, Alabama! Praise God from Houston! Greetings from Dubai!* People from around the world dial in to my church's daily 7 a.m. prayer call. Monday through Friday, I hear familiar voices joyfully bidding each other good morning before the prayer leader mutes the phone line and starts with his or her own welcome and a short devotional before beginning our time in prayer.

It's great to start my day in communal prayer with like-minded believers who know the power of coming together before the Lord. We pray for all sorts of things—healing for loved ones, courage to face the day, protection of our leaders, peace in our country, safety for our children, restoration of relationships, unwavering faith, and more. The prayer leader will often unmute the line for a few seconds during our fifteen minutes together so we can collectively call out the names of people or situations we want to lift up to Jesus, trusting that He will answer us in due time. I don't know who's saying what in the cacophony of voices, but I know that Jesus hears.

Whether I'm alone in my bedroom or among hundreds of people on the phone, I have confidence that the lines of communication are always open with Him. Jesus hears us all. —BARBRANDA LUMPKINS WALLS

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**FAITH STEP:** *Call a friend or relative to join you in prayer today.*

## FRIDAY, JULY 7

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*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Philippians 4:6 (NLT)*

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MY SON AND I WANTED to catch a movie at our town's waterfront park. At the end of a busy day, we ran late, and all the nearby parking spots were taken. When Isaac, who has Down syndrome, gets tired or loses patience, he'll dig in his heels and go no further, even if it's something he really wants to do.

Laps around the various lots yielded nothing, and parking far away wasn't an option as I had chairs to carry. I started to feel anxious and prayed because I was out of ideas.

*Thank You, Jesus!* I finally found an open parking spot, but it was far enough away to make it a struggle with beach chairs and now-grumpy Isaac in tow. I got out of my minivan and popped open the trunk, wondering how we'd manage.

"Isabella, is that you?"

My friend Tammy and her husband, Tim, were walking their dogs. I didn't know they lived nearby. I explained our plight.

"Our golf cart is right around the corner," Tammy said, as Tim darted down the street to retrieve it.

Moments later, Tim pulled up, loaded our chairs, and delivered Isaac and me to the perfect spot in the grass to watch the movie. I marveled how Jesus answered my prayer in a way I never imagined. I wanted a close parking space, but a wheeled cart was even better. I was out of ideas, but Jesus was not. —ISABELLA CAMPOLATTARO

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**FAITH STEP:** *Next time you run into a problem, make prayer your first resort instead of your last.*



Meet the women  
who long to  
share their  
faith journeys  
with you.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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BECKY ALEXANDER teaches for the International Guide Academy and leads tours to Washington, D.C., New York, Toronto, Niagara Falls, Charleston, Nashville, and other destinations. She even works on cruise ships from time to time. Before her travel adventures, she taught kids about Jesus for twenty-five years as a children's minister. Now, she

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Becky's devotions and stories appear in Guideposts' *Pray a Word a Day*, *Whispers from Above: God's Comforting Ways*, *Whispers from Above: In the Arms of Angels*, and *When God Makes Lemonade*. Becky loves to write about happy things, like the colorful wildflowers and singing warblers on her family's farm in Decatur, Alabama. She collaborated with her biologist brother and teacher sister to create *Clover's Wildflower Field Trip*, a children's book that supports elementary science units on plants and natural habitats. You can meet Clover and say hi to Becky at [happychairbooks.com](http://happychairbooks.com).



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books. She's also written numerous articles for print and online magazines and blogs. She's passionate about using written words to encourage women in their relationships with Jesus.

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