

# *Cultivating* Spiritual Growth

*40* Devotions to  
Challenge and Encourage

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Kingdom Winds  
Publishing

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*I have written 'Yahweh' instead of 'the LORD' where the Holy Spirit originally inspired it to be placed in the Holy Scriptures. As mentioned above, 'unless otherwise noted,' all Scripture quotations are from the Christian Standard Bible®.*

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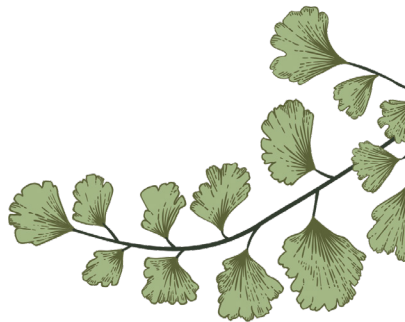
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To the women who spoke  
life to me



# Acknowledgments

First and foremost, in writing this book and (hopefully) in everything else in my life, the glory goes to God. If it were not for Him, my life and family wouldn't look anything like it does today, and I certainly wouldn't have put together a small book of devotionals. He deserves all the glory for everything good in my life.

Secondly, I would like to thank my wonderful and handsome husband, Patrick Quinn. I wouldn't be where I am in my faith if God hadn't used you as He did. It was hard, but through our struggles, He taught me so much about trusting Him and obeying His Spirit. I am so in love with you and look forward to cherishing you and this adventure called life for now and forever more.

Thirdly, I should thank my children. God has used them to teach me about how weak I truly am. He has used them to teach me about how much He as our heavenly Father loves us and is patient with His children. Parenting is so hard, but God has used this time of my life to help me learn to rely on His strength. As much as I love my children, I cannot save them. As much as I try to teach them to obey, the truth is that they have free will. Loving my children as a Christian has really helped me to see how God loves us and how we should love others. I can honestly say that I would not be where I am in my faith

if it weren't for the struggles and lessons that God has taught me (and continues to teach me) through my children. Aelia, Corabell, Elsie, and Dean, I love you each so much!

Fourthly, it wouldn't be fair to thank those who made this book possible without including Beth (Elizabeth) Suess, who invited me to publish my book with Kingdom Winds. Gloria Biggers, who tolerantly put up with my indecisiveness as we worked together to come up with a beautiful cover for this book. Becca James, who helped iron out all of the bumps in my writings. And Dawn King, who helped ensure a smooth page layout. This book would not have been of this kind of quality without all of your assistance. Thank you to all of you ladies and to Kingdom Winds for partnering with me on my first book publishing experience. I believe that you agree when I say that I hope and pray that all of this is done for the glory of God, for the building up of His children, and for the spreading of the gospel!

And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, equipping the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow up into your salvation, if you have tasted that the Lord is good.

1 Peter 2:1-3

# Introduction

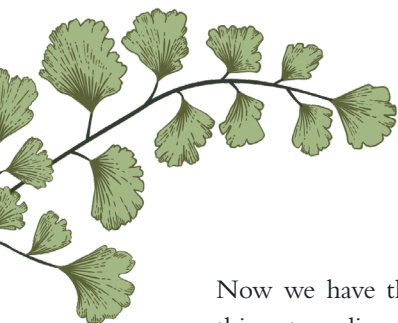
My name is Jennifer Quinn, and I have about one semester's worth of college education. For those of you who are wondering, no, it was not at a seminary. My earthly father is not a pastor; I am a stay-at-home mom of four children and a wife. I don't have a foreword written by Priscilla Shirer. My only credentials are the personal indwelling and teaching of the Holy Spirit. That's it, that's all I have. The following verses describe what happened to me.

Brothers and sisters, consider your calling: Not many were wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world—what is viewed as nothing—to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, so that no one may boast in his presence.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

My hope and desire is that these writings will bless you, make you think, push you to live intentionally, encourage you, and help you to live in a way that pleases God. One heart changed can change a life, a family, a town, a country, and even the world. You matter, you are seen, and you are loved by the living God.

# Beautifully Broken



Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us.

2 Corinthians 4:7

I have a friend that has a beautiful jar. It is so ornate, bright, and colorful. You wouldn't know it by looking at it on her shelf, but it's also broken. She has it turned so that the broken side is facing the wall so that the viewer won't notice. How many of us try to hide our own brokenness from those around us? Now, look back at the verse above. What sticks out to you when you think about 'clay jars'? Personally, when I think of clay jars, I think ordinary and fragile. They're the kind of thing that I would try to keep my children from touching as we walked through a store, not necessarily because they are very valuable but because I know that if they fall, they will break.

Satan knows that we humans are fragile. I believe that he truly enjoys causing cracks and breaks and doing everything he can to try to shatter us and he's done a pretty good job on most of us, hasn't he? I remember how horrible it was to live with depression, anxiety, anger, loneliness, and unforgiveness. I



was so broken when God came after me. He truly does leave the ninety-nine to go and bring back the one that has strayed.

I want to point out a beautiful truth: once you have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus and your sins are forgiven, your broken pieces are no longer something to be ashamed of. The more broken we are, the easier it is for people to see the treasure within us. Think of your brokenness as testimony windows that give glory and honor to God. With Jesus, your brokenness is beautiful.

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” — and I am the worst of them.

1 Timothy 1:15

## *Heart Application*

Sister,

We’re all broken. I’m broken. You’re broken. You know that woman at church that you think is so spiritually mature and seems to have it all together? She may be extremely broken; you just don’t notice it because God’s love and joy shines through her many broken places so brightly. If you don’t believe me, ask her. Ask her what difficulties she’s been through in life and how God has used them.

Stop allowing fear to hinder your testimony.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.

2 Timothy 7:7-8

Write down some of the things that have caused your brokenness. You don't have to share this with anyone; write it down for yourself. Reassure your own heart and soul that these *things* do not define you. These things are what Satan intended for harm, but God will use them for your good and for His glory. These things are the windows that God's love, mercy, grace, and salvation will shine through the brightest.

## Journaling Space

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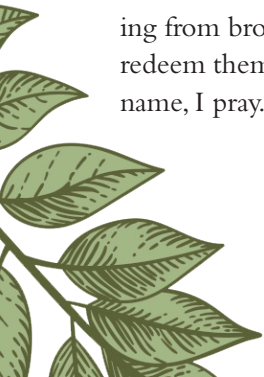
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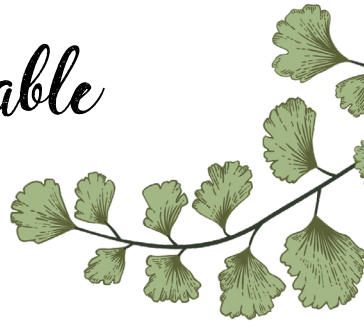
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Father God, please help us to not be ashamed or afraid to let people see our brokenness. Give us the courage to be vulnerable and honest with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank You, God, for redeeming us from a life of brokenness and for never turning away from us when we come to You with broken hearts or dirty hands. May we be refreshed by Your Spirit. May we share our testimonies so that our brothers and sisters will be encouraged and so that those who are still suffering from brokenness can be pointed to the only One who can redeem them from it and make it something beautiful. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.



# The Most Valuable Thing



What is the most valuable thing on Earth? For many, the most valuable thing that they believe they will ever be in possession of is a piece of jewelry, a vehicle, or a home. Some believe the most valuable possession they'll ever own is found in their bank account, or maybe they feel that the most valuable thing they own is a family heirloom or something with sentimental value. These things all have value to some degree; I don't think anyone would deny that. However, they are not the most valuable thing on Earth and certainly not the most valuable possession someone will ever have. *The most valuable thing in this universe is the human soul.* Jesus said,

“For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will anyone give in exchange for his life?”

Matthew 16:26

I believe Jesus was asking a rhetorical question here. Of course, nothing, not even possession of the entire world and

all it contains, is worth more than one's own life and soul. So next time you feel that you don't have the time or the money to spend loving someone in the name of Jesus, listen when the Holy Spirit reminds you how much love He has for every lost soul.

## *Heart Application*

Sister,

True love is always sacrificial. Look at the cross. Look at a loving parent. The person who claims to love yet sacrifices nothing is only deceiving herself. We know love or the lack thereof when we receive it. I know that we all have limited resources. We have a limited amount of time, money, and emotional strength, but shouldn't we spend those things in a way that is pleasing to God? The next time God presents you with an opportunity to love someone sacrificially, remember that He is your source of all things good and that if He wants to use you to love someone else, He will provide what you need and be with you every step of the way. Obey in faith one step at a time.

Write down a memory that you have from a time when you experienced sacrificial love. How did it feel to receive such love? Think about how that memory would be different if you had not received that act of love.

*Journaling Space*

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God, we can never repay You for the incredible gift that You gave us, but we can surrender our lives, time, and resources to You and Your perfect will. We can love You enough to obey You, and, in this obedience, we can love the lost and hurting around us. We can truly love one another only because You fill us with Your love and guide us by Your Spirit. Help us to obey You, for You often lead us when we feel it is inconvenient and uncomfortable. Your timing is not our own; Yours is perfect. Please, God, reminds us in that moment to follow where You lead us. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

# Mess Upon Mess



One day, not long ago, as I was trying to clean, my children were making continuous messes. I would clean something, walk away to do something else, and when I came back, they were making a new mess where I had just cleaned. I said, “Girls, stop making mess upon mess!” Then the poet in me added in, ‘Stress upon stress.’ Then the Spirit reminded me of the Scriptures that tell us that God gives us “grace upon grace,” “strength to strength,” and “glory to glory.” How blessed are we! That even in the mess and the stress, our God covers us with His grace, strength, and glory! Saying those words just once doesn’t seem to express the truth as well as it does when we say it twice. If you will, say this out loud, “Grace upon grace, strength to strength, and glory to glory.” Let’s look at the Scriptures and see some of the context of these precious verses.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’”) Indeed, we

have all received *grace upon grace* from his fullness, for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him.

John 1:14-18

How happy are those who reside in your house, who praise you continually. Happy are the people whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a source of spring water; even the autumn rain will cover it with blessings. They go from *strength to strength*; each appears before God in Zion.

Psalm 84:4-7

Yet still today, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts, but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from *glory to glory*; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:15-18

I see a common theme with these verses of Scripture: the presence of God. It's only through Jesus that we receive these blessings. Only through God. Only through the Spirit of the Lord. May we read this next verse, take it into our hearts, and



live it out for His praise and glory.

If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:11

## *Heart Application*

Sister,

I hope I'm not the only person who almost starts to cry when saying, "Grace upon grace, strength to strength, and glory to glory." Being a mom is so hard. We're all trying so hard to get it right, and I know that most of us feel like we're falling short in this glorious calling. But we aren't doing this alone. No Christian mother is doing this alone. God is with you. He loves you, and He is for you! Don't give up Sister Momma. Trust and believe that God is in control and we are not. He has you and your children in His hands. I'm not strong enough. You're not strong enough. But God, He is more than able to take all of our messes and stresses and turn them into something beautiful.

What spoke to your heart the most from this devotional? How can you keep this truth or encouragement with you to reference it for hope the next time you're struggling and feeling discouraged? Now make it happen. Discouragement and struggle *will* come again. Be prepared to fight back with God's hope and His truth.



## *Journaling Space*

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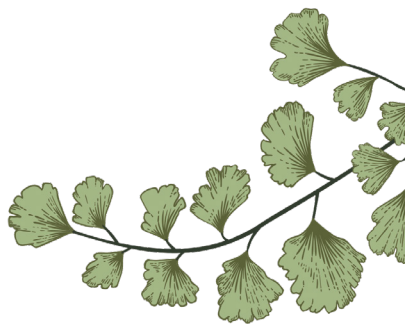
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Father, thank You so much for being our hope and strength! We are such a mess! Remind us of Your promises when we are struggling. Remind us of Your love and power when we are painfully aware of our inadequacies. Thank You for being the source of salvation for us and for our children. May we have the humility to repent when we mess up, and may we remember to point our children to You, the only perfect parent, the only one who can save them. Give us humility, strength, and grace. I love You, God. Thank You so much for loving us so incredibly much. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

# Dulled by Worry



“Be on your guard, so that your minds are not dulled from carousing, drunkenness, and worries of life, or that day will come on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come on all who live on the face of the whole earth. But be alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Luke 21:34-36

I find it very interesting that Luke warned us not to let our hearts be dulled, not only by carousing and drunkenness but also by the worries of this life. I know that we are told not to worry in the Scriptures. I know that worry doesn't do us any good because it is unable to add even a single moment to our lives, but I didn't know that worry could also dull our hearts. Christians need to have hearts that are soft and full of love, so let us all strive to cast off worry and live in a way that pleases our heavenly Father.

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

## *Heart Application*

Sister,

How is your heart doing? Are you suffering from a dulled heart by the worries of life? I know that I need to do this same evaluation on my own heart. The cure for worry in Philippians is to give thanks in everything through prayer and petition to God. I know that these verses are true. They helped me through a very difficult time; I suppose I need to remember to cling to them in the everyday worries and not just the devastating moments of life. I hope that you will remember to do this, too.

Write down what has been on your heart. Write down a prayer to God. Start with your worries and end your prayer with thanksgiving.

## *Journaling Space*

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God, please help us to let go of worry! It's such a constant and powerful struggle for so many of us. But You are greater than our fears. You are greater than any chain that tries to hold us down. God, please bless our hearts with Your peace that surpasses all understanding, not simply so that we can have this precious gift but also so that our hearts will be ones that are pleasing in Your eyes and ready to love those around us. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.