

A 14-part devotion series



Come and see what God has done



This devotion series, originally written by Sarah Condie for The Bible Society Australia, was created to encourage you to ponder the loving deeds of the Lord, so that songs of joy and thankfulness bubble forth from within you. Remembering the character of God and the wonderful things he has done moves us to praise and thank our great God for who he is and what he has done.

Some devotions will focus on small but significant habits, while others will focus on the character of God. At the end of each devotion and prayer, Sarah has provided a suggested song to listen to. Everyone's taste in music is unique, so please, if you don't like her choices, choose songs that you love.

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Devotion 1: Ponder

Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.

Psalm 107:43

Towards the end of the pandemic, I decided I needed help with being thankful to the Lord. I was struck by this verse and the encouragement to 'ponder the loving deeds of the Lord,' as I hadn't done that in a while. Psalm 107 gave me a framework to figure out how to bring about such a significant change.

At the time, I was stressed and emotionally wrung out. If I thought about how I felt, the word I used most was 'blah'. And to be honest, I didn't really feel anything at all — just empty. It's hard to be thankful when you are empty. My prayer to God was little more than an 'arrow' prayer:

'Satisfy me in the morning with your unfailing love, That I may sing for joy and be glad all my days.'

Psalm 90:14 (paraphrase)

I wanted to sing these songs but felt I had little voice; if I tried to sing, the tune was bland and monotonous.

But the Lord answered my prayer. In this series of devotions, I will share with you some of the things that helped change my 'blah and emptiness' into 'songs of joy and gladness.' Most of these suggestions are small, but they brought change.

The first step for me was to follow the Psalmist's example by turning my mind to the work of God. So, today, my encouragement to you is to 'ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.' Take the time to remember God's mighty and gracious work, especially your own salvation story.

Slowly read Psalm 107, filled with stories of God's rescue and notice the repeated encouragement to give thanks. Note too that first, God's people needed to remember. To remember, you need to slow down and ponder; you need to let your mind recall the wonderful deeds of the Lord.

'Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.'

Psalm 107:8-9

Our Father, we give thanks to you for your unfailing love and your wonderful deeds for humankind. Thank you that you satisfy the thirsty and fill the hungry with good things.

And perhaps, as you let God's word fill you, you may find that the feelings of 'blah' will lift a little and enable you to sing a song that is beautiful and melodic — full of joy and gladness.

Thank you for you are good, and your love endures forever. Let us tell of your works with songs of joy today. In the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Song: 'Give Thanks' by Hannah Hobbs



Devotion 2: Treasure

Praise the Lord, all you nations;

extol him, all you peoples.

For great is his love toward us,

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord.

Psalm 117:1-2

I am a fan of Antique Roadshow. I love watching someone find out that something buried in their attic gathering dust and cobwebs for decades is worth 10,000 pounds. And then hearing them say, 'lovely', or 'how marvellous'.

The Brits have mastered the art of understatement. Surely this treasure deserves a more enthusiastic response!

Psalm 117 might appear to be a somewhat understated cry of praise to the Lord. It's so short and bereft of padding.

Yet it provides a reason for responding to God with praise: our God's love for us is immeasurable, and his faithfulness is unending. In a few words, the Psalmist has unlocked the buried treasure of God's character and why he is worthy of our praise — truths that evoke more than a 'lovely' or 'how marvellous'.

You may be feeling unloved, or a bit 'blah', and think that lukewarm is about as warm as you can manage. Let me encourage you to read Psalm 117 out loud. In brief compass you will express your thanks and praise to the Lord who is worthy, despite how you feel.

I wonder if the restrained words that so often emerge on Antique Roadshow might mark the beginning of a transformation in the people with newly discovered dusty treasures. As they go home, they might clean the object and look at it with fresh eyes. Most likely they will tell their family and friends and spend time marvelling that something so precious has lain invisible for so long in their attic or cupboard.

Pondering our treasure trove of grace can warm our hearts. Why not recall the ways that God has shown his love and faithfulness towards you? Write them down in a small notebook to help you remember. And maybe you'll feel compelled to talk about it — to family, friends, work colleagues.

And perhaps, as those who have tasted of his goodness, his love, and his kindness through his Son, Jesus, our response will move beyond a lukewarm, 'how lovely'. May we find a joy and gladness that moves our hearts, minds, mouths and bodies with such enthusiasm that anyone looking at us knows that we are people who treasure our God.

Let's use Psalm 117 to pray:

Praise the Lord, all nations!

Extol him all peoples!

For great is his steadfast love toward us,

And the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord! Amen.

Song: 'A Thousand Hallelujahs' by Brooke Ligertwood



Devotion 3: Habit

"Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord!" (Psalm 134:1, ESV)

Psalm 134:1

The Ascent songs (Psalms 120-134) were written for the Israelite people to sing as they journeyed towards Jerusalem. This is the final instruction in the closing song. They have reached their destination and are encouraged to lift their hands to the holy place and 'bless the Lord'. Other words that capture the meaning of the word, 'bless' include praise, worship, glorify, honour, thank, exalt and adore.

The Israelites have arrived at the place where God has chosen to dwell in all his beauty, awesomeness, and splendour. And they are encouraged to say, 'Thank you, Lord.'

Saying 'thank you' does not come naturally. As a parent, one of the first things we taught our children was to say, 'thank you.'

Before eating a meal as we gather as a family, we say 'thank you' to our God, our provider. A tiny habit, but an opportunity to acknowledge the good things that God has provided, including the food we were about to eat.

On leaving the table, our children learnt to thank us as their parents for the meal they had eaten. A tiny habit, but an opportunity for them to acknowledge the good things their parents had done in preparing a meal.

When visiting friends and family, they learnt to say thank you to their hosts for having them into their home. A tiny habit, but an opportunity for them to acknowledge the good things they had enjoyed.

Have you ever had a house guest who doesn't say 'thank you'? From personal experience, it makes you feel unappreciated, unimportant, unnoticed. Those two simple words communicate so much.

In the house of the Lord, the Israelites are instructed to 'lift up your hands ... and bless the Lord.' With these two gestures, they can acknowledge that they are in the presence of the Lord and how

worthy he is of their thanks and praise.

We no longer need to journey to Jerusalem to come into the presence of the Lord. But he is ever worthy of us pausing, thanking him for his good gifts, and praising him as Creator and Redeemer.

Our God is not remote or distant. He is with us. He sent his Son, Jesus, to rescue and deliver us and give us new life, new hope, and taste of his grace and goodness. Our God has blessed us. Let us lift our hearts, hands and eyes to him in all his splendour and bless and praise and thank him.

Come Thou fount of every blessing Tune my heart to sing Thy grace Streams of mercy never ceasing Call for songs of loudest praise

Teach me some melodious sonnet Sung by flaming tongues above Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it Mount of Thy redeeming love

Here I raise my Ebenezer Here by Thy great help I've come And I hope by Thy good pleasure Safely to arrive at home

Song: 'Come thou fount of every blessing' by Chris Rice



Devotion 4: A bias towards good

Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

Isaiah 12:5-6

What do you remember about yesterday? Or last week? Does your mind gravitate to the difficult and hard things you faced? What about the glorious things? Do you recall these as well?

Think back to the Israelites in the desert after their rescue from Egypt. They grumbled and complained because they no longer had cucumbers and garlic to eat (Num 11:5). Their songs of praise for the glorious story of rescue and deliverance were a distant memory.

We remember difficult experiences with clarity and detail. With anything negative, our brains tend to be like Velcro — the memories stick, and we find it hard to get them out of our minds. But with positive experiences, our brains tend to be like Teflon — they slide off and we forget them. It's so easy to be like the Israelites with this inbuilt bias towards the negative!

A helpful antidote to this bias is to notice the good things in our lives and be thankful for them. It's a means of training our minds to scan for the positive. One small habit that can help here is to keep a thankfulness journal. Have a small notebook by your bed, and each night write down 'three things' you are thankful to the Lord for. It might be something as tiny as enjoying a moment in the sunshine or a beautiful flower in the garden.

Over time, you will find that when you think about yesterday or last week, your brain will more easily gravitate to God's good gifts. Despite the difficult experiences, you may find yourself saying:

'Surely God is my salvation.

I will trust and not be afraid.

The Lord. the Lord Himself.

is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.' Isaiah 12:2 ESV

In Jesus, we have salvation. Like the Israelites, we have been rescued from death to new life. This rescue is so glorious, so wondrous, so marvellous and we can sing a song of joy.

Gracious God,
I humbly thank you for all your gifts so freely given to me,
For life and health and safety,
For power to work, leisure to rest,
And for all that is beautiful in creation and human life.
But, above all, I praise you
For our Saviour, Jesus Christ,
For his death and resurrection,
For the gift of your Spirit,
And for the hope of sharing in your glory.
Fill my heart with all joy and peace in believing.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Source: An Australian Prayer Book

Song: 'O Lord My Rock and My Redeemer' from Sovereign Grace Music



Devotion 5: Mindset

Psalm 9

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Death of the Son." A psalm of David.

1 I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart;

I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

2 I will be glad and rejoice in you;

I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.

Psalm 9:1-2

King David's life was filled with much suffering and persecution. He didn't live the 'enchanted life' of fairy tales with the 'happily ever after' vibe. David spent many days in the valley of darkness. He knew about affliction, oppression and evil.

This Psalm speaks into the context of strife and chaos. David's world was not that different to the world we face today. Each day, there seems to be a new trouble spot or disaster happening somewhere in our world causing more havoc and adding to the numbers of the afflicted, dispossessed and vulnerable. And then there are the troubles closer to home — to our family, our friends, our church family.

Often, we think that our experience of life is dependent upon our circumstances: when things go well, we feel good; when life is difficult, not so much. But the truth is that we can find our hearts and minds lifted to God in thanks and praise even in the midst of challenging life circumstances. This is because the way we experience events is very much shaped by our mindset. 'Mindset' means the way we view things, the way we interpret and make sense of the circumstances that come our way.

David begins this Psalm with the words 'I will...' He repeats those words four times. He will give thanks. He will be glad and rejoice. He will sing. He will tell the world about the wonderful deeds of his God. Our God — the ruler and judge of the world. David's mindset frames how he makes sense of what he is facing and how he responds.

One of the key factors that influences our mindset is what we pay attention to. You may be familiar with the concept of neuroplasticity — that our brains can change and reorganise, especially in response to repeated experiences and learning. Neural pathways are formed and strengthened by what captures our attention.

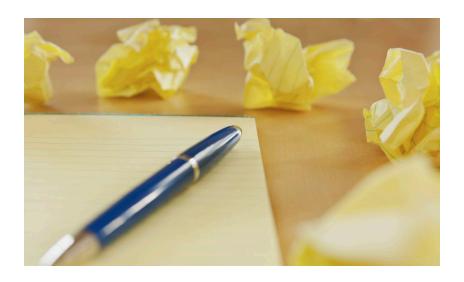
King David shaped his neural pathways in a particular manner. He could say, 'I will...' because he filled his mind with rich truths about the character of God. David knew that his Lord is a refuge for the oppressed and a stronghold in troubled times (v 9). He knew that he never forsakes those who trust in him and seek to follow Him (v 10). The Lord upholds justice and mercy and is far more powerful and mighty than those perpetrating the evil in David's world (v 12). More than this, he knew that his God, our God, hears the cries of the afflicted, even when they are tiny silent groans. And he cares for the vulnerable, the weak, and those whose lives have been shattered and broken.

'But God will never forget the needy. The hope of the afflicted will never perish.' (Psalm 9:18)

As he promised, God has not forsaken or abandoned us. He sent his Son, Jesus, into the world to deal with our mess and the mess of the world. And as we turn our attention to the wonderful deeds that God has done, we too will find reasons to praise and rejoice.

I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart, I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
I will be glad and rejoice in you.
I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High

Song: 'Living Hope' from Bethel Music



Devotion 6: Seasons

Psalm 100

A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

1 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Worship the Lord with gladness;

come before him with joyful songs.

Psalm 100:1-2

Sometimes it's hard to utter words of thanks and praise and make a joyful noise to the Lord. I have been through seasons of bleakness when the words just weren't there. Somewhat surprisingly, I have found that even when times are good, I forget what words to use.

Psalm 100 provides us with a scaffold. Here are thoughts to fill our minds and words to shape our praise.

'Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his, we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.' (v 3)

Our God is not a distant Creator who made us and then abandoned us to our own devices. He actively participates in our lives. He is our shepherd. We live under his loving care, guidance and protection. In our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a good shepherd who knows us and lays down his life for us (John 10:14-15).

And the psalmist says more of what God is like:

'For the Lord is good and his love endures forever.

His faithfulness continues through all generations.' (v 5)

God is always good. He keeps on loving, no matter how foolish or flawed we are. His faithfulness towards us never stops. Goodness, love, faithfulness — all seen so clearly in the work of Jesus to bring us new life.

When we struggle to praise God, words like those found in Psalm 100 can help. We are reminded of what God is like. We are given direction for those attributes of God worthy of praise that we long to find echoed by our own voice.

It has taken me a while to realise that praise is not about me or my feelings. It's about our ever-loving, never-changing God. These truths never falter. They are the same for me when life is filled to the brim with good stuff as in the times when I find myself in a darker place.

When we have no words ourselves, here are words. Words, that as we reflect upon them, fill our minds and warm our hearts. And then we may find that we can shout for joy to the Lord, that we can worship with gladness, and come before him with joyful songs.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.
Know that the Lord is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Song: 'Psalm 100' by Chris Tomlin



Devotion 7: Share the story

Psalm 92

A psalm. A song. For the Sabbath day.

It is good to praise the Lord

and make music to your name, O Most High,

Psalm 92:1

The Bible is a love story of God's love, God's unfailing, steadfast, never-ending love. This recurring theme reverberates through the pages of the Bible. It's there at the beginning, the middle and the end.

This is how much God loves you:

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

John 3:16

This is the climax of the God's love story. He lavishes his love on us with such extravagance, generosity and graciousness. Christian reader, this love story — of rescue, redemption and restoration — now lies at the heart of your personal story. God loves you so much that you are his precious, beloved child. He brought you out of darkness into his marvellous light and said, 'You are mine.'

What's your salvation story? Sometimes it's in the telling of a story that our hearts are warmed. Why not remind yourself of the story of God's love for you? And why not share that story with others? It will warm their hearts too.

Today is Sunday, and Psalm 92 is a song for the Sabbath. It's a Psalm that encourages us to remember God's love this morning and to sing a song of thanks and praise. As the Psalmist reminds us, this is a good thing to do and is pleasing to the Lord. Our voices filled with joy and gladness at the wonder of his love are music to his ears.

'But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, Slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me.'

Thank you for the love and mercy you have shown us in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for the living hope of eternal life with you. Amen.

Song: 'God So Loved' by We the Kingdom



Devotion 8: Beloved

Psalm 18

For the director of music. Of David the servant of the Lord. He sang to the Lord the words of this song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said:

1 I love you, Lord, my strength.

Psalm 18:1

'Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.' Ephesians 6:24

A year ago, I became a Granny. Since then, I have enjoyed spending time with my granddaughter and getting to know her and falling more and more in love with her. And she has gotten to know me. When she sees me, she smiles, and she puts her arms out towards me; she wants to be held in my arms.

Last week, we were out, and she was seated in her stroller. I had gone to buy coffee and on returning, I could see her excitement. Her feet and toes started to twitch up and down, she began waving her hands in the air, and she smiled with every part of her body. This was Emi's way of saying, 'I love you Granny, I know I am safe with you, I know that you care for me, I know that you love me.' It made me smile with delight to be loved and known by this little person.

There is an interplay of love in our relationship with God our Father. We have a Father who knows us intimately, who sees us, hears us, and speaks tenderly to us. In the same way that I speak to my granddaughter, our Heavenly Father says to you, dear reader, 'I love you, precious one, and you are in a safe space here with me.' You are fully known and fully loved. And his love for us brings forth our response of love towards him.

Today, as you sit in this safe space, you can praise him in words and in song. And just as my heart is filled with delight seeing my granddaughter respond to me, I am sure God finds delight and joy when we speak of his greatness and his wondrous deeds and give voice to him in song with thankful and loving hearts.

I love you, Lord, my strength.

You are my rock, y fortress and my deliverer.

In you I take refuge, as you are my strength and shield, my stronghold.

Thank you that you love me more than I can imagine.

Thank you that you let your son Jesus pay the price for my sin and that I am forgiven and washed new. Pour your Spirit on me today as I sing of your wondrous deeds. Amen.

Song: 'The Love of the Father' by CityAlight



Devotion 9: A name

Praise to the Lord

1 Lord, you are my God;

I will exalt you and praise your name,
for in perfect faithfulness
you have done wonderful things,
things planned long ago.

Isaigh 25:1

What's in a name?

If I asked you now, 'What does your name mean?' you'd probably be able to tell me.

Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah said: 'Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.' Isaiah 7:14

Immanuel means 'God with us.' Isaiah spoke this prophecy at a time of war, upheaval, violence and bloodshed. These words are a promise from God to deliver his people. Imagine being told that you will be rescued by a virgin mother and her baby!

The true fulfilment of this promise was the wonderful event of God sending his Son into the world as a baby. A baby who was like all other babies, needing to be fed, burped and nappy changed. A baby who was not like any other baby, as he was also God. In the words of the Apostle John, 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.' (John 1:14)

Jesus, fully human, fully God, is Immanuel, God with us. God with us to rescue and deliver us, so that we are freed from a life in darkness. We have been drawn into his presence.

And God continues to be with us through Jesus, even though his bodily presence on earth is no more. As Jesus said in parting words to his disciples, 'And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' (Matthew 28:20)

As we wait for Jesus' return, we have this fresh vision of Immanuel given to us by the Apostle John:

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. (Rev. 21:3) and 'They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.' (Rev 22:4)

What's in a name? Immanuel — God with us. Praise God for his perfect faithfulness in keeping his promise and ensuring that we can delight in his presence forever through his wonderful work of redemption in Jesus.

'Lord, you are my God.
I will exalt you and praise your name,
for in perfect faithfulness,
you have done wonderful things,
things planned long ago.'
Thank you for the reminder that you are still with us today. Immanuel.

As we sing your name, help us remember we are not alone, and that you are a God who comforts, protects and encourages us. Whether we are afraid, rattled, or discouraged, help us remember that you are with us — in life, death and for all eternity. Amen.

Song: 'Immanuel' by Michael Card



Devotion 10: Good Memories

Taste and see that the Lord is good;

blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

Psalms 34:8

My mother turned 90 recently and her six grandchildren filled a glass jar with ninety memories of her. Each memory was an example of her goodness towards them. If you were to fill a jar with memories or ways that the Lord has been good to you, what would you include?

Let me tell you about one way the Lord showed his goodness to me 40 years ago. My Dad was diagnosed with cancer and died eight weeks later. I had many precious opportunities to talk with him and share my faith. I read Psalms aloud as we sat in the sunshine, or while sitting at his bedside.

A dear friend, living in the U.S., wrote me a card to tell me she was praying, and filled it with passages of Scripture to offer words of encouragement. I received it the day he died. This is what she wrote:

"Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him.

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call on me, and I will answer him,'

I will be with him in trouble.

I will deliver him and honour him.

With long life I will satisfy him

And show him my salvation."

Psalm 91: 14-16

A letter written two weeks earlier had arrived when most needed. I found such comfort and peace reading these verses and then the rest of that Psalm.

My father was too sick to speak in the few days before dying. But he could open his eyes and they communicated much. I held his hand and said, "Dad, you know God loves you; all you need to do is

believe in Jesus and ask, 'Please take me home.'" He opened his eyes and looked at me. I prayed that the Lord would hear my groans and his silent prayers.

God, in all his splendour and majesty, was there in that moment of loss and anguish. He knew just what I needed. He saw my need and provided a rich reminder that he was with me.

This was a taste of God's goodness that forty years later I still remember and treasure. There are so many other memories in my 'jar of goodness'. Sometimes, as I take them out in my mind, the remembering fills my heart with thankfulness and awe.

Dear reader, what memories of God's goodness are in your jar? Why not take out one today, taste of that goodness, and let it fill you with a song of joy and thankfulness.

I praise you, Father God, for glorifying you is the most important thing we can do. I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you, for you are good to me, and you have compassion on me. Help me to fill a jar with memories of how you have been good to me. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Song: 'Goodness of God' by The Worship Initiative, Bethany Barnard



Devotion 11: Held

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

Revelation 1:12-17

The apostle John knew Jesus deeply and personally. He'd spent days in his company, following him around, listening to his teaching. He'd been there at his crucifixion; he'd met the resurrected Jesus and even touched him before he was taken up into heaven.

And now he was imprisoned on the Island of Patmos. While there, he had a vision of the risen Lord Jesus. His response was to fall at his feet as though dead, overcome with awe and wonder.

John sees the King above all kings, the Ruler of the kings on earth. The Alpha and the Omega. The Almighty. What he sees is bedazzling and brilliant. This is a picture of Jesus sitting at God's right hand, enthroned in a glory far beyond our comprehension, far beyond the capacity of words to capture this majesty, splendour, and brilliance.

The majestic king of the universe. The one who is so glorious, so 'other', so terrifying in his magnificence.

But what does this majestic figure do? With tenderness and love, he reaches down his right hand and touches John.

And what does he say? Words of comfort: I am with you. Fear not. You may be isolated and alone, but I am with you.

And Jesus reminds John of who is standing before him: I am. Yahweh.

I am the First and the Last.

I am the Living One.

I am alive for ever.

This Living Lord Jesus is holding John firm and fast.

And this living Lord Jesus is holding you firm and holding you fast.

Readers, turn your eyes to this vision of Jesus and soak up this picture. He is powerful and present. Look in his face. Feel his hand on you. He is with you.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

And yet, you are with me. Thank you that your eyes see me, your ears hear my voice. Thank you that no matter what happens around me, you will hold me firm and fast. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Song: 'He will hold me fast' by Shane & Shane



Devotion 12: Unshaken

10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

We are regularly reminded of how perilous our world is. Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, erupting volcanoes in Indonesia, devastating storms here in Australia, and more. Those mountains and hills that look so invincible are not. When I look at the devastation of such natural disasters, I feel overwhelmed.

I find this verse comforting. It reminds me that while much in our world and my own life shifts and changes and shakes, God remains the same. He is unchanging. I often return to this verse and let its truth fill my mind with what it tells me about God.

When everything else in my world is in flux, his unfailing love will not be shaken. When everything else in my world is moving and changing, his covenant of peace will not shift. And he is compassionate. With tenderness, he sees and hears and understands our needs and our fears.

Rather than focusing on the uncertainties of what will happen tomorrow, I try to ground myself in this truth. Yes, we must expect the unexpected, but of this we can be sure – that our unchanging God will not budge from his loving commitment to our good. There is solid ground beneath us no matter what comes our way. And his heart of compassion towards us does not shift even when we struggle to believe this or are overwhelmed with fear. Praise God for our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who remains the same yesterday, today and forever.

'Be present, merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night: that we, who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world, may rest on your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

Third Collect of the evening, Australian Prayer Book.

Song: Blessed Assurance - CityAlight



Devotion 13: Steady

Psalm 92

A psalm. A song. For the Sabbath day.

1 It is good to praise the Lord
and make music to your name, O Most High,
2 proclaiming your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night,

Psalms 92:1-2

'Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed,

for his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness.'

Lamentations 3:21-23

When our world is falling apart, we need to know there is something we can hold onto to keep us steady. We need to know that we won't be overwhelmed or consumed.

When our world is falling apart, we need to know that we are not alone and have someone who will be with us. We need to know that there is someone who is compassionate and loving, who cares enough to hold us firmly and safely.

That something, that someone, is your God. Your God will keep you steady. Your God will hold you fast. Do you know why? Because he promised he would, and he always keeps his promises. God is faithful. What God says, he does. He is utterly dependable, reliable, trustworthy — he is faithful.

The writer of the book of Lamentations writes movingly of his experience of his world falling apart. But at the centre of the book, he speaks of what keeps him going: the faithfulness of God. Because of the Lord, there is hope, even in this most desperate of circumstances.

I recently caught up with two dear friends I've known for over thirty years. During our conversation, both talked about God's faithfulness to them. Neither woman is sitting on a mountaintop. Both are facing difficult circumstances which have lasted for years. They know what it's like to do life in the valley. They know that they might never see their troubles resolved, and peace restored. But they know their God is faithful.

Both women proclaimed God's faithfulness and their testimonies encouraged my heart. Reader, you too can bear testimony to God's faithfulness in your life. Why not recall those times when God has been with you and held you firmly in his hands. And why not proclaim his faithfulness by sharing this story with your Christian brothers or sisters. This is a habit you could build into your Sunday — and give thanks to the Lord for his faithfulness to you.

'May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it'. Amen (1 Thes. 5:23-24)

Song: Great is thy Faithfulness - The Worship Initiative - Bethany Barnard



Devotion 14: Risen!

'In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!

Luke 24:5

Christ has risen! When you picture Jesus, is he hanging on the cross? Is he still paying the price for your sin? Or do you see him raised from the dead, fully alive, and seated on the throne of heaven?

On the third day after Jesus' death, the women went to find Jesus' body. Two angels appeared before them and reminded them that they would not find Jesus in the tomb, as he was no longer dead but alive:

'Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." Then they remembered his words.'

Luke 24:6-7

King David longed to gaze on the beauty of the Lord (Psalm 27:4). One day we will experience the fullness of this reality, when we see him face to face. But even now we can lift our gaze to behold our Lord in all his risen beauty and ascended glory.

Jesus has dealt with our sin. We are forgiven, washed clean and made new. He has defeated death.

As you turn your eyes to our risen Lord, may it fill your heart with joy and issue in songs of praise.

He is risen!

Allelujah!

Almighty God, you have conquered death through your dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant us by your grace to set our mind on things above, so that by your continual help our whole life may be transformed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit in everlasting glory. Amen. BCP Collect for Easter Day

Song: 'Turn Your Eyes' from Sovereign Grace Music

