

Mary DeMuth

JESUS
EVERY
DAY



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

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Cover design by Emily Weigel

Interior design by Janelle Coury

Mary E. DeMuth is represented by David Van Diest from the Van Diest Literary Agency, 34947 SE Brooks Road, Boring, OR 97009.

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Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-7101-0 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-7102-7 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: DeMuth, Mary E., 1967- author.

Title: Jesus every day / Mary DeMuth.

Description: Eugene, Oregon : Harvest House Publishers, 2017. | Description based on print version record and CIP data provided by publisher; resource not viewed.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017023229 (print) | LCCN 2017028140 (ebook) | ISBN 9780736971027 (ebook) | ISBN 9780736971010 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Devotional calendars.

Classification: LCC BV4811 (ebook) | LCC BV4811 .D46 2017 (print) | DDC 242/.2—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017023229>

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Printed in the United States of America

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 / VP-JC / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



*To Judy Douglass,
a person of great prayer.
And to my Restory tribe
who asked for and inspired this devotional.*





An Invitation...

I don't remember when I started writing, "Mind if I pray for you?" at the end of my monthly newsletters, but I do remember the frequent response: Thank you; I needed that. In this busy and broken world, we casually throw out, "Hey, I'll be praying for you," but so often the sentiment is as far as we get. (I've done it too.) Having the opportunity to pray for the people I'd come to love felt like joy and breathing all wrapped together. As I typed my prayers, I asked God to please infuse my small words with his majesty and comfort. A lot of my prayers reflected my current worry or struggle or victory or grief. And what I found was this: My own life in its vulnerable form connected with my readers, and my written prayers represented the cries of so many hearts.

I've often said that four words inform my life, particularly as an author and speaker.

Go first.

Me too.

I believe God calls us to authenticity, to share our worlds with one another. We do that so that others no longer feel alone. We dare to go first so that someone who's struggling can remark, "Me too." These 366 prayers are my go first, and it's my hope that you'll find yourself in between the lines so you can say, "Me too."

We may not see our way around the next unknown bend in the road. But Jesus does. He walks alongside us every day, giving us the hope we need to make the next decision, love the people in front of us, forgive those who have hurt us, let go of the control that makes us twitchy, and practice the art of gratitude. He is with us in the heartache, the questions, the dreams, and the frailty of life. And he longs for our hearts to unfold before him, trusting him to act in his perfect

(yet sometimes slow) timing. Prayer is that intersection between an almighty God and our all-encompassing need. It's how we connect with God—not merely listing off our wants and needs like a child on Santa's lap, but sharing our bruises, joys, hopes, and bewilderments. Prayer is the language of a close relationship.

I've taken a pilgrimage of prayer to discover the nearness of Jesus. As I mature in my relationship with him, I find myself becoming more and more content with simply praying for people. I pray for strangers. I pray for friends. I pray for my family constantly, like breathing. I ask permission to pray for someone and then place my hand on a shoulder. In that circle of two, I ask Jesus to please help us all face our lives, to find peace in our trials. I pray bold prayers, seeking healing and health. I pray timid prayers, full of ifs and maybes. I pray wordless prayers, those times when our words can't seem to form at the enormity of what we face. And through it all, Jesus hears. He sees. He receives. And he intercedes. Closer than our breath.

You're holding this book because some of my prayers made it into print and a gaggle of people emailed me asking me to please write a book full of them. I shopped *Jesus Every Day* for several years, hoping and praying it would find a home. I'm utterly grateful that it has—it's a dream come true.

This is a unique devotional because you can start it on March 3 or October 21. Just begin on Day 1 and begin the journey. The book moves through every book of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, so that by the time you close the book, you'll have an overarching understanding of the heart of God—his great redemptive story. You'll read a scripture and then pray through it—simple as that. It's my sincere hope that my words will echo your heart and that your own prayer life will deepen each day as a result. By year's end, you'll have prayed through the entire Bible.

It seems fitting to end this introduction with this:

Mind if I pray for you?

Jesus, I pray for the dear person reading this prayer. Would you woo them to yourself? Would you bring peace into whatever chaos they face today? Would you show them how deeply and widely (and wildly) you love them? Remind them in this sweet circle of two that you are there. You are available. You offer grace to approach you—no stern looks, no sighs of disappointment, no tsking or shaking of the head. Your arms, they are wide open, and your embrace is always available. Take my friend on a journey through this book. Deepen their relationship with you. Empower them to run to you when life careens or hope wanes. Invigorate their prayer life. Move mountains. Unleash freedom. Heal wounds. Restore what's been lost. Demonstrate your love in them-shaped ways. Thank you that you're the empathetic savior who understands what it's like to walk this dusty earth, clay-footed. Thank you for making a way for them to be safe, forgiven, and welcomed—all because you left the glory of heaven for earth's sin-scarred shore. Oh, how you love them. Oh, how they need you. Do something new in the heart of the one reading these words. May spiritual growth and freedom spring forth, a new river through a wild land. Amen and amen.

Mary DeMuth



DAY 1

Storyteller

God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

GENESIS 1:27

Jesus, you made everything from nothing. What a surprising Creator you are. All our creativity has its origin in you.

I acknowledge that every gift of inspiration originates from you. So forgive me for hoarding it, displaying it for my glory, dismissing it, wasting it.

I confess that I have tried to manufacture a life in my small strength. Left to my devices, Lord, I fail, grow prideful, and forget the kingdom.

You, who are the Word, are the one I worship with my words. You are the Storyteller of my life, but I have settled for a lesser story of stuff, recognition, and power. Forgive me.

Everything I do, Jesus, I do now because I love you and want my life to count for your kingdom. Any fame that comes my way is a trifle offering, and it becomes a platform to make you famous and proclaim your radical story of redemption to a dying, storyless people. I give you permission to write my story however you see fit. I hand the pen back to you. I no longer want to dictate to you what I want my story to be. I choose now to surrender my story wholly, fully to you.

Take the pen, Lord Jesus. And write. Amen.



DAY 2

Detailed

Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.

GENESIS 7:15-16

Jesus, I love that you are concerned about every detail of my life, just as you were in Noah's time. You gave him specific instructions. You warned him about what would come. You blessed him with skills and knowledge and guts to carry out the preservation of everyone. You didn't leave him alone, scratching his head, wondering where you were.

I love that you shut the door behind him and his family. Because who else could? Every last detail, you took care of—in person this time.

Help me remember your attention to minutiae when my mind wanders toward thousands of worries. Show me the picture of you shutting the door behind Noah as the waters erupted from the sky and ground. You know the big stresses in my life—but more than that, Jesus, you know the smallest bothersome thoughts. You know what niggles me at night. You know me intimately.

So today I choose to worship you for remembering small things, for taking care of pesky details, for loving me in big and small ways. Help me to rest safely behind the door you close after me. Amen.



DAY 3

Fame

They said, "Come let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world."

GENESIS 11:4

Jesus, I confess that I long to be noticed. I want to make a name for myself, for others to see me, applaud my unseen efforts, and recognize me publicly. I may say this isn't true, but deep down, I struggle to base my identity on you, not on what I accomplish.

Thank you for this verse today that reminds me that all my tower building ends in confusion. I'm sorry that I've worshipped my own name, wanting to curry my own fame instead of reorienting my life toward your renown on this earth.

You are the famous one, O Lord. You are the one worth worshipping. I want to become more like what I worship. But when I worship myself, my life becomes shrunken and me-centric. Teach me to worship you so I become more like you—bigger hearted, full of love for those who differ from me, a person of forgiveness and grace.

I tend to build towers to myself. But today, stop me short, Jesus. Remind me that anything I build on this earth will only tumble and ultimately fail. Oh, how I need your perspective today. Amen.



DAY 4

Between

Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD.

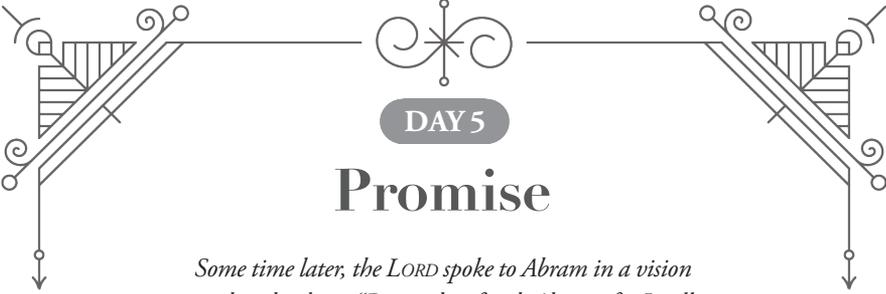
GENESIS 12:8

Jesus, thank you for the story of Abram, how he left everything comfortable and cozy, dared to trust you fiercely, and lived a life of faith-inspired adventure. Oh, how I want to live that way too. Teach me that kind of grit, Jesus. (And thank you for making the same kind of sacrifice, leaving the pristine fields of heaven to come to earth to willingly die for us. How can I thank you?)

In some ways, I don't relate to Abram, but in this one I truly can. He pitched his camp between two worlds—Bethel (house of God) and Ai, the “heap of ruins” that was a Canaanite stronghold. What a picture of my life on this earth.

Help me understand the pull of both—of spending time in the house of God, yet venturing out into the world to be a beacon of your light. Help me to worship you in the in-between places—where you aren't named, where others blame you, dismiss you, rail against you, or flat out don't believe you exist.

Thank you that, through the Holy Spirit, I have the house of God inside me, wherever my feet take me. Help me rest in that today, trusting that you will always be with me. I choose to worship you wherever I find myself today. Amen.



DAY 5

Promise

Some time later, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”

GENESIS 15:1

Jesus, I love that you understand just how scared I can be. Because you walked this earth, experiencing mockery, storms, hunger, homelessness, and ridicule, I know you offer me sympathy when I struggle with fear.

Thank you for this example of your Father caring about the deepest parts of Abram. He must've been bewildered at the journey before him—with a promise of offspring, a barren wife, and no homeland yet to call his own. He lived by the skin of his obedience, and oh, how I want to live that same way.

Even though Abram believed, he worried too. And you offered him sweet assurance that you saw him and knew his struggles. You didn't simply acknowledge that he struggled; you spoke into the situation with words of life.

That's where I am right now, Jesus. I am struggling. Fear has become my companion for the next scary steps. And I need you to intervene with words. Speak protection over me. Help me to know you see me today—broken, needy, worried.

I trust that you will protect me. All things that come my way sift through your sovereign embrace. Help me not to dictate what my reward will be, but to trust you for the reward you will bring. Amen.



DAY 6

Sees

Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the one who sees me?" So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means "well of the Living One who sees me").

GENESIS 16:13-14

Jesus, thank you for the example of Hagar. There have been times when I've felt just like her—forgotten and fleeing from people and circumstances that have leveled me flat. She was forsaken by the very one who forced her into her circumstance, and she found herself alone in the wilderness.

And yet...you saw her. You noticed her there at the well she named. You intervened. And I love that she also gave you a name, the "the Living One who sees me."

Thank you that you are living. You're not a statue. Instead, you're a vibrant well—a fountain of never-ending, thirst-quenching nourishment. You sustain me. You provide everything I need.

I need to know, in whatever small way you want to show me, that you notice me today. Please be the God who sees me as I wrestle with my own shame and inadequacies. I need to know you're acquainted with my weakness, and that you don't hold it against me. Meet me in the wilderness I find myself in today, and pour your refreshing water over me. Amen.