

GOD'S  
BEST  
FOR MY  
LIFE

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HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
EUGENE, OREGON

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Interior design by Rockwell Davis

## God's Best for My Life

Copyright © 1981 by Harvest House Publishers

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-8089-0 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-0-7369-8090-6 (eBook)

The Library of Congress has cataloged the edition as follows:

Ogilvie, Lloyd John.

God's best for my life / Lloyd John Ogilvie.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-7369-1512-5

1. Devotional calendars—Presbyterian Church. I. Title.

BV 4811.035 1997

242.7 2—dc21

97-7438

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**Printed in China**

20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 / RDS-RD / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



## PREFACE

*It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer;  
and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.*

ISAIAH 65:24 KJV

This awesome promise is the motivation for writing this daily devotional guide. We all want God's best for our lives. That desire is a gift from Him! He wants to be our Friend, to tell us about Himself, to communicate His unlimited love, to give us His wisdom for our decisions, and to help us live the adventure of the abundant life. He creates in us the desire to know Him and to talk with Him in prayer. The longing in so many Christians today to discover a consistent, daily pattern for Bible reading and prayer is from the Lord Himself. He has given me the vision of how to maximize a quiet time with Him each day. The desire to share the thoughts and insight from the Scriptures for a whole year was clearly guided by Him, and was done in response to the thousands of requests I have received from my own congregation and television viewers across the nation for a practical, applicable way to find God's best for their lives each day and to receive His power for daily needs.

The result is a daily guide which is intended to be revelational and relational. God reveals Himself in the Scriptures and inspires us in our relationship with Him, ourselves, others, and the world. We all need fresh grace each day. All the Scriptures selected for the days of a full year will enable a renewal of our relationship with the Lord, a deeper acceptance of ourselves, and a contagious joy for our relationships and responsibilities.

The distinctly different quality of this particular guide is that it is rooted both in Scripture and in our deepest needs. Each day's meditation on the Word of God is meant to be profoundly personal. I have tried to listen to our urgent questions and deepest longings. Truth becomes real as we live it. The great need today is for Christians to rediscover a daily companionship with the Lord and to enjoy Him throughout the challenges and opportunities that each day brings. When J.B. Phillips translated the Book of Acts into contemporary English, he said it was like rewiring a house with the current turned on! I hope for nothing

less each day as we take the great texts of the Bible and spell out the implications for living the promises God gives us.

I have tried to be sensitive to the frustrations and feelings of failure that so many people have expressed about finding a workable plan for daily devotions. Many have told me of grand commitments to get up early or stay up late to spend a prolonged period with the Lord. Guilt and self-incrimination set in when the promise is broken or the length of the devotions shortens.

What most of us need is a daily time which is penetrating and personal, which has residual impact throughout the day. Each of these devotionals is meant to be like a capsule with time-release potency. My hope is that the truths we consider and the aching needs we confront will have a constant explosion of engendering, enabling power throughout the day.

I suggest at least 15 minutes each day. Take 15 minutes when you're freshest and most alert. It will give you freedom from uncertainty, frustration, and anxiety all through the day. Here are three five-minute steps:

1. Take five minutes for praise and thanksgiving. Praise God for who He is and thank Him for what He has done for you. Praise is the antidote to pride. Adoration opens our minds and hearts to receive. Review what has been happening to you—both the delights and the difficulties. Get in touch with your real feelings. Only the real you can meet the reality of God. He loves you and wants to use what's happening to and around you for His glory and your growth. Review your life, relationships, challenges, and concerns. Then ask the Lord to use this quiet time alone with Him as a deeply personal time of discovery and new direction.
2. Next take five minutes to read the Scripture text indicated at the top of each day's devotional, plus the exposition I've written. When you've finished, ask yourself these questions:
  - A. What does this passage and message mean to me personally?
  - B. What has the Lord said to me in it about my life?
  - C. What can I do or say today to live the truth I've considered?
  - D. With whom am I called to implement what I've learned?

3. Last, take five minutes for supplication and intercession.
  - A. Write out or think through the needs, problems, and concerns you are facing this day. Spread them out before the Lord. Ask for His perspective and guidance. Then surrender them to Him. And leave them in His gracious and powerful care.
  - B. Pray for specific people—loved ones, friends, people you love or need to learn to love, those for whom you are thankful, and those who frustrate you. Prayer for people in Jesus' name is a sure way to discover a creative attitude toward them!

Many of you will find these 15 minutes each day so exciting and satisfying that it will be the most creative, liberating part of your day. Some of you will find your 15 minutes extended because there is so much more to say to the Lord and receive from Him. The amazing thing you will discover is the miraculous way the Lord will speak to you through His Word. I have asked Him to guide every word I've written. I know that He has had you in mind and knew ahead of time what you would need. The Lord's timing is perfect: never ahead of time, never behind, but always exactly on time. Begin using this guide on the page of today's date. There's a progression which will catch you up in its flow. I am very thankful for the time, effort, and enthusiasm Kathy Guzman contributed in typing this manuscript for publication.

My prayer is that this will be one of the most exciting years of your life. Gathering these Scriptures and reflecting on them with our needs in mind has been exactly that for me. Power to you as you experience God's best for your life!

—Lloyd John Ogilvie

## The Best Year of Your Life

JEREMIAH 29:11-13

*For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11 RSV).*

**T**he sure sign that we have an authentic relationship with God is that we believe more in the future than in the past. The past can be neither a source of confidence nor a condemnation. God graciously divided our life into days and years so that we could let go of our yesterdays and anticipate our tomorrows. For the past mistakes, He offers forgiveness and an ability to forget. For our tomorrows, He gives us the gift of expectation and excitement.

What the Lord said to the people of Israel languishing in the Babylonian exile is for any of us who are exiled from Him and hope for the future. He has plans for each of us—good plans for our growth in His grace—so that we can have a future with hope. Emil Brunner said, “What oxygen is for the lungs, hope is for the soul.” Hope enables a vital quality of life; it sets us free to dare, gives us confidence for daily frustrations, and stirs up the courage to live adventuresomely. The gift of hope for the future is the key entrusted to us which opens the floodgates of the Lord’s power and unlocks the flow of His amazing, unlimited possibilities.

So often people say, “You’ve got to have hope!” as if it were something we could muster out of ourselves. Hope is advertent. It comes from something or someone else. Authentic hope comes from Christ, who He is, and what He is able to do. His resurrection is the ultimate source of hope. Nothing can defeat Him! The worst that man did on Calvary was followed by the best hope for all time. He is with us now today to give us courage for the future. He is in charge of this new year. He has a plan! Surrender the year ahead, thanking the Lord that everything that will happen to us is for what He has planned to help us become like Him. Joyous New Year!

*God’s best for my life begins with  
a vibrant hope for the future.*

JANUARY  
2

## A Year of Jubilee

LUKE 4:16-21

*...to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD (Luke 4:18-19).*

The shadow of the cross was over Jesus' heart as He read these words from Isaiah in His own synagogue in Nazareth. He knew that He was to fulfill that prophecy in His own suffering and death.

The last sentence of the prophecy is easily misunderstood. "The acceptable year of the Lord" also meant the Year of Jubilee. Every 50 years, according to the ancient Hebrew custom, debts were canceled, prison terms were terminated, land holdings went back to the original owners, and people forgave the resentments held through the years.

The cross makes every year the Jubilee Year. Jesus' death cancels our sin and gives us the freedom to be forgiving. This is the acceptable year of the Lord for us. What if we committed this whole year to be one in which we set people free by loving them unconditionally and forgiving them unreservedly? That can happen *through* us only if it happens *to* us. Is there any memory, unforgiven hurt, or unrelinquished hostility still keeping you in a prison of incrimination?

There are three steps to a Jubilee Year: 1) accept forgiveness; 2) ask for forgiveness from any person you've hurt or harmed; 3) offer forgiveness to those who have misused or misunderstood you. Forgiveness is the one gift our Lord offers that we can't have unless we give it away.

Make a list of people who need your forgiveness. What is the Lord telling you to *say* and then *be* to them to assure them that they are forgiven? But don't wait. Your Jubilee Year starts today. Tomorrow may be too late!

*Today I will live as a forgiven, forgiving person.*

## A Nook with the Book

PSALM 1:1-6

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD and in His law  
he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:2 NKJV).*

Thomas à Kempis said, “I have no rest but in a nook with the Book.” Communion with the Lord through meditation on the Scriptures provided profound rest and refreshment in the midst of the demands of life. The same theme song is sung by the psalmist. Meditation on God’s law made him like a tree firmly planted by the streams of water; there was an unlimited source of sustenance.

Psalm 1 is an autobiographical witness of what the Lord had done for the psalmist and a prophetic statement to the wicked who scoff and take their place among those who oppose God’s ways. But not the positive affirmation of what is available to us: The psalmist meditated on God’s law. We have the flowing streams of the whole Bible as the water of life to feed the tree of our life.

Each day’s reading of a portion of Scripture gives us water for the roots. The residual resource moves through the trunk up into the branches, out into the leafage of a beautiful life, and into the fruit of character. A quiet time in our “nook with the Book” enables quietness of soul in the din of life’s demands. Jesus said, “Take care to live in me, and let me live in you. For a branch can’t produce fruit when severed from the vine. Nor can you be fruitful apart from me” (John 15:4 TLB).

The metaphor shifts, but the psalmist’s meaning is the same. Each day we put our roots down in the streams of the Living Water, Christ Himself. Then, all through the day, we are refreshed by what we took from the artesian brook in our nook. We all need a quiet place for our 15 minutes to freedom each day. Out of His Word, Christ will give us a thought which will reorient our day and flower in inspiration all through the day. Expect nothing less today!

*My tree of life is planted in Christ.  
He will give me all I need to live abundantly today.*

## Through the Valley of Fear

PSALM 23:1-6

*Though I walk through the valley...thou art with me (Psalm 23:4 KJV).*

Alexander Maclaren, a great preacher of another generation, tells the story of his conquest of fear. As a young boy he took a job in Glasgow, some miles away from his own village. He stayed in the city during the week and returned home on Saturday evenings. There was a ravine on the way to his home that superstition supposed was filled with evil spirits. All during the first week at work, the lad feared most that his long walk home would have to include passing through this ravine. The anticipation blighted every waking moment of that week.

Saturday night came and there was nothing to do but muster up his courage and start home. His heart pounded as he reached the ravine. He paused in panic. His feet were like lead. Then suddenly he heard a voice calling out of the night, "Alex, it's your dad. I came to walk through the ravine with ye."

All through his later life as one of Scotland's greatest preachers, Maclaren never forgot the courage and strength he felt that night when his father graciously walked through the frightful glen with him.

David felt the same way about God. The valley of the shadow had been extricated of fear because the Shepherd would walk through it with him. David knew about the comfort the Shepherd could be to the sheep. The Lord was his Shepherd all through his life. Evil and evil people were a threat all through his life from the time he was a shepherd boy to when he became Israel's greatest king.

What are the glens of fearful worry for you? What is the valley of the threat of death or deadly anxiety? The Lord does not ridicule our fears. He understands. Like Maclaren's dad, He comes out to walk us home. He knows what's in the glen or valley and wants us to know that if we place our hand in His, we can make it through.

*The Lord does not ridicule our fears;  
He comes to walk through them with us.*

## A Full Life with Purpose

PSALM 146:1-10

*Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! (Psalm 146:1 NKJV).*

A friend of mine celebrated his retirement by having new calling cards printed. On the card is his name and this declaration of new freedom: “No phone, no address, no business, no worries, no appointments, no prospects, no job.”

The man gave me the card at a time of intense busyness in my own life. “Wouldn’t that be wonderful!” I thought to myself. Then I reflected on what life would be like without all the challenges and opportunities. How would I handle life without a full schedule and more to do in any day than is humanly possible? But that led me to a time of deep gratitude for strength beyond my own to meet the demands. Actually, the man whose card gave me a good laugh and a pause to reflect is as busy in retirement as he was in his profession. He spends his days in creative work with people and benevolent organizations.

Most of us complain about busy schedules, but it is good to live a full life. The important thing to consider is what we are accomplishing in all the activities. Justus Schifferes in *How to Live Longer* said, “Live longer so you can love longer, and conversely, the longer you love the longer you live.” Can a Christian ever put “no prospects” on his calling card? We always have prospects for love and understanding and the chance to share our faith.

John Wesley, just before he died, wrote a hymn based on Psalm 146: “I’ll praise my Maker while I have breath. And when my voice is lost in death, praise shall employ my nobler powers.” The abundant life in Christ is life all the way up! At the conclusion of his embattled life, John Knox said something which was not representative of his courageous life as a reformer: “The world is tired of me and I of it.” That need not be true. We are never finished!

*There’s nothing wrong with being busy if we are doing God’s work in His way and by His power.*