



THE
NEW
LONELINESS

DEVOTIONAL

50 DAYS TO
A CLOSER CONNECTION
WITH GOD

CINDI McMENAMIN

Author of *When Women Walk Alone*

TO:

FROM:

DATE:



THE
NEW
LONELINESS

DEVOTIONAL

CINDI McMENAMIN



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For Dana

You are a “city set on a hill” (Matthew 5:14),

and you bring light to all who know you.

Your dad and I are so grateful for your compassionate

heart and your industrious spirit.

Keep shining brightly for Him.



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INTRODUCTION:

NO MORE LONELY DAYS

Life can feel lonely.

Who do you really *know* anymore? And who *really* knows you? In this high-tech post-pandemic world, isolation is beginning to feel normal (if not inevitable) and many people spend more time with screens than humans. What started as a novelty became a necessity and now it's wreaking havoc on our health—mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and even physically.

You and I have, perhaps unknowingly, become a part of the epidemic of loneliness. The US Surgeon General issued a general advisory in mid-2023 calling loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection a public health crisis in this country. The report states there is an epidemic of loneliness, raising the onset of dementia by 50 percent and premature death by 60 percent.¹ Not having a sense of community and close connection with others is now one of the unhealthiest habits you can have—as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day! While aloneness is nothing new, the *new loneliness*—brought on by our increasing reliance on tech, combined with our post-COVID habits—is life-threatening.

An increase in abuse, addiction, anxiety, awareness of past wounds, and perceived failures has exacerbated the problem and made many of us feel even less sure of ourselves when it comes to developing authentic

and transparent relationships with others. Even being among other people can make us feel different, awkward, alone.

What is making *you* feel lonely today? Are you single and wishing you had a man—or more friends—in your life? Are you overwhelmed with work and responsibilities at home and feeling you no longer have a social life? Are you trying to juggle it all and feeling as though you are failing? Are you starting to sink in despair because of a lack of hope and direction? Maybe you feel disappointed that you don't have what others have. Perhaps you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, burdened, or anxious, and at times, you feel that no one else understands.

Regardless of what is making you feel unsupported, anxious, or disappointed, you don't have to feel lonely any longer. The God who fashioned you in your mother's womb and assigned the exact place and time that you'd live is the same One who goes before you, walks alongside you, and always has your back. He's also the One who is *with* you, *for* you, and has a very specific reason for why you are here. He's the One who promises to never leave, and to always be enough when you feel you need more. He's the One who whispers to you, "Because of your trust in My Son, you are *more* than enough. And you will never walk alone."

I encourage you to come daily to this book over the next 50 days to drink from the well of His Word and bask in the knowledge of His delight in you. Keep your Bible beside you and look up the passages I'm writing about, and read them in context to glean even more. Pray the prayers aloud at the end of each devotion and make them your own. And accept the daily challenge as a way of applying and embracing what you've read. As you take a few minutes each day to focus on God's Word and His ways, you'll discover a closer connection with the Lover of your soul. And you just may discover the ways He is nudging you to break out of the lonely shell you're in and experience community with others He brings your way.

You have no idea how much He's been waiting to get up close and

personal with you, and convince you that you never truly walk alone. He's always, *always* there. And He's ready to pull you closer and show you what it means to commune with Him and others He has *already* brought into your life.

In Isaiah 30, God urged the Israelites to repent for forming an alliance with Egypt and looking everywhere else but to Him for their strength and provision. Through the prophet Isaiah's words, God expressed His patient, loving heart toward His people and confirmed to them that they would sense His presence and direction as long as they looked and listened for it. I believe these words can apply to us today as a tender reminder of His constant presence, refreshment, and direction if we listen for His voice:

The LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him...

He will certainly be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you...He... will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will see your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left (verses 18-21).

Just as God whispered His direction and a reminder of His presence to His people in the Old Testament, He will be there for you too. Let's not miss it.

Yours for a closer connection with Jesus, the Lover of your soul,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindi".

PART I

CONNECTING WITH GOD'S HEART



DAY 1

WELCOMING THE QUIET

*Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place
and get some rest.*

MARK 6:31 NIV

Do you ever feel uncomfortable in the quiet, especially when you're alone?

While we may long for quiet in the midst of the constant chatter of televisions or podcasts, or the chaos of work or arguing children, what do we do with stillness, when there's no one else in the room and we start to feel alone?

Perhaps when it's quiet, our thoughts become louder—thoughts we don't want running through our minds. Or maybe the stillness makes us feel that no one is there to support us or understand what we're dealing with.

You and I can view quiet alone times as reminders of our loneliness and do everything we can to avoid them. Or, we can welcome them as much-needed respites from the noise—as invitations from God, who has been whispering to us, “Come with Me to a quiet place and get some rest.”

When my husband left home for four days to climb another mountain with his friend, I realized the quiet times in the house afforded me something I had truly missed—the opportunity to spend more uninterrupted alone time with Jesus, the Lover of my soul. I relished being

Oh, to be *weaned*
from my own life
and become fully
dependent on the
One who calls to
me in the quiet!

alone with Him and His Word on my back patio, alone with Him on a walking trail mid-day with no expectation from anyone of when I'd return. Alone with Him on the couch in the quiet of the evening, just me and my Lord.

Don't misunderstand. I *love* to be around people. I live for the lunch date or get-together with friends. And I enjoy having my husband home in the evenings when, for so many years, he was gone at work. But as I grow more in love with my Lord, I long for the alone times—more and more—to commune with Him. I long for the quiet to dwell on thoughts of Him and His loving thoughts toward me (Psalm 139:17).

How often we feel we must *set aside* time to be with God and then feel guilty for not doing it. How often our hearts may long for a getaway with Him, not realizing that getaway is available to us every moment of the day because He indwells us and calls us to come to Him within the recesses of our hearts.

“Be still, and *know* that I am God,” says Psalm 46:10 (NIV). We can get to know Him in the stillness as we allow Him to quiet our thoughts and we focus on His presence.

Psalm 46:10 in the New American Standard Bible reads, “*Stop striving* and know that I am God.” Having a heart at rest means we are not striving to control, not anxious nor stressed about what might happen or all that

we have to do. It means we are in a place of quiet contentment like David sang in Psalm 131:2: “I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me” (ESV).

Quiet. Full. Satisfied. Secure.

In another version, that verse reads: “I have quieted myself and caused my soul to become silent, that I might be as a child that is weaned of his mother, as one who is weaned from my own life” (JUB).

Oh, to be *weaned from my own life* and become fully dependent on the One who calls to me in the quiet!

Is it time to slow your pace, switch off the inner chatter, and ask God to still your mind from anxiety or busyness and flood it with His peace? Is it time to close the app, shut the lid on your device, or turn off the music or the TV, and develop a heart that not only welcomes but longs for the quiet stillness? It's there you will begin to discern your Savior's voice, which is much more loving than your own internal critic. It is there you will hear His tender words: “I have loved you with an everlasting love...I have drawn you out with kindness” (Jeremiah 31:3). It is there you will be assured of His promise to never leave you nor abandon you (Hebrews 13:5). It is there, in *His* presence, that you will find fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11).

Lord Jesus, I want to spend more focused time with You, the Lover of my soul. Help me to welcome the quiet times in my life and see them not as reminders of loneliness but as invitations to be alone with You. You are the One who pursues my heart. Calm my ambitions and my striving and help me to be like a child, content to lean against You in the quiet, and just rest.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

Embrace the quiet of your day—or escape to it by carving it out somewhere—so you can get away with God in your heart. Close your eyes. Enjoy the stillness of the moment and the assurance of His presence. Spend some time thanking Him for breathing rest—and quiet—into your day.

DAY 2

IN HIS IMAGE

*God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.*

GENESIS 1:27

*H*ave you noticed the trend? We often refer to ourselves—and our daily activities—in electronic terms as if we were devices. In our culture, as well as across the world, many people use *Google* as a verb and often feel more comfortable with their electronic devices than with one another. I can't help but think this makes us feel more alone than ever—like objects rather than people, and digital codes rather than designed creations.

We are often encouraged to *plug into* a church and to *unplug* from our busyness. After a conference or webinar, we want to *defrag* from information overload. When we're high on adrenaline, we consider ourselves *wired*; when we're burnt out, we say we've *run down the battery*. When we need to rest, we say we must *recharge*.

And our interpersonal relationships are now *internet* relationships. Face time used to mean what it sounds like, and it didn't involve a phone,

tablet, or laptop screen. *Social* used to mean *talking* or *being* with one another, not scrolling on a device.

“Can we Zoom about this later? I don’t have the bandwidth for it right now.”

You and I were made in the image of God, not in the likeness of a smartphone. Our sustainer is God Almighty, not Apple, Microsoft, Google, or Amazon!

So how do we reclaim (or just remind ourselves of) our human status as God’s creation, made in His image and for His glory? We can start by rethinking how we speak about and define ourselves.

Next time you are drained of power and need to recharge (your body *or* your phone), let your device run dry and keep it off for (gasp!) an hour or two. If you fall behind with what happened on social media, your notifications will likely let you know. And if you miss a call, someone can leave a message (all phones have voicemail, like those old-fashioned desktop answering machines back in the day when you—or your parents—had far more time and space in your day for creativity, meaningful conversations, and thoughtful execution of what you deemed your top priority).

God never told us in His Word to hurry up, produce more, or run down the battery. His words resonate at a different pace: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10 ESV); and “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Yet our next-day or even “same-day delivery with Prime” has made us even more incapable of waiting on God who is not bound by time or delivery schedules. The words of the psalmists were not “Hurry up, God, I need an answer within the hour,” but rather, “I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning” (Psalm 130:6 NIV). Good things,

rich things, priceless things come to those who wait on God and His perfect timing.

Do you need to revisit some of the things humans, rather than devices, do so you can become a vintage believer who experiences the beauty of waiting on God?

One of my favorite *humanizing* activities is my daily walk around a small lake near my home. I can't help but recognize and adore God when I'm outside among the beauty of His creation—away from technology, mobile devices, and anything with a screen or signal. It is then that I can tune in to *His* signals—a gentle breeze, the way He parts the clouds and sends the sun's rays to shine through, the song of a bird, the rustle of leaves, and the reminder that “the earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24:1 ESV). As you slow down and get outside and off your phone, you may rediscover the beauty of your Creator (not your Programmer) who calls you His masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10 NLT).

According to the Westminster Catechism, man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever. That means we were created to worship. (Do I dare say we are *wired* for it?) Being out in the beauty of His creation and worshipping Him reminds me of the Luke 19 account when Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on a young colt and the Pharisees demanded He rebuke His followers for waving their palm branches and crying out praise to Him, their king. Jesus told the Pharisees if the people remained silent, “the very stones would cry out” (verse 40 ESV).

He *must* be praised. And we are the ones *created* to do it.

Don't leave your God-given calling and purpose to the rocks! Get off your device, notice God and the people all around you, and give Him, not your phone, the attention He deserves.

Lord, what if zeal for Your Word, not the contents of my phone, were to consume me? Help my worship time to exceed my screen time so I am reminded of who I am in Your eyes.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

Turn off your phone for half an hour (or leave it at home) and go outside to enjoy the presence of God and a break from tech. This may be what reinvigorates your soul so you can once again hear God's voice.

DAY 3

AS CLOSE AS YOUR BREATH

*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

PSALM 34:18

Do you sometimes feel like God is far away? Heartbreak, struggles, hurts from the past, unanswered prayers, or filling your schedule with everything but Him can make you believe God is distant. But Scripture abounds with evidence that He is as close to you as the air you breathe.

Psalm 139 assures us that God knows every detail of our lives, and in verses 7-12, we read there's nowhere we can go to get outside of His presence and away from His watchful eye. Hebrews 13:5 also tells us He will never leave us nor forsake us. But maybe you know all that and you still long to know He's there.

When we feel like God is far away, it's often because we are the ones who have distanced ourselves. Perhaps other loves have stolen our heart. The feeling that He's distant can be an indicator that we need to

put ourselves in the position where we can sense His presence, hear His voice, notice His work around us, and invite Him closer to our hearts.

Tiffany, a young married professional, told me, “There have definitely been moments in my life when I felt God was far away, but looking back, I was hesitant to truly bring my struggles before Him. I know now that if I fully pour my heart out to Him, I will feel that He is with me in that moment.”

How can you be assured God is right next to you?

Take a Divine Pause—Sometimes we can’t sense God’s presence because there’s too much of everything else going on. Too much noise. Too much confusion. Too much anxiety. Too many apps or windows open. Too many voices and thoughts running through our minds. Center your mind on Him (Colossians 3:1-2) and start to breathe deeply. Try it. Exhale the distracting thoughts. Inhale a desire to sense His presence. Exhale your preoccupation with self. Inhale a desire to know Him more completely. Exhale the worries of the moment. Inhale His peace. Now, don’t you feel closer to His heart already? There’s a reason His Word says, “Be *still*, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10 *ESV*).

Whisper His Name—There are times we need God but we just don’t know what to say or where to begin. Start by saying His name and then speak your heart’s cry. Scripture says there is power in the name of Jesus, not only because “salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12 *NIV*), but because Jesus responds to His name when His loved ones call to Him.

The writers of the classics called this type of whispering cry “breath prayers.” My breath prayers to sense His presence are “Jesus, I need You,” or “Jesus, give me a heart for You.” Calling upon His name is one of the simplest ways to sense His presence. And I believe the simplest of cries are the ones that penetrate His heart—and ours—the quickest.

Read His Word Aloud—God speaks to us through His Word. And one of the best ways to sense His presence is to get into His Word and ask His Holy Spirit to guide you into a better understanding of it. When you read God’s Word, and even speak it audibly, you will sense its power and His presence. The Bible says God’s Word is “living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). That sharp sword will prick your heart through conviction, inspiration, enlightenment, or determination. A pricked heart is better than a numb, dull, or complacent heart any day, so get into His Word and find Him there.

“If your heart is broken, you’ll find God right there; if you’re kicked in the gut, he’ll help you catch your breath.”

Start Praising Him—God inhabits the praises of His people. Ever wondered why you sometimes feel closer to God when you’re in a church service, singing hymns or praise songs? It’s possibly because that’s where worship tends to take place. But you don’t have to be in a church building among other believers in order to worship Him. Worship is praise and acknowledgment of His worthiness wherever you are and in whatever situation you are in. Worship is surrender. Worship is giving Him your time, talents, and treasure.

When you start praising God regardless of where you are, you’ll sense His presence, probably because you’re no longer focused on yourself, but on Him. When you open the door of your heart to love Him, He will meet you there. Every time. In fact, Psalm 34:18 in *The Message* assures us God is always just a breath away...or just as close as our own breath:

If your heart is broken, you’ll find God right there;
If you’re kicked in the gut, he’ll help you catch your breath.

Lord, thank You for never hiding from me. Your Word says I will find You when I search for You with all my heart (Jeremiah 29:13). Make Your presence known as close and real as the air I breathe.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

Practice spiritual breathing by exhaling (breathing out your doubts), and inhaling (breathing in an expectation of God's presence). Breathe out your insistence on your own way; breathe in your desire for God's control.

DAY 4

HIS CALMING PRESENCE

*Don't worry about anything; instead,
pray about everything.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:6 NLT

It's been said we are living in the most anxious times on Earth. Post-pandemic loneliness and a sense of isolation still impact many people, young and old alike. Suicide is at an all-time high, now the second-leading cause of death for children ages 10-14 and adults ages 20-34.² Countless people suffer from depression and anxiety disorders. Mental and emotional health issues are off the charts. Stress is making us more susceptible to cancer and other diseases.³ Many struggle with a sense of identity, or lack of it. Financially, people are finding it difficult to make ends meet. And the US Surgeon General has declared loneliness a public health crisis and full-on epidemic with devastating results.

Where is God in all of this?

If you're like most believers today, you'll say you know in your mind that God is in control, but you have a hard time relying on Him in your

day-to-day life. And what I've observed after decades of ministry is that those who can't bring that truth from their head to their heart—from the pages of God's Word to their daily life—also admit they need to be in the Word of God more and know it better.

To know God is to know His Word. To know His Word is to know Him. I once heard my mentor author, Elisabeth Elliot, say, "Pray with an open Bible. How can we know what to pray if we aren't reading God's Word? And how can we understand God's Word if we aren't praying?" The more you open up His Word (whether it's in book form or via an app on your device), the more He will open your eyes and heart to know who He is and how He can calm your anxious heart.

Philippians 4:6-7 has been a lifeline for me through the years—especially because there is much to worry about:

when you're contemplating decisions that will impact your future

when you're seeking a man to marry—or struggling in your marriage

when you're pregnant—or trying to get pregnant

when you're caring for a child, parent, or grandparent

when you're trying to stay afloat financially

when your health—or the health of someone you love—causes fear or frustration

Life is often accompanied by concerns that quickly turn into worries that can develop into fear or anxiety. Yet God's Word gives us a simple yet practical antidote to the type of worry that breeds fear. Philippians 4:6-7 instructs: "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about

everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus" (NLT).

The next verse tells us what exactly to focus on. Our worries over what hasn't yet happened? The things we are anxious to control? The worst possible scenarios? *No*. "Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (verse 8 NLT). We are to focus on what is true—or *real*, not on what we *fear* will happen. We are to focus on what is "pure, and lovely, and admirable." Those descriptions sound like *God's characteristics*, not *our circumstances*. As we focus on the here and now, the true and real, and *all that God is*, "then the God of peace will be with you" (verse 9 NLT).

Do you really believe that? As you focus on what is true and real and all that is good about God and what He does for His children, peace will replace your worry. I can honestly tell you that every time I pray for something that bothers me or has the potential to, that concern never develops into fear, but instantly dissolves, as I realize God has heard me and He has taken that worrisome burden from me and replaced it with His indescribable peace.

He will do that for you too. You have only to ask.

Are you wishing you were closer to God than you are right now? Do you long to feel less anxious and more at peace as you trust this capable God with your concerns? Then start now. Open your Bible to Philippians 4:6-9. Pray through the verses (which means reading the words aloud to God as a prayer, inserting your name and situation into the passage), and He will answer. This is a promise. It is a guarantee. And it is your route to rest, freedom, and peace.

Lord, help me not to worry about anything, but to instead pray about everything. You know exactly what I need, and I thank You for working through this situation on my behalf. I trust Your promise to give me indescribable peace as I lay my concerns at Your feet and focus on what is real, pure, and admirable, like You.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

The moment worry starts to creep into your mind, give it immediately to God in prayer and thank Him for what He's already doing about it. Then relax and experience His peace.

IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND

*You have encircled me behind and in front,
and placed Your hand upon me.*

PSALM 139:5

It's easy to feel right now that the world is spinning out of control. Disease runs rampant. The economy is struggling. Our fears and anxieties mount. Political tensions are rising. Our national and religious freedoms are declining. Yet our God has everything under control. He has the world—and all who are in it—in the palm of His hand.

Haylee, an artist, wife, and mom of two young children, said, “Seeing so much suffering and chaos in the world has made me ask God a lot of questions. Not knowing why God allows the things He allows is what is most difficult, at times—be it sickness, evil rulers, and other matters. I just wonder why a lot.”

As overwhelmed as Haylee is when she has too much on her to-do list, or when she wonders why things happen the way they do, still, she

says, “I know God sees me and loves me, and His peace is the very thing that helps calm me down in times of stress.”

Haylee finds comfort in God’s Word and in worship music that she listens to or writes and composes herself to help her stay connected to His heart.

Psalm 139, a portion of worship music within the Word of God, tells us how intimately acquainted God is with all our ways. I can’t help but think God included this song of David’s in His inspired Word to help us connect with His heart, especially at times when we feel insignificant or helpless in light of all that is going on in the world. Not only does this song tell us God has searched us and known us and that He knows our every thought and every detail of our wandering, but it also says He protects us and loves us more than we know. Even when we feel like the world is spinning out of control.

“You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me,” David sang in verse 5 (ESV).

There is such peace in knowing God is here with us in the dark, in the light, waking up, falling asleep, going out, and coming in. In times of peace and in times of chaos, confusion, or unanswered questions. If you’re one to get a little more anxious or stressed when watching or listening to the news, or scrolling through the happenings in this country or around the world, keep your eyes on God’s Word, which constantly reassures us Who is ultimately in control.

Psalm 139 reminds us that we never need to worry about anything concerning our life or the lives of those we love because of God’s ever-present watchfulness. From this song alone, we are assured that God is One who

- searches us and knows us from the inside out (verse 1)
- knows our every thought and action (verses 2-3)
- knows what we will say before we say it (verse 4)
- encircles us and places His hand of protection upon us (verse 5)
- follows us everywhere we go—or stays with us when we can't go anywhere (verses 8-12)
- formed us and watched over us while we were in the womb (verses 13-15)
- wrote out our life story in His book before we lived it—meaning even this time of your questioning doesn't take Him by surprise (verse 16)
- thinks innumerable (and precious) thoughts of us (verses 17-18)
- knows our concerns and anxieties—including during uncertain days like these (verse 23)
- convicts us of our offenses and leads us in the right direction (verse 24)

This psalm reassures us that God is intimately acquainted with us *and* our loved ones. And He is aware of what is going on in the hearts and lives of those we can't be with on a daily basis. It assures us there is nothing we can do and no place we can go where God's love doesn't follow. That means there is never a reason to worry or feel alone. I am safe—and *you* are safe—in the palm of His hand.

God knows every detail of the paths we walk, the decisions we make, the words we say, and the actions we carry out. He knows every detail about us and the world we live in. And He will never let us out of His sight or out of His heart. He tracks us better than our phones; His knowledge surpasses Siri and Google; He always has our best in mind. You may be one who never goes anywhere without your phone. But you are certainly one who never goes anywhere without His watchful, loving eye and His tender, compassionate hand.

Lord, thank You that You know the condition of this world and the condition of my heart. Thank You that Your love follows me everywhere I go, and that I am safe and secure in the palm of Your protective, loving hand.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

Each time you hear discouraging or disturbing news about this world—or your personal circumstances—whisper the words, “This did not take God by surprise.” Saying this will remind you that He is still on the throne.

NOWHERE ELSE TO GO

Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to leave also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.”

JOHN 6:67-68

I remember the moment in which I truly felt I had nowhere else to go but to God. My parents had just split up and there was no security in my home, my plans, or my heart. Today I look back on that day as the moment in which I took ownership of my faith.

When you grow up learning about Jesus from the time you're young, or if you've walked with Him for a while, you can get complacent and put your life on cruise control and fail to acknowledge His presence, direction, wisdom, guidance, and love every moment of your day. Faith can easily become a compartment that is added to the many elements of your life instead of becoming your *whole* life.

The apostle Paul opened chapter 3 of his letter to the Colossians with instructions for followers if they are truly His:

Therefore, *if* you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is our life*, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (verses 1-4).

If you have been raised with Christ. This appears to be an *if/then* situation. *If* we are His, and we have truly been transformed by His death and resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:17), we are to keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is. That means we are to keep our minds on our eternal home, have eternal priorities and values, and live as if we are here temporarily and we will soon be in our real home with the Lover of our soul. The passage goes on to say we have died, and our lives are hidden with Christ in God. (Our lives, our rights, our sense of entitlement, our preferences have died with Christ, and we [our original natures] are hidden and He [and His character—Galatians 5:22-23] is evident and on display for the world to see.) Then the next line in the passage simply assumes that Christ is not merely a part of our life, but *is our life*.

When we consider Him—not a boyfriend, husband, child, or even a job—as our whole life, we safeguard ourselves from misplaced priorities and frequent disappointment.

People will always disappoint us. But Jesus never will.

A friend once told me to lower my expectations of others, or I would always be disappointed. While that advice seemed callous at the time, today I know it to be true. Others mean well, but they will always disappoint us in one way or another. Only when our expectations are with

the Lord will we find He is fully reliable. And if we feel disappointed in God, we are apparently believing something about Him that isn't true.

God is the only one who will never disappoint us. I know you've heard that too. And like me, you believe it in your heart of hearts, but life still hurts. Being vulnerable enough to tell a loved one what you need from them and then coming up empty because they have no idea how to respond can leave you feeling sore to the core.

So where do you and I go with that? Our answer must be the same as Peter's: "Lord, there is no one else that we can go to!" (John 6:68 CEV).

I have learned to echo Peter's words by making Psalm 73:25-26 my life's motto, as well as the cry of my heart:

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing
on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart
may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my por-
tion forever (ESV).

In the Contemporary English Version, those two verses read:

In heaven I have only you,
and on this earth
you are all I want.
My body and mind may fail,
but you are my strength
and my choice forever.

In other words, *Christ, who is my life*.

Where do *you* go when others disappoint? Be already depending on Him, and the disappointments will come less often. What do you do

when you begin to lack contentment? Remember who is your life and that in His presence is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). Where do you turn when you feel directionless or lacking in purpose? To the One who is your life, your compass, your purpose.

Lord, may You be the object of my heart, my focus, my direction, my life. You gave up Your life so I could belong to You forever. I give You my life and desires and realize I have nowhere else to go—but to You.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

Say aloud “Jesus is the only one who will never disappoint” as a way of cementing that truth in your heart. The more your expectations are in Him alone, the less you will be disappointed.