



Walking *in* Grace

2026 Daily devotions
to draw you
closer to God

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January

You have taken off your old self
with its practices and have put
on the new self, which is being
renewed in knowledge in the
image of its Creator.

—Colossians 3:9–10 (NIV)



New Year's Day, Thursday, January 1

God said, Let there be light: and there was light. —Genesis 1:3 (KJV)

The house is quiet. I sit in my dining room chair that faces the eastward-facing window, sip my coffee, and wait. My personal ritual of going to sleep at a normal hour, bypassing watching one ball drop in favor of watching the sunrise, began years ago when I was pregnant with my son, Solomon. I still have the feeling that I had discovered something sacred with my New Year's practice of intentionally waiting for the darkness to turn to light, alone, with God, reflecting on the past and imagining the future.

I love the waiting; the anticipation is truly magical. Connecting with God, I close my eyes and thank Him. I start with the coffee cup that I have used every single morning. It was mistakenly taken from my sister's house years ago, and now that she's in heaven, it makes me feel close to her.

I go over everything I am grateful for—my husband and sons, my mom next door, my scrappy little blind dog who impatiently waits to be fed, and my five cats that keep us all on our toes. I reflect on my hopes and dreams to come and go over the challenges that have healed with time and grace. The miracles I have witnessed, like the double rainbow on the anniversary of my father's passing.

Trust. I hear the word in my head. *Trust the future with the same faith that you trust the past.*

And just with that thought, the sky breaks with light like it's a response—a beautiful coincidence, to have clarity and beauty, light at exactly the moment that I surrender all fear.

Heavenly Father, thank You for shining

Your glorious light on a new year.

—Sabra Ciancanelli

Digging Deeper: Proverbs 3:5–6; Isaiah 43:19

ANGEL WHISPERS: Following God's Way

He shall direct thy paths. —Proverbs 3:6 (KJV)

Another delayed flight. Here I am, stuck in a strange airport, longing for home and thinking of the \$20 bill tucked in my pocket. As soon as I take a restroom break, I'm off to treat myself to some high-calorie treat in the food court.

As I pass by the lavatories, I see weariness on the face of the woman who methodically cleans the sinks one after the other, as messy hand washers hurry to meet their flights.

The voice comes: *Give the lady your \$20.*

No, I respond. *I'm going to indulge myself.*

Already, I know my protestations are hopeless.

Over time, I have come to recognize these messages that float through my head, most often telling me to do things I would rather not do. I call them "angel whispers." Sometimes the whispers incite my pride or nudge my selfishness before I give in on the second or third rerun.

The results of the whispers, if I follow their direction, are rarely obvious at first. Maybe, for me, they never are.

Now I'm washing my hands. The tired woman cleans on. I turn and pull the \$20 bill from my pocket. Quickly I slip it into the woman's hand, look into her eyes, and say, "I'm supposed to give you this." I disappear, but not before I see disbelief, and possibly relief, cross her face.

Walking through the airport corridor, knowing that I've followed God's way, I smile. I imagine that in the mysterious flow of life, I've done some small thing that has worked for the good of another. All I had to do was listen and follow the path He laid before me.

Father, Your paths finally lead to inner peace. Thank You.

—Pam Kidd

Digging Deeper: Psalm 32:8; Isaiah 58:11

Saturday, January 3

He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. —1 Peter 2:21 (NLT)

The road to our cabin in northern Arizona was completely blocked. Twenty inches of new snow had accumulated in the night, adding to the record-breaking 140 inches that had already fallen that season. The snow was piled as high as the stop sign!

“We’ll need to park on the main road and snowshoe in,” my husband, Kevin, decided.

I nodded. We had come prepared for that possibility. I wasn’t worried about the two of us getting around on the snow. We had once lived and worked in Minnesota as wilderness guides. But I wondered how our desert-dwelling dog, Mollie, would manage.

We stuffed gear into backpacks for the 1-mile trek. Kevin added a snow shovel so we could get into the front door.

“Ready, Mollie?” She met my question with eager eyes and a wagging tail. She didn’t have a clue what awaited her.

Mollie bounded over the embankment—and promptly disappeared. The snow swallowed her whole. Another leap had the same result. I maneuvered her wriggling 30-pound body behind my snowshoes. “Follow me,” I instructed.

We huffed and puffed our way in a winter wonderland of snow-laden pine trees. Our snowshoes created a packed trail for Mollie to walk on, but whenever she tried to go off on her own, she sank out of sight.

Later that night, as we dried out by the fireplace, I thought of Mollie’s example. I knew I had some spiritual things to remember about following. And about going off on my own.

Jesus, help me follow in Your steps, so I don’t find myself over my head in trouble. Amen.

—Lynne Hartke

Digging Deeper: John 10:27, 12:26

Sunday, January 4

Write them on the tablet of your heart. —Proverbs 7:3 (NIV)

Every January, I set a goal to read the Bible in a year. I've done it multiple times. But is speed reading what I still need? This question needled me when our pastor assigned a simple Bible study. He asked us to study the book of John, reading five verses each day. We were to prayerfully and slowly read each assigned passage. Then we were to choose the verses that resonated with us, write down why they impacted us, and rewrite the verses in our own words.

After a week, I reread my answers. The passage in John 1 that I'd always skimmed through spoke directly to me. *Jesus was always with God from before Creation; He wasn't a late arrival on Earth* (v. 2 paraphrased). *No matter how hard the darkness tries, it can never overpower Jesus. We can trust Him to save us* (v. 5 paraphrased). *By His grace, He accepts us as His children once we recognize and accept the truth of who He is—the Creator and Savior of the world. That is all that we have to do* (v. 12 paraphrased).

How long would it take me to study and personalize the entire Bible in such depth? With over thirty-one thousand verses, it would take 17 years! Then I saw my pastor's intent. This is exactly as Bible reading should be done. Savored daily. Pored over. Examined. Personalized. Remembered because it specifically applies directly to me now, today, tomorrow. It shouldn't be a reading race. And it definitely isn't just an old history book.

Father God, speak through the pages of Your story. I am ready to listen.

—Erika Bentsen

Digging Deeper: Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 4:12

Monday, January 5

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. —Romans 12:2 (NIV)

There's a joke among golden retriever owners: Our goldens shed twice a year, each time for 6 months. That's not far from the truth. You golden owners know what I mean.

Dark clothing? Not unless you carry a lint roller. I'd guess the average owner replaces significantly more vacuum cleaners than the rest of society. Allergies? Break out the antihistamines. Think keeping them off the furniture will help? Good luck with that.

My golden, Gracie's, most voluminous shedding happens in early winter. It always alarms me. Big clumps of fur everywhere. In the sunlight streaming through a window on a winter morning I can see bits of her hair dancing on the air. Every year I convince myself the shedding is worse. Is it her thyroid?

This January I took her to Dr. Phillips, her vet. "I'm worried," I said, tugging a tuft of fur from Gracie's hip and holding it up. Dr. Phillips, who is regularly bemused by my overly solicitous concern for my dog's health, ran her hands through Gracie's coat. "I can take some blood," Dr. Phillips said, "but it's healthy shedding so she can grow in a new coat. Too bad we can't renew ourselves like that. It must feel good."

Back home, running the vacuum for the second time that day, I suddenly thought of Romans 12:2, about being transformed by the renewing of your mind so you can know God's will.

Isn't that a believer's version of shedding? Growing anew in our conviction of God's will? And there's no better time than at the year's dawn, refreshing our hearts and minds to be open for what God plans for the year, growing a new coat of faith.

Father, I close my eyes and renew my mind to know Yours better.

—Edward Grinnan

Digging Deeper: 1 Peter 2:2–3; 2 Peter 1:1–11

Feast of the Epiphany, Tuesday, January 6

We have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him.

—Matthew 2:2 (RSV)

A few years ago I joined my son and his family in Singapore for a month at Christmastime. There, I experienced a holiday different from the way we celebrated at home. Both temperature and humidity hovered at eighty-nine, a drastic change from a New England winter. The “Christmas tree” was a potted fig tree with twinkle lights, not a fir tree. Attending a Christmas Eve service, held way downtown at midnight, proved not feasible. Of course, I savored the sights and fragrances of the Garden City with my family, but clearly something was missing—my beloved community celebration back home.

About 2 weeks later, my son’s colleagues invited me to the Feast of the Epiphany service at their church. Though this was not my denomination, I knew the liturgy well and grasped at the chance to observe a familiar holiday with faith friends. And that’s exactly what it was! The beloved hymns—“We Three Kings,” of course—and the familiar prayers drew me into a different beloved community. Here the smiling faces in that congregation looked nothing like mine, yet I felt warmly welcomed and connected in spirit.

Millennia after Christ’s birth, we no longer see that celestial star that guided the Magi. Instead, we follow Jesus to find and worship God—no matter where we are. When we seek, we will find.

Light of the world, lead us.

—Gail Thorell Schilling

Digging Deeper: Matthew 2:9, 7:7

Wednesday, January 7

Every morning he makes me eager to hear what he is going to teach me.
—Isaiah 50:4 (GNT)

In last year's *Walking in Grace*, I wrote how, after feeling something was missing from my morning quiet time, I heard God telling me to "listen." I then realized most of my quiet time had not included *my* being quiet. So I began listening for at least 10 minutes each day. I also wrote in a notebook what I felt I heard from God during those times of listening.

After days of checking my watch, then beginning my prayers and reading after 10 minutes had elapsed, I found myself looking at my start time but forgetting to check whether 10 minutes had passed. As the weeks went by, 10 minutes turned into 20, 20 into 30 or more. After several months, my quiet time had become a conversation time. I would listen, ask questions, then listen more.

Now I no longer check my watch. My "prayer request" time has become minimal. My listening time is nearly 100 percent of my quiet time. My "listen" notebook has grown. I often go back and reread what I've written and discuss it with God some more.

My quiet time is no longer just a time of no distractions so I can pray and read, and no longer just setting aside 10 minutes to hear. It has become a time of listening to, and talking with, God. He sets the agenda, not me. Often 2 hours or more pass before I realize it. And the insights and answers He has given me have been amazing.

*Thank You, God, for our listening and conversation
time together. Help me to live all You have taught me.*

—Kim Taylor Henry

Digging Deeper: 1 Samuel 3:9; Mark 9:7; John 10:27