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Now all glory to God, who is able, through his
mighty power at work within us, to accomplish
infinitely more than we might ask or think.

EPHESIANS 3:20 NLT

Getting Started

Are you happy with the way you are right now? Or are there things in your life you would like to see dramatically altered? Are there limitations and road-blocks you would like to get beyond, especially in your relationship with God? Do you sense your need to draw closer to God?

That's what I want to help you do in this book. I want to help build you up in your relationship with God by letting you see what His Word says about the things you deal with and think about every day. Things like relationships, family issues, overcoming temptation, and enduring hardships.

OUR MANUAL FOR LIVING

As our source of God's truth, the Bible serves many purposes. As God's message of redemption, it tells how we can know Him and come into a relationship with Him. And once we've started that relationship, the Bible is also our manual for living our lives in a way that pleases God. Spending time in the Bible will prepare your heart for whatever you'll face throughout the day. It helps keep our relationship with Him healthy and strong, without breakdowns, no matter what we face.

I love electronic gadgets. I hate to read the manuals, however. And as a result, I have a lot of electronic gadgets that don't work.

Our lives can be that way. Think about how many things go wrong because we have not taken the time to follow the instructions in the manual that God has given us called the Bible. The Bible is God's Word and is to be trusted when we use it to guide our lives.

So allow this book to help you take time daily for the Word of God—

to make this a top priority in your routine—so you can discover for yourself the strength and power and encouragement that God wants to make available to you.

THIS BOOK'S SETUP

As you use this book day by day, here's what you can do in each of the daily readings:

1. After getting alone and quiet and still, read my brief comments that start each day's selection.
2. Think over the sidebar scriptures or questions that you'll see in bold type.
3. Ponder carefully the Bible verse under the heading "The Lord's Invitation to His People." Ask yourself, *What does this mean for my life?* This Bible verse will usually be a direct command from God, and labeling it here as an "invitation" doesn't mean that it's merely His suggestion. It's still a command from God, with obedience being the only worthy and proper response. But don't forget that this obedience is also your open door to a stronger relationship with God and to all the wonderful experiences that come with that. He's inviting you to go beyond your present limitations and spiritual dryness. God's commands don't always make sense to us, but it's important that we obey them whether we like them or not, whether we agree with them or not.
4. Pray. There's no need for any elaborate or religious-sounding words; just talk honestly with God. (You can use the guidelines you'll see under the heading "With God in Prayer.") Focus especially on having a grateful heart and expressing your sincere gratitude to God. (There will always be something new each day to thank Him for!)
5. As you continue in prayerful thought, consider the suggestions you'll find under the heading that starts with the words "Move Beyond" (the rest of the heading is different each day). This

suggestion will always relate to actually doing something about what God invites you to. Take seriously that God invites you to be “not a forgetful hearer but a doer” of His Word—and be excited about His promise that whoever does this “will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25).

6. As God’s Holy Spirit brings to mind further reflections, application points, and things to pray about, feel free to write these down in the space provided at the end of the daily reading. If you get in the habit of writing something down here each day, this book will become a powerful record of your spiritual journey during this season in your life, and it will always be a great personal encouragement to come back and review what God has done.

You’ll find enough daily readings here to last you about six months, with readings for each weekday plus one for the weekend.

My hope is that as you make your way through these readings, you’ll keep asking the Lord to show you how He wants to change your life day by day. My prayer for you is that the Holy Spirit will shine His powerful light into your heart, showing you any area that should be dealt with and filling you with hope and encouragement for a lifelong adventure of following the Lord.

MONDAY

The Power of Impartation

Perhaps like many other people, you make bold resolutions whenever a new year rolls around. You make plans about changes you want to experience in the coming year. But it's not long until you let go of those great resolutions.

As Christians, we're often defeated in day-to-day living because we don't truly realize how many resources God has placed in our spiritual account. A lot of times we pray, *God, help me; give me this, give me that.* Meanwhile, God is saying, *Will you please go check your account? I've deposited more than you could ever use. Check it out.*

Can you imagine a soldier trying to fight a battle with no ammunition while he's sitting on a bunker filled with thousands and thousands of rounds of ammo, more than he could use in a thousand wars? He has more than he needs right under him—while trying to fight the battle without it.

Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the **requirements** of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's **grace**.... You are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God.

ROMANS 6:14, 22 NLT

The reasons for our defeats in battles with sin and temptation lie largely in our ignorance of the facts. In Jesus Christ we have the power to live a new life and to no longer be under sin's control. That power is not in imitation; the

power comes from impartation. We can try our hardest to imitate Jesus and to be like Him, but we will never succeed by our own efforts. Victory comes only as He imparts His life in us through His Spirit. And we'll see how many resources He's made fully available to us through His Spirit living inside us.

God has done something for you, and now it's for you to appropriate that divine provision.

THE LORD'S INVITATION TO HIS PEOPLE

Put on the new self, created after the likeness
of God in true righteousness and holiness.

EPHESIANS 4:24 ESV

WITH GOD IN PRAYER

Thank Him that in Christ Jesus you're now free from slavery to sin and that by His grace you can live in victory.

MOVE BEYOND DEFEAT

Be bold and confident in the Lord's power to help you overcome temptation and sin. In what area of life does He want you to grow today in righteousness and purity, by His power?

**Your own reflections...personal application...
personal prayer points...**

TUESDAY

Through the Storm

Sometimes we may think that when we're in the will of God, our lives should be smooth sailing. But many times it's just the opposite. Doors slam in our faces. Obstacles appear in our paths. Storms arise that threaten to drive us off course.

That's why we need to remember there's a devil who wants to stop us from doing what God wants us to do.

As Paul pressed forward to do the will of God, he hit some tough times. For example, while he was being taken across the sea to Rome, a massive storm arose that caused others on the ship to despair of their lives. But there was no obstacle big enough to stop Paul. He always seemed to rise above his circumstances. As he endured the storm, he knew God had shown him what to do, and he would let nothing deter him from his course.

So take **courage!** For I believe
God. It will be just as **he** said.

ACTS 27:25 NLT

Often when a hard time hits, when a crisis hits, when a tragedy hits, we want out. We ask God for an airlift out of our problems. But many times God wants us to learn in the midst of those difficulties—and to learn especially about His love for us:

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or

hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?...No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. (Romans 8:35, 37 NLT)

Notice that phrase “all these things.” This passage isn’t saying we won’t face some of these struggles, but that in them we’re “more than conquerors.”

If you’re seeking to obey the Lord, expect opposition. Expect obstacles. Expect difficulties. But also expect God to see you through.

THE LORD’S INVITATION TO HIS PEOPLE

Hope in God and wait expectantly for Him.

PSALM 42:11 AMP

WITH GOD IN PRAYER

Ask Him what He wants you to learn in whatever difficulties you are now facing. And give Him praise for how He will lead you triumphantly through these obstacles.

MOVE BEYOND DESPAIR

What specific action steps has God shown you to take in light of your current circumstances or difficulties? Do today what you know He wants you to do, and trust Him for the results.

**Your own reflections...personal application...
personal prayer points...**

WEDNESDAY

People Reaching People

It's worth noting that in the New Testament we see no one coming to faith apart from the agency of another human being. Have you ever stopped and thought about that?

We can find example after example. Take the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26–39. There are many ways God could have reached this man from a distant country. He could have sent an angel to meet him; instead, the Lord sent an angel to Philip, who sent Philip to the Ethiopian. Philip obeyed. He went and proclaimed the gospel to that man, and the Ethiopian believed.

So we are **Christ's**
ambassadors; God is making
his **appeal** through us.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20 NLT

Then there was the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:27–34. God could have reached him without human help. Instead, He allowed Paul and Silas to be incarcerated in his jail. From these two prisoners, the jailer heard the gospel, and he and his family came to faith.

I think also of Cornelius in Acts 10, a centurion searching for God. An angel told him he needed to meet someone named Simon Peter, and the angel explained where to find him. Interesting. The angel could have given him the gospel. Instead God chose to use Simon Peter.

So faith comes from hearing, that is,
hearing the **Good News** about Christ.

ROMANS 10:17 NLT

And what about Saul (later the apostle Paul) in Acts 9? While it's true he was converted through an encounter with Christ Himself on the Damascus Road, God sent Ananias to confirm this with Saul and to pray for him to receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

So you see, God uses people. And He wants to use you.

THE LORD'S INVITATION TO HIS PEOPLE

Live wisely among those who are not believers,
and make the most of every opportunity.

COLOSSIANS 4:5 NLT

WITH GOD IN PRAYER

Ask Him to show you clearly the people whose lives He wants you to invest in with your time and energy.

MOVE BEYOND FEELING USELESS

God wants to use you in the lives of unbelievers around you. Who are they? What can you do for them today? When can you share the gospel with them?

**Your own reflections...personal application...
personal prayer points...**

THURSDAY

When We Doubt

Oswald Chambers said, "Doubt is not always a sign that a man is wrong. It may be a sign that he is thinking." There's a difference between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is a matter of the mind. Unbelief is a matter of the heart. Doubt is when we cannot understand what God is doing or why He's doing it. Unbelief is when we refuse to believe God's Word and to do what He tells us to do. We must not confuse the two.

Remember the discouraged disciples on the Emmaus road in Luke 24? In their minds, Jesus had failed in His mission and had been crucified. Jesus joined them on that road and began to speak with them. Afterward they said, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32 NLT). God dealt with their doubt through His Word.

O you of little **faith**, why did you doubt?

JESUS, IN MATTHEW 14:31

And God will deal with your doubt through His Word. When you're facing doubt, that's not the time to close the Bible. It's the time to open it and let God speak to you.

Maybe you've been doubting God's ways in your life. Maybe you've been asking *Why?* a lot lately. Maybe His timing doesn't seem to make any sense. Be confident that it will all be resolved in that final day when we stand before God. As Paul says,

Now we see things imperfectly as in a cloudy mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. (1 Corinthians 13:12 NLT)

God doesn't ask us to understand everything. He asks us to trust Him and follow Him.

THE LORD'S INVITATION TO HIS PEOPLE

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God,
who gives to all liberally and without reproach,
and it will be given to him.

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting,
for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea
driven and tossed by the wind.

JAMES 1:5-6

WITH GOD IN PRAYER

Be honest with Him about any doubts you're now experiencing.

MOVE BEYOND DOUBT

To help you overcome doubt, what are the truths about God and His character that you most need to remember?

**Your own reflections...personal application...
personal prayer points...**

FRIDAY

A Matter of the Heart

It's fascinating to note how Jesus dealt with different people. He never dealt with any two individuals in precisely the same way. That's because He looked beyond the outward veneers and saw their hearts.

When a person was really seeking God and a miracle was in order, Jesus did one. There are numerous miracles He did for hurting, searching people like blind Bartimaeus, or the centurion whose servant was deathly ill, or the sick woman who spent everything on doctors and needed a miracle, or the ten lepers who came to Him looking for His cleansing touch.

You will seek Me and **find** Me, when you
search for Me with all your heart.

JEREMIAH 29:13

But when people came to Jesus with the wrong motives, it was a different story. In fact, on some occasions, He didn't even reveal Himself to them, as in this instance:

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. (John 2:23-25)

Here were these people who believed after they saw Jesus's miracles, but He wouldn't "commit" Himself to them. That really seems strange, doesn't it? But let's consider what the word *commit* means: to entrust someone with something. Jesus wouldn't entrust these people with His truth. If they were true seekers, Jesus would have revealed Himself to them.

These people weren't seeking with their whole hearts. They were merely excited about the miracles Jesus had done. Therefore, Jesus wouldn't commit Himself to them.

THE LORD'S INVITATION TO HIS PEOPLE

Seek the LORD while He may be found,
call upon Him while He is near.

ISAIAH 55:6

WITH GOD IN PRAYER

Thank Him for being so open and responsive to all who genuinely seek Him.

MOVE BEYOND FEELING DISTANT FROM GOD

What can you do today to more wholeheartedly seek the Lord?

**Your own reflections...personal application...
personal prayer points...**

When God Seems to Disappoint

Have you ever had something happen in your life that caused you to say, *Where is God?* Someone no less than the greatest prophet who ever lived, John the Baptist, faced this same struggle.

John had put everything on the line for Jesus Christ. He had baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. He pointed his own disciples to Jesus, whom he believed was the Messiah. John had clearly pledged his complete loyalty to Jesus.

Then a strange series of events occurred that resulted in John's being arrested. One moment he was out preaching to the multitudes and baptizing people; the next moment he was in prison. And while there, the great John the Baptist began to entertain some doubt about Jesus. So he sent his disciples to Him with basically this question: "Are you really the One we've been waiting for? Or should we wait for somebody else?"

John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the **Messiah** was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask **Jesus**, "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for **someone** else?"

MATTHEW 11:2-3 NLT

Jesus's disciples commonly believed (as John did) that Jesus would establish His kingdom then and there. But they failed to recognize that before

Christ would establish His kingdom, He would first suffer and die for the sins of humanity. John misunderstood the prophecies of Scripture and therefore thought Jesus wasn't doing what He was supposed to do.

Sometimes we, too, misunderstand God and His Word when He doesn't do what we think He should do, or when He doesn't work as quickly as we would like Him to. But even when we cannot understand God's ways, His methods, or His timing, He still asks us to trust Him. And He is trustworthy.

THE LORD'S INVITATION TO HIS PEOPLE

Commit everything you do to the LORD.
Trust him, and he will help you.

PSALM 37:5 NLT

WITH GOD IN PRAYER

If there's anything about His ways of dealing with you that you don't understand, confess and acknowledge that He knows best and that all His ways are good and right.

MOVE BEYOND DISAPPOINTMENT WITH GOD

Commit to Him every part of your life, including especially those areas where God's timing or methods are hard for you to accept.

**Your own reflections...personal application...
personal prayer points...**