

Good Morning Messages

Prayer, Praise, and Love from Above

Katherine Merkle

Bestwine Press
Indianapolis, Indiana



Bestwine
Press

INTRODUCTION

Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23

This devotional is an expression of my love and gratitude for all that God has done in my life. He rescued me from the depths of sin and rebellion and gave me a new life in Him. The most powerful impact we can make in changing our lives is through building our relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Each morning, we are given the gift of a new day, an opportunity to grow into the person God created us to be. An important part of my journey has been and continues to be spending time daily in morning devotionals, studying God's Word, prayer, praise, and experiencing His presence and love.

God desires for us to know Him, to have a deep personal relationship with Him, and an established devotional time daily is a great place to begin or a practice to continue in. In the morning, *Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait expectantly* (Psalm 5:3). There is no better time of day than morning to give ourselves over to God, to surrender all to Him, to listen for His voice, and to allow God to lead and direct our path. *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well* (Matthew 6:33).

Our Heavenly Father knows best. I pray we all will devote ourselves to the daily pursuit of knowing Him more and serving Him, as well as others in and through Him. May His will be our priority.

God is good, all the time!

Katherine Merkle

authorkatherinemerkle.com

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer (Psalm 19:14).

JANUARY 1ST

This is the day which the LORD hath made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.

PSALM 128:24

Good morning! New Year's Blessings to you and yours! It is not just "this day," but all of our days—the yesterdays, today's, and for all eternity. We can choose to live in this truth! We can choose Jesus and live victoriously! When we start each day in prayer and praise, we start the day off in the right direction.

Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens! Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with trumpet sound; praise Him with lute and harp! (Psalm 150:1-6).

We can choose another year of battling through, trying so hard to control our circumstances and other people, places, and things, and we'll continue to get the same results. OR we can surrender our lives to the One who is truly in control, who loves us beyond anything we could ever imagine (Psalm 36:5-7) and *who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine* (Ephesians 3:20).

The best resolution we can make has nothing at all to do with earthly matters. It is not about weight loss, quitting bad habits, or forcing temporary changes into our lives. It is all about Jesus!

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7). Let's choose to follow Jesus more closely and grow deeper in faith as our New Year's resolution.

Lord, we thank You for another New Year and praise You for who You are in our lives. This year, Lord, we desire to follow you more deeply, to shift our priorities to Yours. It is in our surrender that we are set free and will find our resting place in Your promises of love, healing, and peace. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

FEBRUARY 18TH

Arise and eat.

1 KINGS 19:5 KJV

Good morning! Depression and despair can paralyze us, and both are a reality of life. Oswald Chambers says of depression that “a human being is capable of depression, otherwise there would be no capacity for exaltation.”³ The answer is simple: we have to do the next thing and do it in the inspiration of God. The angel did not give Elijah a vision, or explain the Scriptures to him, or do anything remarkable. If we are focused on doing something to overcome depression, we are more likely to deepen the depression. But God! Let His Spirit fill us, guide us, and lead us into His action. Our focus is moved, and healing begins.

And for despair, we find ourselves saying, “It is all done, there is no use trying.” The disciples went to sleep when they should have been watching. When they realized what they had done, it produced despair. We’ve all experienced situations like that in our lives. But Jesus said, “*Rise, let us be going*” (Matthew 26:46). Jesus responded with a spiritual initiative against despair—“get up (arise) and do the next thing.” We mustn’t let depression and despair stop us or block us from the Power of God in our lives.

What is the next thing? To trust Him absolutely and to pray on the ground of His Redemption. *Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge* (Psalm 62:8). Give everything to the Lord and see what He will do. *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act* (Psalm 37:5). We provide a surrendered heart, and God provides the outcome of our stories. “I can’t. He can. Let Him.”

Lord, whatever we face, we never face it alone. You are with us in the midst of it all, inviting us to do the next thing, and to do it confidently in and with You. We are never alone. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

3. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2017).

MARCH 17TH

I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him. Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord ... Nothing can compare with You.

PSALM 40:1-4, 5

Good morning! Nothing on the outside compares to God's presence on the inside! Live in the world, become worldly; live in God's Word, become holy. We are in desperate need of experiencing the awesomeness of God's presence in our lives, and afterward, we will never again be impressed or bothered by things external. God has not moved. He waits patiently for us to turn away from our external focus to find Him. He is the only One who transforms lives into something worthwhile and eternal.

Do we know Him? Do our lives still feel like a tangled mess, overwhelming and stressful? To know God is to know peace. "No God, no peace. Know God, know peace." We will never solve the external mess of this world, but God is the answer for our internal peace. He alone will fill us up to overflowing that we might delight in the conscious presence of Him! Smith Wigglesworth said, "The more of God's Word you hide in your heart, the easier it is to live a holy life."⁹

Lord, You came that we would have abundant life, life to the full. You gave us Your Word that we would be filled, that we would know You and live in Your power and presence. Lord, may we turn away from the things of this world that distract and destroy, and turn to You—our hope and life. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

9. Smith Wigglesworth, *Smith Wigglesworth Devotional*, 132.

APRIL 9TH

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

MATTHEW 6:11

Good morning! In the Lord’s Prayer, the “daily bread” we pray for is not just the physical bread that provides our physical nourishment or sustains physical life. We are asking for spiritual nourishment and acknowledging that God is our sustainer and provider. The daily bread we need is Jesus, the bread of life. *“It is My Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty”* (John 6:32–33, 35).

Our spiritual hunger can only be satisfied, and our spiritual life sustained, by a right relationship with Jesus. He must be the foundation of our daily walk, as Jesus alone brings life and sustains us.

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever” (John 6:51). As manna came down from heaven to physically nourish the Israelites in the desert, Jesus came down from heaven for our spiritual nourishment. The ministry of Jesus is spiritual, not physical. When we eat of the living bread, we accept Christ into our lives and become united with Him. God sent the “true bread from heaven,” in the form of the person Jesus, that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.

Lord, we thank You for Your gift of daily bread, the bread of life. Lord, let us not miss Your invitation to daily intimacy with You: a life-giving relationship of faith in You that leads to one day being physically resurrected to eternal life! Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

MAY 11TH

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle
and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

MATTHEW 11:28–30

Good morning! It is a rainy morning, and our house is quiet except for the soft snoring of our dog Raleigh. I am fully aware this is a different stage of life from many who might be reading this. Your time will come too. What struck me as I studied this morning are the words of this hymn: “My goal is God Himself, not joy, nor peace, Nor even blessing, but Himself, my God; ‘Tis His to lead me there—not mine, but His—At any cost, dear Lord, by any road.”¹⁵

For many years, my prayers were centered on escaping where I was in my life—the self-inflicted chaos, challenging circumstances, difficulties, any discomfort life presented to me. But God! He knows best! He can and will use whatever is necessary to draw us to Himself. He desires us to know Him, to be in fellowship with Him. Man’s solutions are temporary and fleeting and ultimately lead to death. God is the only real and lasting answer in and to life, and He repeatedly, constantly invites us into relationship with Him. *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well* (Matthew 6:33). Stop trying to navigate life alone, carrying heavy burdens you are not intended to bear on your own efforts. Jesus took them all upon Himself on the cross to set us free to live abundant lives in and through Him. I don’t know your burden, but I do know without any doubt that God is your answer!

Lord, we don’t deserve Your grace, mercy and forgiveness, but You freely offer it to us. Whatever we’re facing, we give it all to You. We exchange it for knowing You! Do what You must to break the chains that bind us from being wholly Yours, for You, Lord, are all we need! Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

15. Frances Brook, “My Goal Is God Himself,” public domain.

JUNE 6TH

*“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.
The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

MATTHEW 26:41

Good morning! When we don't take time to “*watch and pray*,” our alertness is compromised, and we will suffer as a result. Temptations are waiting to confront us, and we are unprepared to withstand them. Jesus, the omnipotent Son of God, felt it necessary to rise early each morning before dawn to pour out His heart to His Father in prayer. How much more should we be compelled to seek and pray to the Father?

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God will give us strength to endure the inevitable temptations we will face and show us a way out. The way to overcome temptation is to keep watch and pray. Watching means being aware of the possibilities of temptation, sensitive to the subtleties, and spiritually equipped to fight. Temptation strikes where we are most weak, and we can't resist it alone. Prayer is essential because it is in the Lord's strength that we are made strong in defense against Satan's power.

A life without prayer is a powerless life—a life filled with noise and activity, but far removed from God and Jesus, who day and night prayed to His Father.

Lord, morning and night we are protected and strengthened by time taken to “watch and pray.” May we not give in to the laziness that robs us of the rich freshness and strength that come from time with and wisdom imparted during moments with You. We need You, Lord. Fill us with Your Word, that our lives would be living testimonies to You. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

JULY 8TH

*“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you,
then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ...
But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”*

JOSHUA 24:15

Good morning! We live in a world where there are an overwhelming number of choices! Where to eat, work, or play; what to watch, wear or consume; whether to stay or go; with whom and where. The list is endless. But there is one choice we must make that has eternal consequences. Joshua challenged the Israelites to “choose whom you will serve,” and nothing has changed. We must choose for ourselves whether we will serve and obey God, who is faithful and trustworthy, or the myriad of earthly idols we are chasing after.

It’s easy to slip into the rebellion of doing it our own way, but there are serious consequences. God will judge those who refuse to listen to Him, and the results can be disastrous. *“Whoever believes in the Son of God has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them”* (John 3:36). At some point we must decide “our way” or “Yahweh”—God’s way.

“Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel” (Joshua 24:23). Serving God is more than just saying the words. It is action and complete dedication to Him. We must yield our hearts to God, surrendering ourselves to Him, and prioritizing Him in our lives above all else. Make the decision today to follow Jesus and reaffirm that choice each and every day.

Lord, our hearts are set on You, surrendered in obedience to You. Teach us, guide us and show us what You would have us to do. We choose to serve You, yielding to Your control in and of our lives. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

AUGUST 13TH

Therefore, as God's chosen people ... Bear with each other and forgive one another if any one has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

COLOSSIANS 3:12-13

Good morning! Have you ever thought or said, “I can never forgive (fill in the blank)” or “I’ll forgive, but I’ll never forget.” Friends, that is not in the Word of God. What if God held forgiveness in the same vein as we often do—limited and with conditions? His Word commands us to *forgive as the Lord forgave you*. The key to forgiveness is remembering how much God has forgiven us. How can we withhold our forgiveness of another when we acknowledge that God has forgiven us so much?

Stop and realize God’s infinite love and forgiveness. We must pray for Him to help us love and forgive others, especially those we are struggling to release from our unforgiveness and judgment. God is the only one who can judge. *“It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord* (Romans 12:19).

Unforgiveness is poison to our souls and leads to death. *“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins”* (Mark 11:25). It is not by our forgiving others that God forgives us but because of his great mercy toward us. As we come to understand His mercy, however, we grow in the desire to become more like Him. Having received so great a mercy and His forgiveness, we will pass forgiveness on to others. Those unwilling to forgive have not become one with Christ, who was willing to forgive even those who crucified Him. Can we say, as He did, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34)?

Lord, help us to forgive as You have forgiven us, for it is in such mercy that we are set free to fully love and be loved. Lord, we pray for our hearts to be pure and holy, for our lives to become more like Yours each day, bringing honor and glory to You. Thank You, Jesus!

SEPTEMBER 18TH

*The Lord confides in those who fear him;
he makes his covenant known to them. My eyes are ever on the Lord,
for only he will release my feet from the snare.*

PSALM 25:14-15

Good morning! Do you have a special time and place where you sit with God? For us, during fair weather months, it is mornings spent on the front porch. Maybe for you it is evening walks or midday breaks. The when and where are much less important than the necessity of making certain to do so. Why? Because it is the very thing that Jesus did!

Have you just received difficult news? Jesus, *after hearing about John the Baptist's fate at the request of Herodias, withdrew by boat to a solitary place* (Matthew 14:6-13). Do you have a long day ahead of you? *Before preaching throughout Galilee, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a very solitary place, where He prayed* (Mark 1:35). Are you facing a big decision? *Before choosing the twelve disciples Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God* (Luke 6:12).

If Jesus recognized the need and took the time to spend time with His Father, how much more should we? *God is good to those who hope in and seek Him* (Lamentations 3:25). *He gives strength and power to His people* (Psalm 68:35).

Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always (Psalm 105:4). God's Word encourages us to look to Him, to seek Him, spend time with Him, and talk to Him—to pray.

Thank You, Lord, for Your example of standing on Your Word and going to a solitary place to pray. The busyness will wait, and You will strengthen us through our time with You. Lord, instruct us, teach us, and strengthen us for Your work in and through our lives. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

OCTOBER 18TH

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

Good morning! My husband and I memorized this verse a few years ago during a particularly difficult time in our lives. We encouraged each other by repeating it to each other, sometimes multiple times a day.

Skeptics will question: “ALL things? How can loss, pain, suffering, and death be for our good?” The story doesn’t end with the experiences and circumstances we’re living in or going through. God is in control of ALL things, and He is a part of our story. God knew us before we were even born, recording our days in His book of life. *Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be* (Psalm 139:16–17).

God has plans for us that are meant to prosper us, give us hope, and give us a future (Jeremiah 29:11). There are times God will discipline those He loves, called to be His children, to build us up and ensure our story is complete. *And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?* (Hebrews 12:5–7).

Trust God’s Word and His Ways. Know His truth, that in ALL things God works for the good of those who love Him.

Lord, we thank You that You are in control of our story, that You love us so much You orchestrate our lives to mature our faith and bring us to a deeper knowledge of who You are and into a lasting relationship with You. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

NOVEMBER 17TH

*“If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land.
But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.”
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.*

ISAIAH 1:19–20

Good morning! When we hear the word *obey*, I doubt that adverbs like *joyfully* and *willingly* are the words that first come to our minds! From tantrum-inclined toddlers to feisty know-it-all teenagers and even into our adulthood, we are more inclined toward self-willed disobedience than joyful and willing obedience. God’s desire is for us to know Him and trust Him so deeply that obedience becomes our first response to whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. *But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him. Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did* (1 John 2:5–6). Obedience is our response to believing in Jesus, to loving God and choosing to live as Christ lived.

Jesus was always obedient to His Father, even unto death. *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done”* (Luke 22:42). Jesus confessed His dread of the task before Him but remained obedient to what His Father set before Him to do. Why? Because He loved and trusted His Father.

Do we love God enough to be obedient to Him? *In fact, this is love for God: to keep His commands* (1 John 5:3). To live joyfully and willingly obedient lives to God, we simply need to filter all our thoughts, words, and deeds through this: Are we demonstrating our love for God and our love for others? If the answer is anything but a resounding “yes,” we need to pause and rethink.

Lord, forgive our inclination toward the sins of rebellion and disobedience. Reveal in us anything that is not of You, that we may repent of it. Lord, we want to live for You in joyful, willing obedience that pleases You. Father, Your will be done. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

DECEMBER 13TH

“You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.”

JEREMIAH 29:13

Good morning! How many times do we speak of “seeking God’s will” as if He’s hidden it from us and all of humanity? As if He’s lost. This just isn’t so! It is more likely that we are simply unaware of God’s presence because we are too aware of ourselves and the world surrounding us. We are searching after the wrong things. *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Matthew 6:33).

God isn’t hiding from us, but we might be walking around with a divided attention that interferes with our spiritual concentration. *Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name* (Psalm 86:11).

We are to have a God-centered purpose in our lives, that our awareness toward Him would increase and our hearts would be fully His. Are we listening for what God’s desire is for us and responding to what He is prompting us to do? We need to follow the example Jesus set for us when He walked this earth always in concert with God the Father. *“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does”* (John 5:19).

When our spiritual eyes are pure and our hearts are centered on Him, we will be amazed by all God will reveal to us.

Thank You, Lord, that You are not hidden or lost from us. Help us, Lord, to seek You with our whole hearts, fully surrendering our lives to You. May we pursue You with passion and fervor, eager to be doers of Your Word, that our lives would be pleasing to You and dedicated to the work You have planned for us. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.