

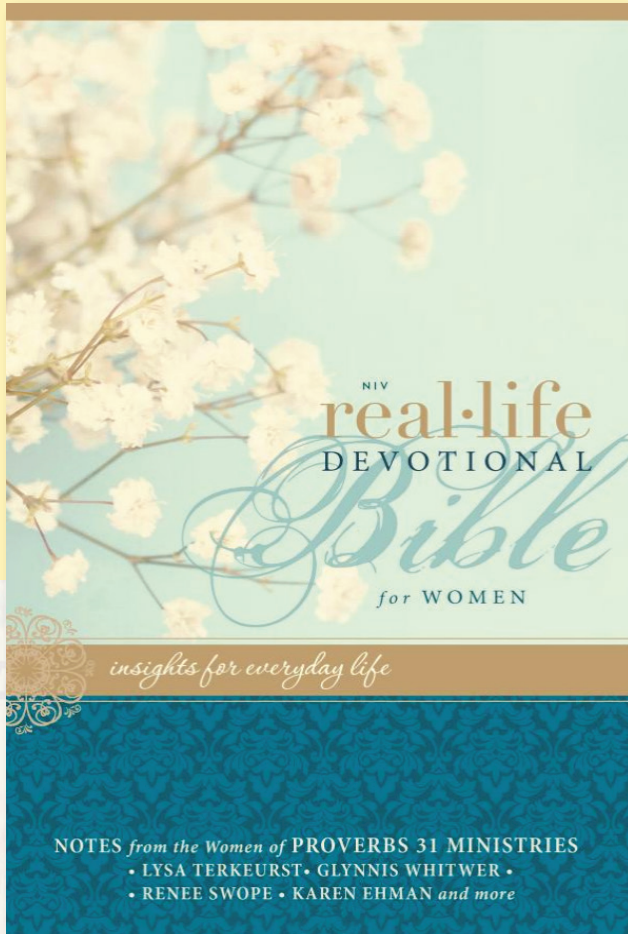


real-life
DEVOTIONAL

7-Day Plan

Real-Life for Women

Find peace and balance through life's hectic pace with practical and spiritual insight from God's Word. Life is full of obligations, emotions, and relationships. Some are life-giving, yet sometimes the weight and responsibility of everyday life is heavy to bear. As wives, mothers, friends, and daughters, we need to know we're not alone. When our days are long, and our nights are restless, it's easy to think we should be able to handle things on our own. Or that no one struggles like we do. Be encouraged with this 7-day reading plan with insights from Lysa TerKeurst and the women at Proverbs 31 Ministries.



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Day 1

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. —Genesis 3:24

Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. —John 1:16

A Grace Place

I once wondered if God ever got tired of my issues, those recurring failings and sins I couldn't ever seem to conquer. Throughout my lifelong struggle with emotional eating, I worried I was going to use up all my grace with God.

That is until I read the “first story” of God's grace with fresh eyes.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating from the forbidden tree, and they ushered sin into the world. God handed down the consequences of their actions, which included banishment from the Garden of Eden.

Whenever I'd read that story, I'd thought they had to leave paradise because God was tired of them. But I was wrong. Their relocation was not a place of abandonment; it was a place of grace.

You see, there were two special trees in the Garden of Eden. One was the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” This tree was the one with the forbidden fruit. The other tree was the “tree of life.” This was the tree that gave Adam and Eve perpetual life.

And this tree of life is why they had to leave. For if they'd been allowed to stay, they would have eaten from the tree of life and lived forever (see Genesis 3:22)—wallowing in sin, wallowing in all the brokenness sin brings with it. And God couldn't stand that for the people he loved.

So it was his love that made them leave. And allowed them to die. So that they could experience the resurrected life his Son would one day provide.

God did not run out of grace at the dawn of humankind. And, he will not run out of grace for you or for me.

Taken in part from Lysa TerKeurst's book, [Made to Crave: Satisfying Your Deepest Desire With God, Not Food](#)

Day 2

Now, Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, Lord, are God. —2 Kings 19:19

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” —Luke 17:5

Am I Scared to Pray Boldly?

Sometimes I’m scared to pray boldly in the way King Hezekiah did when the Assyrian army was knocking on Jerusalem’s gate.

It’s not that I don’t believe God can do anything. I do. I’m a wild-about-Jesus girl. Wild in my obedience. Wild in my adventures with God. After all, I think Jesus would rather rein in a wild stallion than kick a dead mule.

So my hesitation isn’t rooted in doubt about God. Instead, it’s rooted in doubt about my ability to discern the will of God. If his will is no while I am boldly praying for a yes, then I worry my prayers will get me off track.

Because I desperately want to stay in the will of God, I find myself praying at times with timidity: “God please heal my friend, if it’s your will.” I wonder why I don’t just boldly pray, “God, please heal my friend.” Then believe, whatever the outcome, that my prayers were not in vain.

I’m realizing prayer isn’t just about getting an answer from God. It’s also about changing me. It opens my spiritual eyes to see things I can’t see on my own and to see God in a fresh way. Praying boldly boots me out of a stale place of religious habit into authentic connection with God.

So prayer does make a difference—a life-changing and earth-rattling difference. We can kneel confidently and know the tremors of a simple Jesus girl’s prayers extend far and wide. This truth snuffs out the flickers of hesitation in my prayers.

What do you need to pray boldly about today? Go ahead and ask. Not so your prayers cause God to move, but so you can be in a position to see Jesus move in any which way he pleases.

By [Lysa TerKeurst](#)

Day 3

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” —Matthew 19:25-26

Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” —Genesis 18:14

Praying for the Impossible

I sat beside my youngest sister and listened as she boldly rejected my views of God. She’s always been a free spirit, much too unconventional for traditional religion. “Good thing I’m not into religion,” I gently replied.

She twisted her face and took exception, “But you are religious.”

I laid my head against the back of the lounge chair, closed my eyes to the sun now washing over me and simply replied, “Nope.”

When she asked me to clarify, I explained that I follow God, not a list of rules. I am passionate about getting into the Bible—God’s teachings—and I let my feelings and experiences be evaluated in light of God’s Word.

I took my sister’s hand and told her I’d be praying for God to mess with her in ways too bold for her to deny.

Fast-forward five years. My sister walked into her professor’s office and saw one of my books. And it messed with her.

She went home, poked around my blog and listened to my testimony. God’s Word messed with her so much that she let the possibility that God exists slip into her heart. A few days later she went and had Jeremiah 29:11 tattooed on the back of her neck. And she called, wanting to talk to me about life, tattoos and God.

Then one day, I stood in the middle of the Atlanta airport praying for this precious girl. She called. She asked. That’s the miracle of our Jesus. He is the God of the impossible. Let’s dare to ask God for the impossible a little more often.

By Lysa TerKeurst

Day 4

my lips will not say anything wicked, and my tongue will not utter lies.

—Job 27:4

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. —Genesis 18:14

Words

“Growth opportunity” is the phrase our family uses for a fight, and two of my children were experiencing a big opportunity to grow one day.

Hand on my hip, I preached to them: “Outside this house, people may or may not be kind. But inside this house, before you speak, you must ask yourself: ‘Are my words kind, necessary and true?’ If the answer to all three parts of that question is yes ... proceed; but if the answer to any part of that question is no ... remain silent. Does that mean we don’t address hard issues? No. But it will be done with respect and honesty.”

Then I ushered these precious teens outside, instructing them to figure out their issues together. Thank you very much. Have a nice time on this warm little bench on this warm little day.

After that particular growth opportunity, I considered writing some Bible verses on the palm of my hand.

Think of how handy it would be to just flash my palm up with this verse in bold ink: “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be” (James 3:9-10).

Later, that same chapter of James reads, “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (verse 16).

I do not want disorder and every evil practice in my home. And if envy and selfish ambition (which are where ugly words come from) are the keys that open the door to that evil mess, then I will do everything to tame tongues, including my own, in my home.

By Lysa TerKeurst

Day 5

*But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;
you consider their grief and take it in hand.
The victims commit themselves to you;
you are the helper of the fatherless. —Psalm 10:14*

When People Let You Down

Disappointment feels like a heavy rock sinking to the bottom of my spirit—especially when others disappoint or deceive me. Often I ignore my disappointment, shut it in a box and hope the lid holds. Sometimes I gloss it over with a quick, “People will let you down, but God never will.” True, but does this really help me process the hurt?

One morning, I poured out my sadness, anger and disappointment to God about a close relationship. As the tears slipped down my face, I begged for an answer: What do I do with this? Show me. I’ll do it because what I’ve been doing is not working.

In my spirit, Jesus said, “Grieve.”

Really? I questioned. I remembered that Jesus knew disappointment—Peter’s denial, Judas’s betrayal and the disciples falling asleep during his anguish before his crucifixion (see Matthew 26). Jesus understood my pain.

So I cried, feeling every ounce of the disappointment. I told God all the things I wished were different, all the things I thought this person had done wrong, and what I wished this person would change.

After the winds of grief subsided, I was done. Grieving was the bridge I had to cross to move beyond the disappointment. On the other side, I could embrace the relationship for what it was, not what it wasn’t.

Only after we’ve allowed ourselves to grieve will we know how to respond in the way God wants. We may need to talk to the person who disappointed us or get godly counsel.

We may need healthy boundaries or to just let it go.

Once we’ve completed those steps, the words “People will let you down, but God never will” will be comforting, not empty.

By Melanie Chitwood

Day 6

*When I said, "My foot is slipping,"
your unfailing love, Lord, supported me.*
—Psalm 94:18

Deep Grief

I stood at the side of a casket too small to accept. Pink roses were draped everywhere. And I watched my mom as she lay across the casket. Within that casket laid part of her heart, so quiet and so still. Her little girl was gone.

It was the type of loss that cuts a heart so viciously it forever defines you. A loss called "deep grief."

I remember standing paralyzed at the funeral. Just days before we were doing everyday things; suddenly it all stopped. People were everywhere. Soft chatter filled in the gaps of our stunned silence. Eventually people went back to their own lives, and we carried on with ours, bound in deep grief.

I desperately longed for God to fix things. To take away my bloodshot eyes. To take away my anger toward him. To take away my guilt for being the one that lived. I felt I didn't deserve to be happy, ever again.

This is the reality of deep grief. Even when you love God and believe in his promises, healing takes time.

It takes wading through an ocean of tears.

It takes discovering one day that the sun still shines and it's okay to smile.

It takes prayer, and a decision to stop asking for answers and start asking for perspective.

Then one day you take off the blanket of deep grief. You fold it neatly and tuck it away. You no longer hate it or resist it. For underneath it, wondrous things have happened. Things that can only come about when Divine hope intersects with a broken world.

And finally you can see years stretching before you once again. You look up, blow a kiss, wipe a tear and find it's still possible to dance.

By Lysa TerKeurst

Day 7

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”*

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” —Isaiah 6:8

Don't Send Me to Africa

Since I was a little girl, I've had a heart for the people of Africa. To be honest, though, I didn't want to live in a hut, eat fried grubs or wear tribal headdresses. So while I prayed for Africa, I added, “But Lord, don't send me there.”

I imagine God smiling and saying, “Really, Princess? You don't want to go to Africa ... fine. Then I'll send Africa to you.”

And that's exactly what he did. One night while attending a concert by the Liberian Boys Choir, God clearly spoke to my heart and told me two of those boys were mine. I tried to ignore him, but to no avail. After the concert, two boys walked straight to me and called me “Mom.” After months of prayer and piles of paperwork, Mark and Jackson joined our family ... Africa had arrived.

No longer was the plight of the starving orphans just a story on television. They were precious children who deserved a second chance. Not only did we think so, but the people of my church soon felt moved to also adopt children from Liberia.

This is the way the body of Christ is supposed to work. God speaks, we listen, he confirms, we obey and he gives us the strength to do amazing things.

Many shrug and make excuses. But one jumps up and in complete abandon says, “Me, Lord! Me! Pick me! I am willing!” God smiles, scoops her up, brings her into his loving embrace, and whispers back, “Well done my child ... I am so pleased. I will give you the strength to do this. Do not be afraid, I will be with you.”

By [Lysa TerKeurst](#)