

MAX LUCADO



GOD IS
WITH YOU
every day

365 - DAY DEVOTIONAL



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798



LIVE A STIRRING LIFE

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

PHILIPPIANS 2:14–16 NIV

Each of us should lead a life stirring enough to start a movement. We should yearn to change the world. We should love unquenchably, dream unfalteringly, and work unceasingly.

We should close our ears to the manifold voices of compromise and perch ourselves on the branch of truth. We should champion the value of people, proclaim the forgiveness of God, and claim the promise of heaven.

And we should lead a life stirring enough to cause a movement.

A movement comes of age when one life harvests the seeds planted by countless lives in previous generations. A movement occurs when one person, no greater or lesser than those who have gone before, lives a forceful life in the fullness of time.

Let’s live lives stirring and forceful enough to cause a movement. A true mark of the visionary is his willingness to lay down his life for those whom he’ll never see.

Will the movement come in our generation? I hope so. But even if it doesn’t, even if we never see it, it will occur. And we’ll be part of it.

–*On the Anvil*



UNSHEATHE THE PROMISE

The Lord your God is He who has fought for you.

JOSHUA 23:3

Not only does God desire that you live the Promised Land life, but he fights for you so you can. This was the main point of Joshua’s victory speech (Joshua 23–24).

Joshua has seen every significant moment of the last half century. The Jordan River opened, and the Jericho walls fell. The sun stood still, and the enemies scattered. And Joshua in his final words wants to make sure they have gotten the message: “The LORD your God is He who has fought for you” (v. 23:3).

Joshua summarized the victory by saying, “For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; . . . no one has been able to stand against you to this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you” (vv. 23:9–10).

Don’t you love that image? *One man of you shall chase a thousand*. I envision a single Hebrew soldier with drawn sword racing after an entire battalion of enemies. Since God fights for him, they scatter like scared pigeons.

I picture the same for you. The enemies of your life—fears, dread, hatred, and hurt—come at you like a legion of hoodlums. Yet rather than run away, you turn and face them. You unsheathe the promise of God’s Word. You were not made to quake in fear. You are a living, breathing expression of God. He fights for you.

–*Glory Days*



GRACE SEEPS IN

You were taught to be made new in your hearts, to become a new person. That new person is made to be like God—made to be truly good and holy.

EPHESIANS 4:23–24 NCV

Some years ago I underwent a heart procedure. My heartbeat had the regularity of a telegraph operator sending Morse code. Fast, fast, fast. Sloooooow. After several failed attempts to restore healthy rhythm with medication, my doctor decided I should have a catheter ablation. The plan went like this: a cardiologist would insert two cables in my heart. One was a camera; the other was an ablation tool. To ablate is to burn. Yes, burn, cauterize, singe, brand. If all went well, the doctor, to use his coinage, would destroy the “misbehaving” parts of my heart.

As I was being wheeled into surgery, he asked if I had any final questions. (Not the best choice of words.) I tried to be witty.

“As long as you are in there, could you take your little blowtorch to some of my greed, selfishness, superiority, and guilt?”

He smiled and answered, “Sorry, that’s out of my pay grade.”

Indeed it was, but it’s not out of God’s. He is in the business of changing hearts.

We would be wrong to think this change happens overnight. But we would be equally wrong to assume change never happens at all. It may come in fits and spurts. But it comes. “The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared” (Titus 2:11). The floodgates are open, and the water is out. You just never know when grace will seep in.

—Grace



THANK GOD FOR THUMPS!

“My child, don’t think the Lord’s discipline is worth nothing . . . The Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as his child.”

HEBREWS 12:5–6 NCV

When a potter bakes a pot, he checks its solidity by pulling it out of the oven and thumping it. If it “sings,” it’s ready. If it “thuds,” it’s placed back in the oven.

The character of a person is also checked by thumping. Thumps are those irritating inconveniences that trigger the worst in us. They catch us off guard. Flat-footed. They aren’t big enough to be crises, but if you get enough of them, watch out!

How do I respond? Do I sing, or do I thud?

Jesus said that out of the nature of the heart a man speaks (Luke 6:45). There’s nothing like a good thump to reveal the true nature of a heart. If you have a tendency to thud more than you sing, take heart.

There is hope for us “thudders”:

1. Begin by thanking God for thumps. Every thump is a reminder that God is molding you (Hebrews 12:5–8).
2. Learn from each thump. Look upon each inconvenience as an opportunity to develop patience and persistence.
3. Be aware of “thump-slump” times. Know your pressure periods. Bolster yourself with extra prayer, and don’t give up.

Remember, no thump is disastrous. All thumps work for good if we are loving and obeying God.

—On the Anvil



TRUST GOD'S STORY

The ways of the Lord are right;
the righteous walk in them.

HOSEA 14:9 NIV

As God's story becomes yours, closed doors take on a new meaning. You no longer see them as interruptions of your plan but as indications of God's plan.

This is what Paul learned. God blocked his missionary team from going north, south, or east. Only west remained. The closed doors in Asia led to an open-armed invitation to Philippi (Acts 16:11–12).

Once there, Paul and his team got to work. Their efforts in Philippi were so effective that the pagan religious leaders were angered. So they conjured up a story against Paul and Silas.

“The multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw . . . them into the inner prison . . . and fastened their feet in the stocks” (Acts 16:22–24).

Listen closely. Do you hear it? The old, familiar sound of keys turning and locks clicking. Paul and Silas could have groaned, “Oh no. Not another locked door.”

But they didn't complain. From the bowels of the prison emerged the most unexpected of sounds: praise and prayer (Acts 16:25).

Their feet were in stocks, yet their minds were in heaven. How could they sing at a time like this? From whence came their song? There is only one answer: they trusted God and his story for them.

–*God's Story, Your Story*



A PRAYER . . . TO DRAW CLOSER TO CHRIST

For every child of God defeats this evil world, and
we achieve this victory through our faith.

1 JOHN 5:4 NLT

Son of God, there's nothing I have faced or ever will face that you have not faced, endured, and conquered. And wonder of wonders, you run to me when I need your help. I come to you now. Draw close to me, Jesus. In your name, amen.

–*On Calvary's Hill*



MAY 5

THE BIG NEWS OF THE BIBLE

For the angel of the Lord is a guard;
he surrounds and defends all who fear him.

PSALM 34:7 NLT

Did you know that God is fighting for you? That “with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles” (2 Chronicles 32:8)? That “Our God will fight for us” (Nehemiah 4:20)? That the LORD will fight against those who fight against you (Psalm 35:1)?

God fights for you. Let those four words sink in for a moment.

God. The CEO, President, King, Supreme Ruler, Absolute Monarch, Czar, Emperor, and Raja of all history. He runs interference and provides cover. He is impeccably perfect, tirelessly strong, unquestionably capable. He is endlessly joyful, wise, and willing. And he . . .

Fights. He deploys angels and commands weather. He stands down Goliaths and vacates cemeteries. He fights . . .

For. For your health, family, faith, and restoration. Are the odds against you? Is the coach against you? Is the government against you? Difficult for sure. But God fights for . . .

You. Yes, you! You with the sordid past. You with the receding hairline. You with the absentee dad. You with the bad back, credit, or job. He fights not just for the rich, pretty, or religious. He fights for the yous of the world. Are you a *you*?

The big news of the Bible is not that you fight for God but that God fights for you. And to know this—to know that your Father fights for you—is an unparalleled source of empowerment.

–Glory Days



JUNE 23

OUR DEFENDER

Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

ROMANS 8:34 NIV

Many years ago, I preached my first sermon. No sermon is perfect. But a preacher’s first sermon? I make no effort to defend mine. In an effort to say everything, I said very little.

But still, I didn’t deserve the criticism from the pastor. He invited me into his study for a post-service postmortem. He pounced on the sermon like a hawk on a rat. By the end of the harangue, I felt like a scolded puppy.

I tucked my tail between my legs and slouched out to where my dad was waiting for me in his car. As I recounted the meeting, his face grew red, and his grip on the steering wheel tightened. He dropped me off at the house and said, “I’ll be back soon.”

The next day I learned the rest of the story. My dad had pulled into the pastor’s driveway. He was soon in the preacher’s face giving him “what for” and “how much” and demanding an explanation for the meeting.

The preacher called me the next day and asked my forgiveness.

Again, I am not defending the sermon. But it was a wonderful thing when my father defended me.

What’s that? You wish you could say the same? You’d love for someone to rush to your defense?

Oh, dear child of heaven, God has!

–Glory Days



KEEP WALKING

Let the mighty strength of the Lord make you strong.

EPHESIANS 6:10 CEV

Yell a loud *no* to the Devil and watch him scamper” (James 4:7 MSG). He will retreat. He *must* retreat. He is not allowed in the place where God is praised. Just keep praising and walking.

“But, Max, I’ve been walking a long time,” you say.

Yes, it seems like it. It must have seemed that way to the Hebrews too. Joshua did not tell them how many trips they would have to make around the wall of Jericho. They just kept walking.

Our Joshua didn’t tell us either. Through Paul, Jesus urges us to “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Keep walking. For all you know this may be the day the walls come down. You may be only steps from a moment like this.

It happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people . . . took the city (Joshua 6:20).

The very walls that kept them out became stepping-stones onto which they could climb.

By the way, a great shaking is coming for this world too. Our Joshua, Jesus, will give the signal, and a trumpet will blast. He will reclaim every spoil and repel, once and for all, each demon.

Until he does, keep marching and believing.

It’s just a matter of time before your Jericho comes down.

–Glory Days



A PRAYER . . . BECAUSE JESUS WORE YOUR THORNS

They clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

MARK 15:17–18

O Lord, how can I ever thank you enough for giving your entire life that I might be kissed by forgiveness? You bore the thorns of my accusations and the piercing of my rejection. I rejoice that today I can follow in your steps. In Jesus’ name, amen.

–In the Manger



WELCOME GOD IN

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

REVELATION 3:20 NIV

When we invite God into our world, he walks in. He brings a host of gifts: joy, patience, resilience. Anxieties come, but they don't stick. Fears surface and then depart. Regrets land on the windshield, but then comes the wiper of prayer. The Devil still hands me stones of guilt, but I turn and give them to Christ. I'm completing my sixth decade, yet I'm wired with energy. I am happier, healthier, and more hopeful than I have ever been. Struggles come, for sure. But so does God.

Prayer is not a privilege for the pious, not the art of a chosen few. Prayer is simply a heartfelt conversation between God and his child. My friend, he wants to talk with you. Even now, as you read these words, he taps at the door. Open it. Welcome him in. Let the conversation begin.

—Before Amen



JESUS HEALS US ALL

Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

MATTHEW 20:32

Are you waiting for Jesus to heal you? Take hope from Jesus' response to the blind men of Matthew 20:29–34.

"Have mercy on us, O Lord," they cried.

"Jesus stood still." He stopped dead in his tracks. Everyone else kept going, but Jesus froze. Something caught his attention. What did Jesus hear?

A prayer. An unembellished appeal for help, floating across the path on the winds of faith and landing against his ear. Jesus heard the words and stopped.

He still does. And he still asks, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The duo in Jericho told him. "Lord, that our eyes may be opened," they said.

And you? What in your life needs healing?

Jesus' heart went out to the blind men. He "had compassion and touched their eyes." He healed them.

He will heal you, my friend. I pray he heals you instantly. He may choose to heal you gradually. But this much is sure: Jesus will heal us all ultimately. Wheelchairs, ointments, treatments, and bandages are confiscated at the gateway to heaven. God's children will once again be whole.

Because ultimately Jesus heals us all.

—Before Amen



IS YOUR CAUSE TOO SMALL?

“Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them.”

MARK 11:23 NIV

If your problems are great, then your cause is too small. When your cause is great, the problems begin to shrink.

Do you have a holy cause? A faith worth preserving? A mission worth living for? Ask God to give you a cause to claim to his glory. An orphanage to serve. A neighbor to encourage. A needy family to feed. A class to teach. Some senior citizens to encourage. It really is better to give than receive. In the kingdom of Christ we gain by giving, not taking. We grow by helping, not hurting. We advance by serving, not demanding. Want to see your troubles evaporate? Help others with theirs.

You’ll always face problems. But you don’t have to face them in the same way. Instead:

Immerse your mind in God-thoughts.

Turn a deaf ear to doubters.

Set your mind on a holy cause.

Once you find your mountain, no giant will stop you, no age will disqualify you, no problems will defeat you.

–*Glory Days*



WHO’S COMING TO DINNER?

Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay. God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

1 PETER 4:9–10 NLT

The Greek word for *hospitality* compounds two terms: *love* and *stranger*. The word literally means to love a stranger. All of us can welcome a guest we know and love. But can we welcome a stranger?

In one of Jesus’ resurrection appearances, he accompanies two disciples as they walk from Jerusalem to their village of Emmaus.

As they near their village, Jesus acts as if he is going to continue on his journey.

It had been a long day. The two pilgrims had much on their minds. Certainly they had obligations and people in their lives. But their fellow traveler stirred a fire in their hearts. So they welcomed him in. Still not knowing that their guest was Jesus, they pulled out an extra chair, poured some water in the soup, and offered bread. Jesus blessed the bread, and when he did, “their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (Luke 24:31 NIV).

We still encounter people on the road. And sometimes we sense a peculiar warmth, an affection. We detect an urge to open our doors to them. In these moments let’s heed the inner voice. We never know whom we may be hosting for dinner.

–*Outlive Your Life*



NOVEMBER 15

A GOOD PILOT

You are good, Lord.

PSALM 25:7 NCV

As I boarded a plane, the pilot called my name. He was standing in the cockpit entrance, greeting passengers. “Well, hello, Max.” I looked up. It was my friend Joe. My *old* friend. He is the Methuselah of the airways. He’s been flying forever. He’s faced every flight crisis from electrical storms to empty fuel tanks. He is a good pilot.

And he is a friend, a *good* friend—good in skill and good in heart.

We chatted for a few minutes, and I went to my seat with a sense of assurance. *What more could I request?* I thought. *The pilot is experienced and proven. Even more, he is my tried-and-true friend. I am in good hands.*

The knowledge came in handy. An hour into the flight we hit a wall of winds. People gasped and dentures rattled. I’ve had smoother roller coaster rides. Unlike the other passengers, I stayed calm. I knew the pilot. I knew his heart and trusted his skill. *Joe can handle this*, I told myself. The storm was bad, but the pilot was good. So as much as one can relax in a squall, I did.

Friend, it’s a stormy world out there. The question during these troubling times is this: Do we have a good pilot?

The resounding response of the Bible is yes!

—*Before Amen*