

faithbook of jesus

CONNECTING WITH JESUS DAILY

RENEE JOHNSON
Devotional Diva

NAVPRESS 



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THEM APPLES

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made.
He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree
in the garden?’”*

— GENESIS 3:1

Everyone likes apples. I just watched a three-minute YouTube video from the movie *Good Will Hunting*.¹ Will (Matt Damon) is famous for asking the question: “How do you like them apples?”

I looked up the origin of this phrase on Wikipedia but didn’t find much—just a movie from 1974 called *Chinatown* and a few other movies, but nothing compared to Will’s famous phrase.

It’s no secret that apples have been the source of controversy since the beginning of man. Do you remember your first Sunday school story? God created Adam and Eve, and they lived happily ever after. Wait. No, they didn’t.

They ate that stupid apple and got cast out of the Garden of Eden forever. Now the rest of creation has to suffer because they couldn’t listen to the one thing God told them not to do. Eat an apple.

What amazes me even more is how we still fall into the same trap that Adam and Eve fell into that day. The Enemy is “more crafty,” the Bible says. He knows how to deceive and make us disbelieve.

If you’re hearing questions like “Did God really say that?” turn it back around and shove them apples back in the Devil’s face.

“” Matt, 38, said, “How do you like them apples?”



*Dear Apple Jesus,
Sometimes you give us commands we don’t like. Help us to trust that you have our
best interests at heart and stay away from them dang apples. Amen.*



When have you been tempted to do something you know God doesn’t approve of? What happened? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: Genesis 3:1-7

THROW IT OFF

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

— HEBREWS 12:1

What happens when a baby takes its first step? He or she stumbles and falls down, or looks for something to grab on to. Much like myself when I am learning how to walk in a new area of life; I am not very proficient.

Starting something new takes a willingness to throw off whatever is hindering me. That could be a relationship that I know I'm not supposed to be in, choosing how to spend my time, or even the way I spend my money.

Hannah Moore said, "Forgiveness is the economy of the heart . . . forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits."²

Today is the day to throw off whatever is bothering you—frustrating thoughts, negative emotions, or unrealistic demands on your time—as it says in Hebrews. Take those thoughts, crumple them up like a wad of paper, and throw them away.

Picture the wastebasket. Make the shot. Gone.

“” Brandon, 25, said if he knew he couldn't fail at trying something new, he “would own businesses, travel, and develop the largest music label and the largest network of commercial banks from the ground up.”



*Dear Jesus Who Makes All Things New,
Thank you for looking at us as mature adults when we see ourselves as growing children. You know our limitations and you see us for who we will be—complete and whole. Help us to throw off whatever hinders us so that we can see ourselves as you see us. Amen.*



What's your wastebasket story? I'd love to know how God helped you make the shot by throwing off whatever was hindering you from his best. Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: Hebrews 12:1-2

I GOT THE BLUES

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

— HEBREWS 11:6

It can be hard to confidently move forward and exercise faith when we are still learning how to walk. I feel tempted to shrink back from the first obstacle—which is usually due to stress or exhaustion at work, fear of being alone, or low self-esteem. That’s when I start singin’ the blues.

In his song “Don’t Look Now but I’ve Got the Blues,” B. B. King wrote that “troubles [are] everywhere.” It’s no different for you or me. Right now you could be experiencing a failed relationship, a lost college scholarship, your parents’ divorce, or low funds to pay your rent because one of your jobs was cut due to the economy.

All of those things may make you want to grab a guitar and a microphone to sing the blues, but not so fast.

Let’s learn to trust God. He can take care of our needs, and “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6).

“” Meghan, 24, said she prays when she feels like singing the blues. “I pray for healing, grace, mercy, understanding, wisdom, others, circumstances, life, my heart, ideas, creativity, courage, strength, patience, lots of things.”



Dear Never-Got-the-Blues Jesus,

You see our strengths and weaknesses and carry us through times of depression and doubt. Help us to see that you’ve got a plan and that we can trust you instead of singing the blues. Amen.



What’s your story of a time when you sang the blues? How did faith help you carry through? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: Psalm 1

TRIALS PRODUCE FRUIT

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

— JOHN 15:2

Do trials make you feel thirsty for more? Or do you just want out?

Learning what it's like to exercise faith in the midst of a trial is not easy. After I started reading through the Bible each day, I expected God to heal me right away. When he didn't, I was devastated.

I didn't want to develop more faith or be "pruned." I wanted to be back in school with the rest of my peers instead of nursing my health problems. With every trial there is a purpose, and what took me years to realize, I now wish to convey to you.

Jesus only prunes those he loves. If he didn't see potential in you or me, then he wouldn't cut off the branches that get in the way of our growth.

“” Virly, 29, said that her times of “pruning” were over relationships “at least once or twice in my life (so far). . . . I am praying the next time is the last!”



Dear Jesus, the True Vine,

If we receive any encouragement today, let it come from you. Help us to realize that you prune only those you love. Help us to learn how to give grace to those in need. Give us the same love and purpose for one another. Amen.



What's your branch/vine story? Have you ever had a time in your life when God “pruned” you? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: John 15:1-5

DESPERATE PRAYER LIVES

This, then, is how you should pray . . .

— MATTHEW 6:9

What do you consider praying? There can be many reasons why you pray, but the best reason of all is to talk with Jesus as you would your best friend. Here are four examples of how to know Jesus more personally today:

1. PRAY WITH PLEASE AND THANK YOU

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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).

2. PRAY ABOUT ANYTHING

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

3. PRAY IN SECRET

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:6).

4. PRAY AS JESUS DID

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:9-13).

“” Sheri, 23, said that prayer “is a place of quiet waiting on God. Other times it is requests for direction, healing of hurts, for Jesus to bring freedom to lives of friends, family, and for the many who do not know him.”



Dear Teacher Jesus,

Thank you for the privilege of knowing you. Teach us how to pray. Give us prayer lives that are desperate for more of you each day. Amen.



What’s your desperation story? Think about a time in your life when God answered the cries of your heart. Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: Matthew 6:9-15

DISAPPOINTED MUCH?

Those who hope in me will not be disappointed.

— ISAIAH 49:23

What stresses you out? I stress when I don't get enough sleep and my schedule becomes too demanding. You'd think working with high-profile speakers and comedians (my dream job), graduating college, and moving out of my parent's house would keep me from disappointment. Wrong!

Every day, there are small disappointments that take my focus off Jesus—for instance, my singleness, my body image, and my bank account. I'm never satisfied. I'm sure you can relate. If I were to ask you to list five disappointments, I'll bet you could name them within five seconds.

The more consistent I am in spending time with Jesus daily, the less I let the day-to-day disappointments get to me. Having a daily routine with Jesus is just as important as getting to know your best friend. If you want to know more about your BFF, you spend time getting to know him or her.

Jesus promises us that those who wait for him will not be disappointed. Tell me then, what are we waiting for?

“” Sheila, 24, said, “I stress about everything. . . . And what about when reading my Bible does not equal feeling better?”



Dear Jesus Who Never Disappoints,

There are just some days that couldn't be any more stressful and full of disappointment. Show me what to do and how to pray when reading your Word doesn't make me feel any better about myself, my weight, my singleness, etc. I know that trusting in you will not put me to shame. Amen.



Want to comment on your bad day? I know Sheila and I are not the only ones who sometimes feel that reading the Bible and praying aren't enough. Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: John 16:33

GOD OF REFUGE

The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety.

— PSALM 18:2 (NLT)

When I picture a rock, I think of an immovable object. If Jesus is my rock, then why am I so easily moved?

It's easy to blame the economy. I can count more friends than I have fingers and toes who have lost their jobs, had a car repossessed, been kicked out of their apartments, or moved halfway across the country to get a new life.

The Israelites experienced something similar in Bible times. Cities of refuge were set up as places to flee for one's life (see Numbers 35). Don't you wish you had a place like that to go when you're short on rent, get in a fight with your girlfriend/boyfriend, or fail at a new career?

On the other hand, maybe you're not desperate. Maybe your life is going rather well, and you're in a position to help out your friends who are currently experiencing tough times.

Thankfully, we serve a God who is so big that he sent his Son Jesus to save us all—so that we could have eternal refuge through him.

“Elisha, 23, said that in light of today's economy, what he fears most is “my friends having to move for work.”



*Dear Jesus, the Eternal Refuge,
Thank you for being our refuge. Help us remember where to go when we feel lost, upset, or like we don't have any place else to go. Be our refuge and our comfort. Give us that time-out that we need to rest and reevaluate before we move on and take another step. Amen.*



Have you been affected by today's economy? Would you like prayer? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: John 3:15-16

B E S E T F R E E

Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.

— MARK 5:34

There was a woman in the Bible who bled for more than thirteen years. She wanted to be set free. Amidst a crowd of people, instead of asking for help, she decided to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. When Jesus realized that healing power had gone out from him, he immediately asked who had touched him.

I wrote this poem for a friend who needed to feel Jesus' touch. Read it as if he is speaking directly to you today.

*I can see behind the look in your eyes, something that goes much deeper
Than the smile on your face.
You long to be thought of as worthy.
The things you once thought would bring happiness and fulfillment
Have become your prison bars that separate you from your own freedom.
But there is a way out.
A man stands in front of you, with your freedom.
Will you notice him? Will you realize he is there? And cares for you like no other?
There is a way out. Put your hope in Him, and watch Him set you free.
Free from all the things that entangle you, disappoint you, and leave you insecure.
To the freedom you always wanted, thought you had, and can possess.
Will you choose to be set free?*

“” Thomas, 25, said, “It is okay to ask for help,” when asked if there was anything else he could think of that would address the specific needs of twentysomethings.



*Dear Jesus, Full of Healing Power,
I ask for your help. No matter if I am bold or timid—help me to have the faith to believe. I'm ready for a fresh start with you today. Amen.*



Do you need a touch from Jesus? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: Mark 5:24–35

(I ' V E G O T) T H E P O W E R

Let light shine out of darkness.

— 2 CORINTHIANS 4:6

Every time I hear the song “(I’ve Got) The Power,” I think of the movie *Bruce Almighty* with Jim Carrey when he was walking on water. What struck me most from that movie was the fact that Bruce didn’t know how much power he already had just by choosing to acknowledge the one who was in him giving him the power.

Jesus gave his power away so that I could have just enough light for my path—one day at a time. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

I try to make a habit of spending time in the Word for a few minutes in the morning before I start my day. “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ . . . to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:6-7).

Why would I want to miss out on that power? Have we forgotten that Jesus has the power to light the dark places for us?

“” Kari, 24, said, “I think it’s hard for twentysomethings to really have their ‘quiet time’ with God and time to read every day because of busy schedules, work, etc.”



Dear Power-Giving Jesus,

I need the kind of power that helps me remember who I am and whose I am. Shine forth your light on my path today to let me see just how blessed I already am. Amen.



Do you have a power story you’d like to share? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

CELEBRATE YOU

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things.”

— LUKE 10:41

One day Mary and Martha were getting ready for company. But not just any company—they were hosting Jesus and his crew. Martha found herself doing all the work alone. She was frustrated and said, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” (Luke 10:40).

Jesus’ next words to her are very interesting if you look at them from the perspective that Jesus was celebrating Martha. He challenged her by saying, “You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed” (verses 41-42).

What was that one thing? It wasn’t an outward sign but an inward one. Yes, Jesus needed to eat and Martha was busy trying to make that happen, but Mary was just soaking up his very presence and being. When was the last time you got to enjoy that kind of time doing nothing? Jesus was trying to show Martha that she was already celebrated. No matter what she did or didn’t do, her worth was not found in her work but at the feet of him who has the power to save from worry, fear, and a demanding spirit.

God wants us to celebrate life with him today by letting the worries of the world fade away.

“” Ronald, 22, said what stresses him out most, like Martha, is “not taking breaks.”



Dear Celebration Jesus,

Please help me see that these trials are meant to make me the best version of me. Please forgive me when I blame those around me instead of focusing on this new thing you’re doing—celebrating me. Thank you for forgiving me when I believe anything otherwise. Amen.



If you’ve ever found your worth in your work instead of in who you are, tell your story by visiting www.faithbookofjesus.com. Click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: Luke 10:38-42

DO YOU FEEL LUCKY, PUNK?

*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish,
and it will be given you.*

— JOHN 15:7

What do we do when life deals us a devastating blow? Do we consider it pure joy?

No matter how big the trial, the test is developing our perseverance. Perseverance must have its perfect work so that we will be complete, not lacking in anything (see James 1:4).

“But what if I don’t want it to have its perfect work?” you say. “What if I want everything to stay exactly the way it is?”

Jesus doesn’t give us anything we can’t handle—and if a trial is really disguised as a new beginning, then maybe the question isn’t “do you feel lucky (punk)?” but “what can I learn from this trial before he takes it away?”

In the movie *Evan Almighty* the wife prays for her family to become closer, and through a series of unfortunate circumstances they were able to spend lots more time together. Now, their time together was spent building an ark as the laughingstock of the neighborhood, but nevertheless Jesus answered her prayers and they became a stronger family unit.

If you are struggling in the midst of a trial concerning your relationships, money, job, purpose, or health, I encourage you to ask Jesus if there is a lesson in the midst of your trial. He wants to bless you today.

“” Carmen, 25, said, “I am a young mom of two. I often feel overwhelmed by all that is demanded of me as I try to be a great parent and wife.”



*Dear Persevering Jesus,
Through whatever trials we face today, help us to remember there is a purpose and to look to you for strength. Please help us remember that you want us complete, not lacking in anything. Amen.*



How has Jesus taken your trial and turned it into a blessing? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: James 1:2-8

TRY GIVING THANKS

I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

— PSALM 7:17

From the very beginning of the book of Psalms, David gives thanks. Of all people in the Bible, David knew what it meant to experience trials of every kind. He knew the purpose: One day he would be king of Israel. In the meantime, that didn't take away from the fact that everywhere he went, he was a walking dead man.

King Saul, the current king of Israel, had a hit out on David. Even though Saul had watched David defeat Goliath and save the Israelites from the Philistines and was soothed by David's skills on the harp, Saul knew that the Lord had rejected him as king and that David was to be next in line (see 1 Samuel 16:1).

So David hid. In mountains, caves, enemy towns, and any place that Saul's men wouldn't find him. For me, this means no BlackBerry service, portable laptop, cushy job, food to eat, or warm place to live. Can you imagine? And yet David still praised Jesus and still became the next king of Israel.

Today and every day start by giving thanks. The same God who spared David's life can and will spare yours too.

“” Chris, 23, said if there was anything about the Christian walk that he would like to know more about it is “sanctification . . . something we don't talk about much anymore!”



Dear King Jesus,

You are worthy of praise. You are the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. Help see us through our trials from the moment they make us hide to the moment we begin walking in freedom again. By the power of your name we pray. Amen.



Do you have a praise story? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: Psalm 30:12; 75:1

THE WAITING GAME

I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry.

— PSALM 40:1 (NLT)

One of my favorite devotional stories comes from *Streams in the Desert*. It is about a ten-year-old boy named George who was promised a stamp-collecting album for Christmas from his grandma. Christmas came and went, and no album. However, during the excitement of the holidays, little George told everyone that he had already received a stamp album. George's mom asked him if Grandma forgot, and George said, "Well, Mom, Grandma said, and that is the same as."³

Another month passed, and George decided to write a letter, thanking grandma for the stamp album. A week later, George received a letter in the mail from his grandma with thirty dollars because the stamp album that she ordered wasn't the right one and the new one wasn't in stock, so she sent George the money to buy himself one.

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24).

"Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength" (Isaiah 30:15, NLT).

“” Chris, 24, said, "How [do you] keep the Christian walk alive and active when you aren't living with parents telling you what to believe and to go to this church and to make this choice?"



Dear Jesus Who Waits on Us,

Thank you for the story of the ten-year-old boy who waited. Help me to remember the same things, Jesus—that you are faithful and that you know just how long we need to wait. Put my mind at ease and allow me to rest while I wait on you. Amen.



When was the last time you waited for something and got it? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on "Community" to share.



To Read Further: Isaiah 30:15; Mark 11:24

A NEW COMMAND

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

— JOHN 13:34 (NLT)

Whenever a new club opens in town, the owners make a VIP or exclusive guest list. Why, you may ask? The new owners are looking to attract a certain type of exclusive, high-paying customer.

When Jesus rolled into town with his entourage, he wasn't looking for some exclusive membership for the highest of society. Jesus said that he came to give a *new* commandment: to love everyone.

Non-exclusive—"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Everyone Included—"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Welcomes All—"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

“” Emanuel, 24, said, "I want to know what it feels like to be forgiven for your sins [and not] judged."



Dear New Jesus,

Thank you that you do not judge us where we are but instead include us in your nonexclusive club, where everyone is welcome to be a member. Help us to take that kind of love into the world today. Amen.



Do you have a story where someone included you and made you feel loved? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on "Community" to share.



To Read Further: 1 John 4

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.

— MALACHI 3:1

I don't have a degree in Old Testament theology, but what I do know is that Jesus fulfilled all 333 Old Testament prophecies.⁴ There are eight prophecies about Christ in the Old Testament. Here they are:

First prophecy is Jesus was the seed of a woman (see Genesis 3:15). First prophecy fulfilled (see Galatians 4:4).

Second prophecy is Jesus was a descendent of Abraham (see Genesis 12:3). Second prophecy fulfilled (see Matthew 1:1).

Third prophecy is Jesus was born of the seed of Isaac (see Genesis 17:9). Third prophecy fulfilled (see Matthew 1:2).

Fourth prophecy is Jesus was born of the seed of Jacob (see Numbers 24:17). Fourth prophecy fulfilled (see Matthew 1:2).

Fifth prophecy is Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (see Genesis 49:10). Fifth prophecy fulfilled (see Luke 3:33).

Sixth prophecy is Jesus was the heir to the throne of David (see Isaiah 9:7). Sixth prophecy fulfilled (see Luke 1:32-33).

Seventh prophecy is his birthplace is Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2). Seventh prophecy fulfilled (see Luke 2:4-7).

Eighth prophecy is being born of a virgin (see Isaiah 7:14). Eighth prophecy fulfilled (see Luke 1:26-27,30-31).

I hope today's devotional will take you deeper into a better understanding of your faith. We won't always know everything about Jesus, but it's comforting to know that all the prophecies came true.

“” Sheri, 25, said, “My Old Testament knowledge is somewhat lacking in a few areas.”



Dear Prophetic Jesus,

You were a descendent of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah, born of a virgin in Bethlehem. We worship you because you are the One True God. Amen.



Do you want to know more about Old Testament prophecies? Please visit <http://www.allabouttruth.org/old-testament-prophecy-concerning-the-messiah-faq.htm>.



To Read Further: Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 9:7; Matthew 1:2

UNITY IN CHRIST

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.

— 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are the body of Christ. Can you imagine? Brothers and sisters in the Lord living in China, India, Russia, the United States, or Korea. What about the United Kingdom, Malaysia, or the Caribbean? Europe. The Middle East. Africa. Japan. Australia. New Zealand. South America. Canada. Everywhere throughout the world there are people who are completely different yet all share something in common. We're all a part of the same body of Christ.

As someone living in the United States, it's hard to imagine what my "brother" is doing in South Korea or my "sister" in Uganda. Knowing that there are so many different cultures out there gives me hope to imagine just how big the family of Jesus is, and then imagine how awesome it will be when we celebrate diversity in heaven for eternity. We can also marvel in the fact that we are not alone.

“” Dana, 26, said, “Being single at this age is hard when most of your friends are married and everyone is saying you’ll find someone someday, but you still sit home alone on the weekends.”



Dear Papa Jesus,

You are the one who made us beautiful on the individual level and beautiful together as one body. Help us to discover our part in the unit. Give us the ability to mix well with others, knowing that together we are representing you to the world. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.



Have you ever spent a summer in China or a week in Florida witnessing? Please visit www.faithbookofjesus.com and click on “Community” to share.



To Read Further: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27