

ELEVATE THE DAY

Devotional

Renewing Your Mind One Day at A Time

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(All Scripture is NKJV unless otherwise notated)

HELLO READER!

Welcome to the Elevate the Day Devotional, a place where you can find refreshing, encouragement, and the guidance you need through faith-based and truth-filled messages. We want to help you grow your faith, renew your mind, and deepen your relationship with Jesus.

We've put this book together with one purpose in mind: To encourage you in your walk with God. Let's be real. Life can sometimes be tough! Yet when we have biblical resources that can help us make it through, overcome, and be more like Jesus, then life gets a little easier.

This devotional is filled with personal testimonies of God's provision, grace, and mercy as well as the lessons we have learned from leaning into God's Word, as well as listening to the comforting and wise guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Have you been searching for a devotional that "keeps it real"? Do you want to know how two regular people have had their lives transformed by the power of God's love? You've found it!

Our Story: A Divine Connection

Once upon a time, Jennifer was talking to one of her brothers in faith about her weekly *Elevate the Day* blog and her aspirations to be an author and teacher of the Word. His response was “You should connect with Karen Salisbury. She has a blog, is on the radio, was my teacher at Rhema Bible College, and is a mighty woman of God.” Now, mind you, Jennifer lived in Connecticut and Karen lived in Minnesota – they’d never met, never even heard of each other.

Jennifer took his advice and connected with Karen. Their first activity was a mutual swapping of blog posts on each other’s websites. One day, Jennifer was watching Karen’s weekly “Coffee with Karen” Facebook live videos and saw that a guest was being featured. Jennifer reached out to Karen to join the ranks. While their first technological partnership was fraught with error, this was to be only a taste of things to come.

After years of *Elevate the Day* posts, Jennifer had it on her heart to launch a podcast. (Read her November 10 devotional “Are You Playing It Safe?” for the whole story). Of course, Karen was one of her first guests! It wasn’t long after going solo on this venture that she got the idea to reach out to Karen to join her as a co-host. (Get ready for the cool part!)

In January of 2021, the Lord spoke to Karen and said, “I want you to start a podcast,” to which she said, “Of course I’ll do whatever you say Lord, but – what’s a podcast?” Totally willing but totally clueless, Karen kept it on the back burner, asking God to help set her up for podcasting.

One day, Jennifer saw a post on Karen’s Facebook feed about wanting to start a podcast. “Karen, what would you say to being my co-host?” Karen didn’t even have to pray about – this was the open door God had spoken to her about!

And the rest is history. Now they’re even writing a devotional together. All that to say -- God has such good plans! He found two women who lived hundreds of miles apart and divinely connected them.

Here’s the lesson: If God has spoken to you about something you have no idea how to do, fear not. He has ways that you can’t even think of to bring about His plan. Keep going and let Him divinely connect you to your destiny.

DO YOU NEED A REST?

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

One year, Karen gifted me a book about resting. I devoured its contents in a few hours. Every page contained insights about the importance of rest. The last month of the prior year contained both forced and planned rest for me. During this much-needed time off, I slept in nearly every day. It was strangely disconcerting as I felt less productive and struggled to find my way through the day.

Long defined by accomplishments and completed to-do lists, this carefree time left me asking myself, “Who am I and how valuable am I if I’m not *producing* something?” Here’s what God’s Word says about our worth and value:

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore you are of more value than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31)

Each of us is likely in desperate need of rest after the busy holiday season and the challenges of the past several years. It’s more than tired. It’s more than weariness. It’s burnout. This is not God’s intention.

We see no commandment from God that says “Thou shalt work yourselves to death and then you can retire.” Quite the contrary. God was so intent on the importance of rest that He dedicated and blessed a whole day for it – the Sabbath.

Daily Reading: Matthew 11:27-30, John 3:16

THE RESTING RULE

“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.” (Hebrews 4:9, 10)

We left off yesterday talking about the Sabbath. Let’s see what the Word has to say about it:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:8-11)

Even God, the Creator of everything took a rest from His work. Now let’s be clear. God was not tired. He didn’t collapse on the couch and binge watch Netflix after He put the finishing touches on our planet.

God doesn’t get tired, but He knew we would. God knew we would need to restore ourselves if we were to complete our race. So, He made rest a ‘rule.’ Yet it’s a rule with a blessing. Wow!

If you read the New Testament, there are oodles of times where Jesus took time off. He often went off to spend time with His Father and rest his body so that He could fulfill His purpose.

As you crack open your planner this year, be sure to add regular “R&R” to your schedule. Step away to a quiet place each day. Make the world go away so you can hear from God.

Professional athletes have rest days. Nature takes periods of rest. Your Father in heaven rested. His Son Jesus rested. So can you.

Daily reading: Philippians 4:6-9

Karen

January 3

HOW TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION EVERY TIME

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

“If God would just tell me what to do, I’d do it!” Have you ever heard anyone say that? Have you? We all face decisions—big and small. Yet, I have good news: you can make the right decision every time you seek God’s direction.

Your heavenly Father wants you to make the right decision even more than you do, because He has a plan and a purpose for you. He’s not hiding it from you, He’s hiding it for you!

Jeremiah 29:11 says, *For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope* (NLT). The Message Bible says: *I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.*

So, there is a plan. Someone knows what it is and it’s a good plan. God’s plan will lead you into a bright future, where things will turn out better than you ever imagined. Our goal should be to seek and follow God’s plan.

One minister friend of mine says it this way, “Decisions are the doorways to God’s plan. If we could see what happens in the spirit realm, and the future results when God-led decisions are made, we would make it a point always to seek Him and go His way, because His way is always right!”

So, the first step in making the right decision every time is to seek God. He’s the One with the good plan for your life.

Daily Reading: Psalm 37:23- 24; Proverbs 16:9

LEARNING TO RECOGNIZE THE VOICE OF GOD

“...when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” (John 10:4,5)

How do you seek God when you're facing a decision? How can you know it's really God talking? Jesus answers this in John 10:27, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”* Notice that Jesus says you *do* hear His voice!

How did you begin to recognize the voice of your parents? You spent time with them. It's the same with God's voice. You get familiar with it by spending time with Him. You do that by reading and meditating on His Word because *that is Him talking with you.*

The Bible is alive. It will meet your need where you are *today*. Yesterday's faith is not enough for today's challenges. The Bible gives you discernment in spiritual things. *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...* (Hebrews 4:12).

When you read the Bible, you're experiencing God's life and familiarizing yourself with who He is and what He has for you. It's your covenant – it's what belongs to you as Jesus' heir. When you get familiar with the way God talks to you, you can easily recognize a wrong voice.

Here's a perfect example. The U.S. Treasury Department trains its agents to recognize counterfeit U.S. money by studying *real* money. This helps them spot a counterfeit quickly.

It's the same for you. If you become so familiar with God through His Word, then when a different voice tries to lead you, you'll recognize it instantly as a counterfeit or a lie.

All of God's answers for your life are in His Word. As you spend more and more time reading it, meditating on it, and speaking it, you'll be able to recognize the real-deal voice of God.

Daily Reading: John 10:1-16