

Lysa TerKeurst



Embraced

100 DEVOTIONS

to Know God Is

Holding You Close



Presented to:

From:

Date:





Embraced

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to Know God Is

Holding You Close

Lysa TerKeurst



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

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To anyone who has ever tried to give love without being embraced in return, I understand. But that's exactly why we must know the One who will always fully embrace us and never hold back. My greatest prayer is that as you read these pages you'll know even more deeply that you are loved, cherished, and so intimately cared for by your Heavenly Father.





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A NOTE FROM LYSA

Hi friend,

What an honor it is to meet with you through the typed-out encouragement found in these pages. I want to be that friend who comes alongside you no matter what situation you may find yourself in. I pray you feel the loving embrace of Jesus become more and more real with the turn of every page.

I know it's not always easy for God's voice to rise above all the chaotic noise competing for your heart's attention. The fears. The worries. The hurts and betrayals. The struggle you've begged God to take away that's screaming at you right this very minute. The seemingly easy and perfect lives others post about that pierce your heart with fresh reminders of your hard realities. Your doubts when you have to make a decision that makes almost every path seem increasingly unstable while the Lord seems shockingly quiet. Your secret sorrows that you haven't dared whisper to anyone else about.

Your imperfections feel like neon signs welcoming others' judgments and opinions. Maybe they are real rejections or just simply perceived ones. Either way, every insecure thought is laced with toxic comparison, disappointment, and discouragement.

I know each of these scenarios well because I face them too. And I have to confess that none of this is easy. But the Lord has been so faithful to draw me closer through it all. I think we underestimate how much courage it takes to actually release our desire to fix everything and make the choice to fix our eyes on Jesus.

That's what these devotions are about. They're a glimpse into my own personal journey as I've set out to live the "embraced" life. One where I not only *receive* His embrace, but I *return* His embrace. Embracing His grace, His wisdom, and His rest. Embracing His love, His Word, and His plans. Even embracing the parts of His plan that I find horribly difficult in the moment but completely necessary in the end. Parts that ask me to sacrifice and lay down my own desires and fleshly responses.

You'll quickly realize that I don't do any of this perfectly. But I'm making imperfect progress toward living embraced and embracing at the same time. And something tells me this is how you want to live as well.

If that's true for you, you're in the right place. Rest assured, I'll have tissues and a whispered "Me too" for the hard moments. But you can also count on me for a laugh, slight eye roll, and a "have mercy" for the other everyday moments we'll face.

So if you're ready to start this journey, let's link arms. Fix our gaze on the only One who can direct our steps. And turn the page together.

Sweet Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alyson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that loops back under the name.



part 1

*Embracing the Pursuit of
Him and His Direction*





GIVING MY FIRST MOMENTS TO GOD

Teach me your way, LORD,
that I may rely on your faithfulness;
give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear your name.

—PSALM 86:11

*I*t is very early in the morning. Though my body begs me to go back to sleep, my soul stirs to get up and talk with Jesus.

And though I can't physically see Him, I know He is present.

I open my Bible to the book of Psalms and pray through the verses I read to start my day. The more I do this, the less I hear the ongoing naggings of this world. A beautiful melody of God's truth rises up, and my worries fade in their light.

His perspective on what troubles me overshadows my anxiety. This time alone with God prepares me for what I will need throughout the day. He's equipping me to handle what is ahead with His gentle boldness, quiet strength, and loving grace.

In Psalm 81:10, God instructs me, "Open wide your mouth and I will fill it."

He will give me what to say. What to say in happy moments and in aggravating moments. What to say when I feel insecure and what to say when I am confident.

He also reminds me that sometimes it is good to keep my mouth closed and say nothing at all.

I want it to be evident that I'm a girl who spends time with Jesus and that He's working on me.

Psalm 84:1 reminds me that God's dwelling place is lovely. So I ask for Him to dwell in me richly. I want it to be evident that I'm a girl who spends time with Jesus and that He's working on me—shifting a wrong attitude, guarding my words, and whispering constant truths into my heart.

Psalm 86:11 prompts me to request, "Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name."

Each of these verses leads my morning prayer:

Lord, may nothing separate me from You today. Teach me how to choose only Your way today so each step will lead me closer to You. Help me walk by Your Word and not my feelings.

Help me to keep my heart pure and undivided. Protect me from my own careless thoughts, words, and actions. And keep me from being distracted by MY wants, MY desires, MY thoughts on how things should be.

Help me to embrace what comes my way as an opportunity . . . rather than a personal inconvenience.

And finally, help me to rest in the truth of Psalm 86:13, "Great is your love toward me."

You already see the ways I will fall short and mess up. But right

now, I consciously tuck Your whisper of absolute love for me into the deepest part of my heart. I recognize Your love for me is not based on my performance. You love me . . . shortcomings and all.

That's amazing.

But what's most amazing is that the Savior of the world would desire a few minutes with me this morning. Lord, help me to forever remember what a gift it is to sit with You like this. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I'm now ready to face today. Armed with truth. Surrounded by love. Filled with gratitude.

Dear Lord, I love You. All that I've expressed above is the desire of my heart. I confess that sometimes my actions and reactions betray my love for You. Please forgive me. Thank You for Your grace that enables me to recognize this new day as a new chance to walk closer with You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

THE PINEAPPLE PRINCIPLE

Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

—JAMES 1:21–22

I love fresh-cut pineapple. I love the way it tastes. I love that it has no fat grams. And I love that it can be served at any meal—breakfast, lunch, or dinner—as the perfect, healthy side dish.

The problem with fresh pineapples is that they are slightly complicated. To hold up a fresh pineapple and look upon it longingly can be quite frustrating when you haven't a clue how to properly cut it open. So, for years I would walk by the fresh pineapples in the grocery store produce section, heave a sigh, and head straight to the canned fruit aisle. The canned version was fine in a pinch but honestly didn't compare to the fresh. It simply teased my taste buds that greater possibilities existed.

Then one day a friend I was visiting asked me if I'd like a snack. I gasped when she brought out a real pineapple. With ease she turned the fruit on its side and chopped off the top and the bottom. Then she sat it upright on its level end and proceeded to cut sections from each side, starting at the edge of the core. She then shaved off the

outer skin, chopped the fruit into bite-sized pieces, and handed me a whole bowlful.

I was amazed. That's it? That's all there is to it? You mean for years I've missed out on the goodness of fresh pineapples because I couldn't figure out how to do *that*?

For years, I took the same approach with studying the Bible as I did with the pineapple. I looked at biblical truth from afar. I didn't feel equipped to open it and study it on my own. Instead of reading the fresh truth for myself, I only read books that talked *about* the Bible. Just like that canned pineapple, my experience with learning God's truth teased me that greater possibilities existed. But since I had no idea how to get them for myself, I avoided the Bible and settled for whatever I could glean from other people.

Then I attended a Bible study in which the teacher modeled how to open up the Bible and study it for ourselves. Each week I watched her dig into Scriptures with a passion and hunger for truth that I'd never known. The way she put verses into context and brought out the meanings from the original text amazed me.

Slowly, I decided to try it for myself. I started getting into God's Word so it could get into me. I no longer wanted to simply settle for learning facts about the Bible when it was meant for so much more. I wanted God's Word to interrupt me, change me, and satisfy me. And that meant not only reading and studying the Bible but also developing the habit of living out its message in my everyday life.

The apostle James addresses this in our key verses: "Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and

*I started getting
into God's Word
so it could
get into me.*

humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:21–22).

The more we make a habit of applying God’s Word to our lives, the more it becomes part of our nature—our natural way of acting and reacting. Knowing God’s Word and doing what it says not only helps us while going through heartbreak and trouble, it also brings more satisfaction to our souls than anything else ever could.

Thank You, Lord, for giving us good things to nourish us in body and soul. Help me to dig in to Your Word and let it become part of me. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

STOP READING YOUR BIBLE

Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions;
I will put them into practice with all my heart.

—PSALM 119:34 NLT

I have a request today. One that might sound odd right after reading the first two devotions: stop reading your Bible.

Does that shock you? Relieve you? Make you angry at worst? Curious at best?

Read on, and see what I mean by this request.

There have been many days in my Christian journey when God was reduced to something on my to-do list. Somewhere along the way, I picked up an unwritten checklist of sorts explaining what “good Christians” are supposed to do:

Pray.

Read your Bible.

Go to church.

Don't cuss.

Be nice.

Being the rule-following girl I am, I subscribed to the good things on that list and waited with great expectations to receive the zap of contentment and happiness good Christian girls are supposed to exude.

But then something felt wrong with me. I still felt restless. I still reacted in anger. I still felt a bit hollow.

I was going through all the motions but didn't feel connected to Jesus. Others around me seemed very connected. They would talk of being "moved by the Spirit." They would hear from God Himself. They would clap their hands and shout "Amen" in the middle of a sermon that sounded like Greek to me.

I often felt like a weightless soul grasping at the air, hoping to somehow snag this Jesus that was just out of reach. Have you ever been there?

This nagging sense creeps in that you'll never get it—that you don't have what it takes to be a Christian. That's where I was. I lived there for a long time until someone challenged me to stop simply reading my Bible because it was a thing on my Christian checklist. Instead, they challenged me to experience God. To know God.

In other words, I needed to look at the words in the Bible as a love letter. God's love letter to a broken-down girl. A love letter not meant to simply be read . . . but a love letter meant to be *lived*.

I won't lie. It took a while.

It took many days of sitting down with my Bible while praying gut-honest prayers. I told God I wasn't connecting. I told Him I wanted to understand, just like the psalmist in our key verse, Psalm 119:34.

I asked Him to help me. I begged Him to help me. Finally, one verse came alive to me. I literally felt moved when I read it. I memorized it and thought about it all day long. All week long. Maybe all month long.

I was overjoyed. I had a verse. A verse where Jesus spoke tenderly and clearly and specifically to me. It was Jeremiah 29:11, "I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and

not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Slowly, I added more verses. Day by day. Chapter by chapter. And eventually my Bible became my greatest treasure, my love letter.

Now, every day I open up God’s Word with great expectation and intentionally look for my verse for that day. Usually one verse among the many I read during my devotion time grabs my heart, and I know it’s meant just for the day ahead. And then I attempt to live that verse out in some way, that very day.

When I make the connection between what happens in my life that day and why I need that verse, I experience God. I see Him active in my life, and I become even more deeply aware of His constant presence.

I’m sure some Bible scholars would probably take issue with my simplistic approach, but it sure has helped me.

So, back to my original statement. Stop reading your Bible. In other words, *stop simply reading it because you have to cross it off the Christian checklist.*

Instead, read it with great expectations of connecting more deeply and living more authentically with God.

When I make the connection between what happens in my life that day and why I need that verse, I experience God.

Dear Lord, thank You for showing me the Christian life can be so much more than a checklist. I want to not only read Your Word, but live it out each day. Please give me the wisdom to understand and the courage to become more like You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

GREAT SERMONS AREN'T
PREACHED, THEY'RE LIVED

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

—2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17

What if someone followed me around with a video camera all day documenting my every move? Catching all my words, facial expressions, actions, and reactions on camera. And then what if someone packaged it all together and played it on some sort of reality TV show for all the world to see? What would be the glaring message of my life?

I'm convicted thinking about this.

You see, if someone were to ask me, "What are you all about?" I would have some nice-sounding answers. But what actually happens during the strains of everyday life can sometimes betray my best intentions.

I want to be a loving mom. But my family seems to know the exact buttons to push that send me into a tailspin of emotion and exhaustion.

I want to be a strong witness for Christ. So why is it I can read my Bible first thing in the morning and then find myself honking at the person who cuts me off in traffic just an hour later?

I realize there is a place for God’s tender mercies for me in all this. But I also know that while no TV cameras are following me around, my life is speaking a message about what I really believe, and I want that message to honor Jesus.

I once heard, “Great sermons are not preached, they are lived.” Oh how I long to live a message that speaks loud and clear, “Jesus is true and the principles found in His teachings work!”

Let’s just be honest: It’s tough being a sold-out soul for Christ stuck in a body that’s so tempted to sin. That’s why it’s essential that I view my time with God each morning as a preparation and an invitation.

*My life is speaking
a message about
what I really
believe, and I want
that message to
honor Jesus.*

- *Preparation:* Our key verse reminds us, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Every verse I read is part of God’s preparation for me that day. So, instead of just rushing to check off my to-do list that I spent a few minutes with God, I must allow His teachings to seep into my heart and mind. Then I can prayerfully ask God to interrupt my natural flesh response and remind me throughout the day of the truths He taught me that morning.

- *Invitation:* The next essential view of my quiet time each morning is recognizing I've just invited Jesus to do life with me, so I need to look for His activity throughout my day. My minute-by-minute theme becomes, *"Not my will, God, but Yours be done."*

So if something happens that causes my flesh to want to rear up and act ugly, I can say, *"Not my will, God, but Yours be done."* This slight pause and acknowledgment of God redirects my frustration and replaces it with grace. And most wonderful of all, it helps me connect my time with Jesus to everyday life choices. Making that connection is one of the ways we personally hear from and experience God.

I know sometimes it's hard to spend time with Jesus first thing in the morning. And I'm certainly not trying to make this just another demand on our time. But Jesus' invitation to us to sit with Him is such an incredible gift. He loves us so much He wants to help us. He knows what each day holds, and He longs to prepare us for every single thing He sees coming our way.

Let's accept His invitation to sit with Him. Let's listen to Him intently. And let's ask Him to intervene before our natural reactions to things betray our best intentions. Then we will be able to live lives that speak to the fact that we have spent time with Jesus . . . and without saying a word, our imperfect lives will be a God-honoring sermon.

Dear Lord, please teach me how to reveal more and more of You through the way I live my life. I want to tell the whole world about You using words only when necessary. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

IS THIS THE RIGHT DECISION?

This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

—PHILIPPIANS 1:9–10

*H*ave you ever had that deep-down knowing of what to do in a situation but ignored it? I understand.

I was home alone recently when a large box was delivered to my doorstep.

The delivery man graciously brought it inside. But I figured it might be a bit much for me to ask him to take it past the foyer, up the stairs, and down the hall.

So there it sat, this mysterious, heavy box.

Deep inside, I knew this was nothing but some product one of my people had ordered.

But I didn't listen to that internal awareness. I ignored it and listened to my fears instead. You know you've watched one too many mystery TV shows when your first thought about a mysterious box sitting in your foyer is that a person with scary intentions could fit inside. Yes, a crazy person with weapons could mail himself right into your foyer and sit there all day, quietly waiting until you went to bed.

So I kicked the side of the box to see if there was any kind of reflex action from a living thing inside of it. There wasn't, of course. But then I decided, just to be sure, I would stand around the corner from the box to see if I could step out of its line of sight and possibly hear something: a cough, a sneeze—anything.

I could leave no room for doubts, no room at all for any possible bad outcome from this box—a box that I eventually opened with a knife. Just in case. Only to discover a dorm-room refrigerator that someone had ordered.

I wasted half my day worrying about a box that contained a dorm fridge.

*Find that
courageous yes.
Fight for that
confident no.*

But we do this sometimes. We have a decision to make and we have that deep-down knowing. We know what to do. We know what the answer is. But we don't go with that knowing. We overprocess the what-ifs and the maybes until we find ourselves standing around a corner

listening to see if a cardboard box containing a refrigerator might sneeze.

Now, there are certainly some decisions that need to be processed. But then there are other decisions we just simply need to say yes or no to and move on.

Find that courageous yes. Fight for that confident no. Know it. State it. Own it.

Sometimes it just comes down to that deep whisper within that says, "Uh-huh, yes." Or a simple, "No, not that."

God has woven into us the ability to discern what is best if we're

closely following Him. Let's read our key verse again: "This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern *what is best* and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:9–10, emphasis mine).

As we layer knowledge and depth of insight into our lives, we develop a trustworthy discernment.

Knowledge is wisdom that comes from acquiring truth.

Insight is wisdom that comes from living out the truth we acquire.

Discernment is wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit's reminders of that knowledge and insight.

I know a young mom who has really been struggling with the decision of whether to let her two-year-old go to preschool a couple of half days a week next year. As I listened to her, I felt compelled to ask her three questions:

1. Have you been reading and praying through God's Word?
2. Have you been applying God's Word to your mothering?
3. Have you sought godly counsel and insights from wise people who know specifics about your situation?

The answer to all three of those simple questions was yes, so I reminded her that God had assigned her to be this child's mother. If she had done these three things, then she had the ability to discern what was best.

She didn't need to wait for some big neon sign to drop down from heaven to know what to do. If she had that deep knowing that this was a no answer for her child, then she should go with that. If she had

that deep knowing that this was a yes answer for her child, then she should go with that.

It's not about trusting ourselves. Rather, it's about trusting the Holy Spirit to do what Jesus promised us in John 14:26: "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

When we've done what we need to do to acquire the knowledge and insight of truth, then the discernment of that truth is there. We must learn to trust and use that discernment because the more we do this, the more wisdom we acquire to make God-honoring decisions.

Dear Lord, I want to make decisions that honor You. Lead me as I develop a trustworthy discernment. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

AN AGENDA THAT WILL NEVER SATISFY

He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.

—MARK 3:14–15

I should have been happy. I knew it. I could have listed so many things for which I was thankful.

So, what was this undercurrent of disappointment that ebbed and flowed just beneath the surface of my more honest moments? I got still and I got sad.

I was doing a lot, pouring myself out for God, but not really spending time getting refilled by God.

Maybe you can relate?

We run at a breakneck pace to try and achieve what God wants us to slow down enough to receive.

He really does have it all worked out. The gaps filled. The needs met. The questions answered. The problems solved.

And the parts He's purposed for us? They're all perfectly portioned out in assignments meant for us today. No more. No less.

All He asks is that we personally receive from Him before setting out to work for Him. In doing so we are fueled by His power and

encouraged by His presence. This is the daily sacred exchange where ministry duty turns into pure delight.

How it must break His heart when we work like we don't believe He's capable. We say we trust Him but act like everything depends on us. We give all we have to the tasks at hand with only occasional leftovers of time to slightly acknowledge Him.

Imagine a little girl running while holding a cup, sloshing out all it contains. She thinks what will refill her is just ahead. So she presses on with sheer determination, clutching an empty cup.

She keeps running toward an agenda He never set, one that will never satisfy.

She sees Him and holds out her cup. But she catches only a few drops as she runs by Him because she didn't stop long enough to be filled up. Empty can't be tempered with mere drops.

*We run at a
breakneck pace
to try and achieve
what God wants
us to slow down
enough to receive.*

The tragic truth is what will fill her . . . what will fill us . . . isn't the accomplishment just ahead.

That shiny thing is actually a vacuum that sucks us dry—but never has the ability to refill.

I should know, because that's where I was. There's no kind of empty quite like this empty—where your hands are full but inside you're nothing but an exhausted shell.

I knew it would take slow moments to get me out of this empty place.

I needed to reconnect with the One who knows how to breathe

life back into depleted and dead places. Jesus doesn't participate in the rat race. He's into the slower rhythms of life like abiding, delighting, and dwelling—all words used to describe us being with Him.

As a matter of fact, when Jesus appointed the disciples, there were two parts to their calling, as we see in Mark 3:14–15.

Yes, they were to go to preach and drive out demons, but the first part of their calling was to “be with him.”

Fullness comes when we remember to *be with Him* before going out to serve Him.

He wants our hearts in alignment with Him before our hands set about doing today's assignment for Him.

So, He extends what we need and invites us each day to receive in prayer, worship, and truth from His Word. And He lovingly replenishes our cup while whispering: “This isn't a race to test the fastest pace. I just want you to persevere on the path I have marked out especially for you. Fix your eyes, not on a worldly prize, but on staying in love with Me.”

That's an agenda that's always completely satisfying.

Dear Lord, I'm choosing to stop in the midst of everything to just be with You. Let me never forget what a gift it is to spend this sacred time in Your presence. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

PREPARING FOR ADVENTURE

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

—PSALM 119:18

Oh, how we underestimate the power made available to us when we spend time with God. Our earthly eyes are so limited because they don't allow us to see what is happening in the heavenly realm. A daily battle is being fought for our attention and our devotion. Satan would love nothing more than to keep us separated from the power God gives us during our time with Him. It's time to stop feeling guilty and ill-equipped and start embracing the incredible privilege of meeting with Jesus every day.

Remember, this time doesn't have to be perfect to be powerful and effective. Jesus just wants a willing soul to come to Him—to

Satan would love to keep us separated from the power God gives us during our time with Him.

verbalize her desire to seek Him and acknowledge her need for Him. Then He'll show her how to make each moment with Him exactly what she needs.

Most days before I start my time with the Lord, I pray a very simple prayer that ushers my heart into the right place with God:

God, I want to see You. God, I want to hear You. God, I want to know You. So that I can follow hard after You.

This prayer is not a magic formula, just four short sentences that perfectly express my desire to experience God throughout my day. I want to see Him working in me, around me, and through me. I want to hear His voice so clearly that I won't doubt when He asks for my obedience. I want to know Him—not just facts about Him—but really know Him personally and intimately. And lastly, I want to follow hard after Him, to be the woman He wants me to be in every circumstance of my day.

It's amazing that when I verbalize my heart's desire in this way, something inside me shifts and I'm ready for the Word of God in a fresh way. It reminds me of the psalmist's request in Psalm 119:18: "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." A request God delights in answering.

I don't want to just read and pray to check it off my to-do list. I see this time, instead, as preparation for the great adventure God and I are about to head off on together in the hours ahead. Now what could be more exciting than that?

Dear Lord, I want to see You. I want to hear You. I want to know You. Please help me recognize Your presence in my day today so that I can follow hard after You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



INTERRUPTED BY JESUS

“Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.”

—MATTHEW 5:8

When we connect with Jesus and see Him, we will be changed. Changed in the best kind of way. Jesus will be so real that we won't be able to be anything but completely devoted to Him.

I can hardly go through anything in life without seeing God's hand in it. Layer upon layer of these constant experiences with God have built a very secure foundation of faith.

This raises a few concerns. Am I overspiritualizing my life? What if I don't have these experiences, or what if an experience I attribute to God isn't from Him at all? I understand these questions. I remember being skeptical. Part of me wanted something deeper with God, but I was scared.

A larger part of me wanted God to be explainable and safe. Fitting Him in a box ensured that I ran no risk of being interrupted by Him. I just wanted to do my part (be good) and have Him do His (bless me). It was a comfortable arrangement. But it was also the very perspective that numbed my spirit and rendered my faith ineffective.

I remember hearing my Bible friends talking freely about hearing from God and seeing Him in remarkable ways. I called them my “Bible friends” while my eyes rolled and my voice mocked their enthusiasm.

Finally God got a hold of me while I was reading Henry Blackaby's book *Experiencing God*, in which he encourages us to look for God's activity all around us. There was not even a hint of doubt in Blackaby's statements. He was absolutely certain that if we desired to see God, we would.

Paul writes to the Corinthian church, "It is written: 'What no eye has seen, and what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived'—the things God has prepared for those who love him—*these are the things God has revealed to us by his*

*It is possible for
God's Spirit to
reveal to us the
deep things of God.*

Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9–10, emphasis mine).

If we have accepted Christ as our Savior, we have God's Spirit in us. Therefore, it is possible for God's Spirit to reveal to us the deep things of God.

How does this happen most often? In the midst of everyday life using everyday things. Divine mixed in our mundane. It's the stuff all Jesus' parables were made of.

So what do you do if you aren't currently experiencing God in this way? The Bible tells us that those with a pure heart will see God (Matthew 5:8). It doesn't say we have to be perfect or perfectly ready; it just says that we have to get to a place where our hearts purely desire to see Him—and then we will.

Tell God of your desires. Ask Him to reveal anything that may be blocking your view. And then start looking. Seeing God changes us, grows us, and strengthens us to become more than people with mere

knowledge of God. We become changed people who live out the reality of God.

Dear Lord, I want to see Your hand and hear Your voice in my life. Please show me if there are things that block my view of You, so I can deal with them. I want to see You and be changed by You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

IF YOU'RE FEELING OVERLOOKED
AND UNAPPRECIATED . . .

The LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his outward appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

—1 SAMUEL 16:7

*S*ometimes I wake up in the morning feeling a little grumpy. *Time to do it all again.* I'll buy food that gets eaten. I'll wash clothes that get dirty again. I'll sweep floors that will somehow need to be swept again before the day is even done.

Is there more to all this than just doing the tasks of everyday life?

One day before I jumped into the normal routine, I sat with Jesus. And I found some big truths as I read my Bible and took a little glance into David's life. Despite how others saw him, his own tendency to sin, and lack of position in his own family, David had the sweet reassurance of God. And that was enough.

Overlooked by everyone else. Handpicked by God.

To his older brothers, David was young . . . possibly even a pest. To his father, Jesse, he was just another son. To onlookers, he was a mere shepherd boy. But to God, David was the one destined to be king of Israel. And not just any king. He was from the bloodline from which Jesus would come.

Overlooked by everyone else. Handpicked by God.

Even the way David was anointed to be the future king is a telling story. In 1 Samuel 16, God reveals to Samuel that He has rejected Saul as king and chosen one of Jesse's sons to be the replacement.

Think of the list of qualifications that must have run through Samuel's mind for such a position: tall, smart, articulate, brave, groomed, well-mannered, a natural-born leader. Samuel saw some of these characteristics in Eliab, David's brother. "The LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his outward appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart'" (1 Samuel 16:7).

*Overlooked by
everyone else.
Handpicked
by God.*

Samuel had Jesse line up all of his sons before him. All of them were to be considered. Yet, Jesse didn't call David in from tending sheep. Was this an oversight? An assumption? A judgment call? A deliberate choice?

Overlooked by everyone else. Handpicked by God.

Samuel passes on each of Jesse's sons and then asks, "Are these all the sons you have?" I imagine Jesse with a quizzical expression replying, "There is still the youngest . . . He is tending the sheep" (1 Samuel 16:11). Surely one who spends his time taking care of animals is not the one to take care of a nation.

Overlooked by everyone else. Handpicked by God.

As soon as Samuel saw David, he knew he'd found the one. David was anointed to become king. But he was not immediately ushered

to the throne. It would be many years before David was recognized by the world. So, where did he go after being anointed as king? To a refining school? A government academy? Military training? Nope.

He went back out to the fields and continued to shepherd his flock. A king-to-be doing lowly tasks. A future king whose character was refined in the fields of everyday life to prepare him for his calling.

How like us. In the midst of smelly laundry, dirty dishes, snotty noses, misplaced keys, overdue library books, bills, and that birthday gift that still needs to be mailed—there is training. There is character building. There is attitude shaping. There is soul defining. All of which must take place for us to become what God intends.

Do you ever feel overlooked by the world? Take heart—we are handpicked by God.

We aren't just doing tasks. We are building a legacy. We are shaping God's Kingdom. We are in the process of not only discovering our calling but that of our family as well. And I don't know about you, but it sure does make me look at my everyday tasks (yes, even the smelly laundry) in a whole different light.

Dear Lord, I'm grateful that even when I feel overlooked, I can rest in the fact that I am handpicked by You. Help me live my life for an audience of One. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I'M SCARED TO PRAY BOLDLY

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

—JAMES 5:16

Sometimes I'm scared to pray boldly.

It's not at all that I don't believe God can do anything. I absolutely do. I'm a wild-about-Jesus girl. Wild in my willingness. Wild in my obedience. Wild in my adventures with God.

So my hesitation isn't rooted in any kind of doubt about God. It's more rooted in doubts about myself and my ability to absolutely discern the will of God. The reality is, sometimes God chooses not to do things. And if His will is "No," while I am boldly praying for a "Yes," it makes me feel out of step with God.

Can you relate?

I so desperately want to stay in the will of God that I find myself praying with clauses like: *God, please heal my friend, but if it's Your will to take her, I will trust You.*

I wonder why I don't just boldly pray: *God, please heal my friend.* And then stand confidently knowing my prayers were not in vain—no matter what the outcome.

Praying boldly boots me out of that stale place of religious habit into authentic connection with God Himself.

Prayer opens my spiritual eyes to see things I can't see on my

own. And I'm convinced prayer matters. Prayers are powerful and effective if prayed from the position of a righteous heart (James 5:16).

So, prayer does make a difference—a life-changing, mind-blowing, earth-rattling difference. We don't need to know how. We don't need to know when. We just need to kneel confidently and know the tremors of a simple Jesus girl's prayers extend far-wide and far-high and far-deep.

Letting that absolute truth slosh over into my soul snuffs out the flickers of hesitation. It bends my stiff knees. And it ignites a fresh, bold, and even wilder fire within. Not bold as in bossy and demanding. But bold as in, *I love my Jesus with all my heart, so why would I offer anything less than an ignited prayer life?*

Jesus speaks specifically about igniting our prayer lives in Matthew 6, verses 6–8: “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. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

So let's ask. And ask again. Not because we can cause God to move, but so we'll position our souls to see our sweet Jesus move in any which way He pleases.

Dear Lord, I'm so grateful for the opportunity to bring all my worries and cares to You. Thank You for providing me with exactly what I need. I trust You have my best interest in mind today. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Prayer opens my spiritual eyes to see things I can't see on my own.



A PRAYER FROM L Y S A

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

—ROMANS 10:9

When I was in my early twenties, I felt very distant from God. A series of heartbreaking situations in my life made me question His goodness and whether or not He really loved me. But through His divine grace, eventually truth broke through my cold resistance and brought me to the place where I wanted to accept His love and dedicate my life to Him.

The challenge was that I didn’t know how to do this and I was too afraid to ask my friends. As I remembered struggling through this years ago, I wondered if you might be facing this same struggle too. Maybe you’ve had some ups and downs with this whole God thing but finally you’re in a place where you want to give your heart to Him, accept His grace, and receive salvation.

If that’s you, I’d like to invite you to pray this salvation prayer with me today:

Dear God,

Thank You for the gift of grace and forgiveness. Thank You that in the midst of my sin, You have made a way, through Jesus, to forgive my sin and make me right with You.

So today I confess my sinfulness . . . my hard heart . . . my mean

thoughts . . . my harsh words . . . my doubt. I believe with all my heart that it was for me—and because of me—that Jesus died.

Please forgive me of all my sin. Big sins. Small sins. Past sins. Present sins. And all sins to come. I exchange my sin for Jesus' goodness and holiness. By the shed blood of Jesus, I am now forgiven and free! Thank You that in this moment, You have sealed me with Your Holy Spirit. I receive this precious gift and trust You will do as You promise and make me a new creation, molding and shaping me from the inside out to be more like You!

I celebrate that the old me is gone and the new me is here to stay! I love You and am forever grateful for Your forgiveness and my new life in You. I ask all this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

I love you, dear friend. And I'm rejoicing with all of heaven over every decision made to accept God's free gift of salvation. It truly is the sweetest gift we'll ever receive.



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ABOUT PROVERBS 31 MINISTRIES

Lysa TerKeurst is the president of Proverbs 31 Ministries, located in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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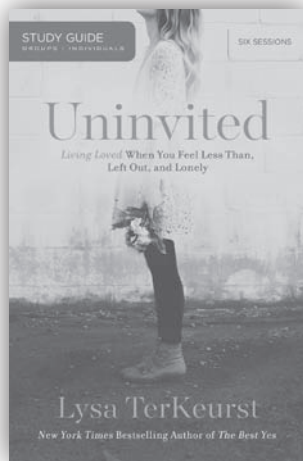
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*What Happens When Women Walk in Faith:
Trusting God Takes You to Amazing Places*

Win or Lose, I Love You! (Lulu and Her Tutu)

*The Enemy wants us to feel rejected . . .
left out, lonely, and less than.*



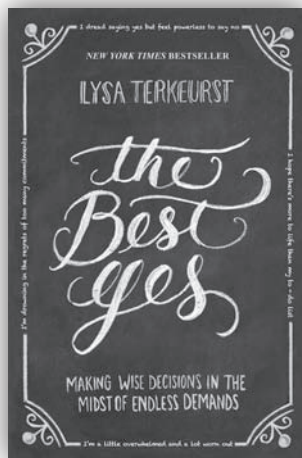
In *Uninvited*, Lysa shares her own deeply personal experiences and leans in to honestly examine the roots of rejection, as well as rejection's ability to poison relationships from the inside out, including our relationship with God.

With biblical depth, gut-honest vulnerability, and refreshing wit, Lysa will help you:

- Stop feeling left out by believing that even when you are overlooked by others you are handpicked by God.
- Change your tendency to either fall apart or control the actions of others by embracing God-honoring ways to process your hurt.
- Know exactly what to pray for the next ten days to steady your soul and restore your confidence in the midst of rejection.
- Overcome the two core fears that feed your insecurities by understanding the secret of belonging.

Get a copy of the book, study guide, and DVD wherever books are sold or by visiting www.uninvitedbook.com.

Are you living with the stress of an overwhelmed schedule and aching with the sadness of an underwhelmed soul?



Lysa TerKeurst is learning that there is a big difference between saying yes to everyone and saying yes to God. In *The Best Yes* she will help you:

- Cure the disease to please with a biblical understanding of the command to love.
- Escape the guilt of disappointing others by learning the secret of the small no.
- Overcome the agony of hard choices by embracing a wisdom based decision-making process.
- Rise above the rush of endless demands and discover your Best Yes today.

Get a copy of the book, study guide, and DVD wherever books are sold or by visiting www.thebestyes.com.

**The free app you've been looking for!
Give God your first thoughts every day.**

We say we put God first... so wouldn't it make sense that we give Him the first 5 minutes of each day? That's why Proverbs 31 Ministries created the First 5 app. With First 5, you will:

- Honor God by letting His truth direct your first thoughts of the day and discover how much healthier your perspective of life becomes.
- Discover unique parts of the Bible you may have missed by studying one verse in one chapter, one day at a time.



- Replace feelings of comparison and rejection that social media often brings by starting your day with the truth of God's Word.
- Gain confidence in your ability to navigate Scripture by learning to identify the major moments in each chapter.

Download the app for FREE!



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