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D E V O T I O N A L

HYMNS OF PRAISE: A 7-DAY CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL

'Tis the season to be swept up in joyous Christmas melodies. Whether you're in a grocery store, a post office, or your car you probably can't help but sing along to "Feliz Navidad" or "Joy to the World."

As we belt out these songs, we're reminded that singing is powerful! It affects our mood. It stirs our emotions. And for Christ-followers, singing connects our heart to God. Perhaps that explains why so often in the Bible we are commanded to sing. Psalm 96:1-2 (GNT) notes, "Sing a new song to the LORD! Sing to the LORD, all the world! Sing to the LORD, and praise him! Proclaim every day the good news that he has saved us!"

Singing praises to God uplifts our hearts. It shifts our focus from life's cares and ushers us into the wonderful presence of our Savior Jesus.

That's why this Christmas we're inviting you to sing! For the next seven days, journey with us as we connect with Jesus through powerful hymns of praise¹. We'll read the stories behind popular hymns, meditate on the inspiring lyrics, and then allow our hearts to flow with praise and adoration as we sing to our faithful God.

DAY 1: IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

Horatio Spafford

Attorney Horatio Spafford was at the pinnacle of his profession and financial success when tragedy struck. It began in 1871 when the great Chicago fire wiped out the majority of his property holdings. Two years later, his wife Anna and their four daughters were aboard an ocean liner in route to England when it was struck by another vessel in the North Atlantic Ocean. Horatio received a telegram from Anna with these heartbreaking words, "Saved alone. What shall I do?" All four daughters had drowned. Spafford boarded a ship to join his grieving wife, passing through the very waters where his daughters perished. It was on that journey he penned the lyrics to the hymn "It is Well with My Soul." From the depths of such unimaginable sorrow, Spafford turned to the faithfulness of God. He was comforted in knowing that his present suffering could not compare with the hope of future glory in Christ.

Perhaps like Stafford you are facing great hardship. You too can rest in God's faithfulness and know that you are not alone. Jesus knows the depths of your sorrow. He hears your cries for help and invites you to take comfort in him. He wants to assure you, though your

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pain is great now, one day there will be no more tears, no more pain, and no more sorrow. He has purchased our salvation, through his death and resurrection, and has given us the hope of eternal life which brings us great joy.

“It is Well With My Soul”

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

Scripture Reading

“And this small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble. For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever.”

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17-18 (GNT)

Pray

Jesus, I thank you for being by my side as my heart aches and grieves. Please comfort me with your peace. Remind me of your nearness when pain and sorrow threaten to overwhelm me. I pray for your joy to uphold me when I am weak.

DAY 2: WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

Joseph M. Scriven

Irish poet Joseph M. Scriven was born on September 10, 1819 in Northern Ireland. In 1843 his fiancée drowned on the night before they were to be married. Grief-stricken, Scriven moved to Canada. But in Canada he suffered another tragedy when he lost another fiancée to pneumonia before they could get married. Well acquainted with pain and suffering, in 1855, Scriven wrote a poem called “Pray without Ceasing” to comfort his ailing mother. Scriven cherished God’s friendship through the various hardships he endured. He cultivated this friendship through the power and intimacy of prayer. This poem was later set to music by Charles Crozat Converse and retitled, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”

In moments of crisis, we often seek comfort in the presence of a trusted friend. Jesus is a true friend, the greatest friend we could have. He is faithful, compassionate, and always available. Not only is he ready to listen in our times of need but he graciously offers to bear our burdens. What a friend! If you need someone to talk to or a shoulder to cry on remember the sweet abiding presence of your friend, Jesus.

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!



Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

Blessed Savior, Thou hast promised
Thou wilt all our burdens bear;
May we ever, Lord, be bringing
All to Thee in earnest prayer.
Soon in glory bright, unclouded,
There will be no need for prayer—
Rapture, praise, and endless worship
Will be our sweet portion there.

Scripture Reading

“The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them.”

JOHN 15:13 (GNT)

Pray

Jesus, thank you for your friendship. I am so grateful that I can always turn to you and share what's on my heart. I pray that our friendship will only grow deeper and deeper as we spend time together in prayer. I love you my friend, Jesus.



DAY 3: GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

Thomas Chisholm

Thomas Chisholm was born in a log cabin in Franklin, Kentucky, in 1866. Although he lacked a formal education, he became a schoolteacher at the age of 16 and the associate editor of his hometown weekly newspaper. Years later he was ordained as a pastor, but poor health forced him to leave the ministry. Chisholm relocated his family to Indiana, to recover, and then to New Jersey where he sold insurance. He retired in 1953 and spent his remaining years in a retirement community. A prolific writer of poetry, Chisholm had written more than 1200 poems. In 1923, he sent a collection of his poems to his good friend William Runyan, a musician associated with Chicago's Moody Bible Institute and one of the editors of Hope Publishing Company. Runyan leafed through the poems sent by Chisholm and was immediately taken in by the depth of meaning of the poem "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." He wrote a musical setting, and the completed hymn was published by Runyan that same year.

God is faithful. That is his nature. He's faithful to keep his promises. He's faithful in our trials. He's faithful to forgive us. He's faithful to protect us from evil. He's faithful even when we are faithless. "If we are not faithful, he will still be faithful. Christ cannot deny who he is" (2 Timothy 2:13 CEV). God proves himself to be trustworthy, over and over again. This causes us to declare, "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see:
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow—
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Scripture Reading

“The thought of my pain, my homelessness, is bitter poison.
I think of it constantly, and my spirit is depressed.
Yet hope returns when I remember this one thing:
The LORD’s unfailing love and mercy still continue,
Fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise.”

LAMENTATIONS 3:19-23 (GNT)

Pray

Father, thank you for being the one constant in my life. No matter what I go through, you stay the same. You are unchangeable, and for that I am filled with gratitude. Thank you for being faithful to me.

DAY 4: BLESSED ASSURANCE

Fanny Crosby

Fanny Crosby was born in Southeast Putnam County, New York, in 1820. She lost her eyesight to an eye infection at the age of six weeks. Nonetheless, Crosby was a happy child. While young, she developed a love of poetry; her first verse was written at the age of eight. But more than loving poetry, Crosby loved the Bible. She memorized five chapters a week. At the age of 15, Crosby became a student at the New York Institute of the Blind and joined the faculty of the Institute at 22, teaching English grammar, rhetoric, and American history.

About 1864 Crosby began writing hymns, drawing inspiration from her own faith. In 1885, Crosby married Alexander Van Alstyne, also a student at the Institute and later a member of the faculty. He wrote the music to many of Crosby’s hymns. Fanny Crosby authored more than 8,000 gospel hymn texts. Her hymn texts were staples for the music of the most prominent gospel song writers of her day. Today she is known as one of the most prolific hymn writers the world has ever seen.

Where were you when you accepted Jesus into your heart? What’s your salvation story? That decision to follow Jesus guarantees you eternal life with God. Through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, you’ve been redeemed for eternal purpose and given a divine destiny. And today, you can declare with confidence, “Jesus is mine.”

“Blessed Assurance”

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!



Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels, descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

Scripture Reading

“Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope, and so we look forward to possessing the rich blessing that God keeps for his people.”

1 PETER 1:3-4a (GNT)

Pray

God, I praise you for the gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus my Lord. Thank you for the glorious inheritance you are preparing for me. Today, I surrender to you all my doubts and fears, and I declare with full assurance, Jesus you are mine now and forever.

DAY 5: I SURRENDER ALL

Judson Van DeVenter

Judson Van DeVenter was born on a farm in Michigan in 1855. His dream was to become a famous artist. Following his graduation from Hillsdale College, he became an art teacher in the public schools of Sharon, Pennsylvania. It was there that he got involved with revivals held at his local church. That’s when Van DeVenter discovered his gift and love for leading others to Christ. Recognizing his talent for ministry, friends urged him to give up teaching art and become an evangelist. This wasn’t an easy decision for Van DeVenter.



He wrestled with the decision for five years before finally surrendering his life to Christian service. Following his decision, he traveled throughout the United States, England, and Scotland, singing and leading music for various evangelists. It was during this time that he wrote, "I Surrender All," recalling his struggle to surrender every aspect of his life to Christ. It was put to music by Winfield S. Weeden and published in the late 1800s.

As Van Deventer discovered, God wants us to surrender our lives to him, not for his sake, but for ours. But so often, we struggle to let go and trust God's purposes for our lives. There is beauty in surrender. When we allow God to be in charge of our lives, we exchange our weakness for his strength, our sorrow for his joy, and our worry for his peace.

"I Surrender All"

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to him I freely give.
I will ever love and trust him,
In his presence daily live.

I surrender all,
I surrender all,
All to thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Humbly at his feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken,
Take me, Jesus, take me now.

All to Jesus I surrender;
Make me, Savior, wholly thine;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit,
Truly know that thou art mine.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to thee,
Fill me with thy love and power,
Let thy blessing fall on me.

All to Jesus I surrender;
Now I feel the sacred flame.
Oh, the joy of full salvation!
Glory, glory, to his name!



Scripture Reading

“I have died, but Christ lives in me. And I now live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me.”

GALATIANS 2:20 (CEV)

Pray

Father, today I surrender my life to you. I relinquish control. Please take charge of my heart and make me more like you. Teach me to let go and to follow your lead. I surrender to your plan no matter where it leads.

DAY 6: ‘TIS SO SWEET TO TRUST IN JESUS

Louisa M.R. Stead

Louisa M.R. Stead was born in Dover, England in 1850. At the age of nine she gave her life to Jesus. Stead came to the United States in 1871 where she later married in 1875. The couple had a daughter Lily. One day Stead, her husband, and her daughter Lily decided to go for a picnic at Long Island Sound. While having their picnic, they heard a scream. The sound was coming from a young boy drowning in the water. Mr. Stead ran to the rescue, but he and the boy drowned as Mrs. Stead and her daughter watched helplessly. But their troubles weren't over yet. Stead became very poor and destitute. It was then—in circumstances that were anything but sweet—that Stead wrote the words to “‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus.” By the end of her life, Stead had served faithfully as a missionary to Africa. She was a living testimony of her own lyrics, “I’m so glad I learned to trust Thee / Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend / And I know that Thou art with me / Wilt be with me to the end.”

Stead learned that no matter her circumstances she could face all things through Jesus Christ. If you are in the midst of life’s storms, there’s sweet peace in knowing that you can trust Jesus. What a comfort to know Jesus is right there with you. He will carry you and sustain you through every twist and turn life throws at you.

“‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus”

‘Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to take Him at His Word;
Just to rest upon His promise,
And to know, “Thus saith the Lord!”



Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er;
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!
Oh, for grace to trust Him more!

Oh, how sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to trust His cleansing blood;
And in simple faith to plunge me
'Neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just from sin and self to cease;
Just from Jesus simply taking
Life and rest, and joy and peace.

I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee,
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;
And I know that Thou art with me,
Wilt be with me to the end.

Scripture Reading

“Christ gives me the strength to face anything.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:13 (CEV)

Pray

Jesus, thank you for the sweetness of your presence in every situation. I know that I can face any trial because you are by my side. Today I rejoice in knowing that you are always with me and will be with me until the end.

DAY 7: HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW

Walter and Civilla Martin

Walter and Civilla Martin spent years ministering to others. But in an interesting turn of events it was another couple who touched their hearts and inspired one of today's most well-loved hymns. Early in the spring of 1905, the Martins were sojourning in Elmira, New York when they befriended a couple named the Doolittles. Mrs. Doolittle had been bedridden for nearly twenty years. Mr. Doolittle was wheelchair bound. Still, they lived happy Christian lives. They were always bright and hopeful. This prompted the Martins to ask one simple question: “Why are you so happy?” Mrs. Doolittle's reply was just as simple, “His eye is on



the sparrow, and I know he watches me.” That’s when Mrs. Martin penned the lyrics to “His Eye is on the Sparrow,” sent it to renowned composer Charles Gabriel, and the timeless gospel hymn was created.

When people are around you, do they see your joy? Are you able to belt out, “I sing because I’m happy,” no matter your current realities? The Doolittles had a contagious joy. It wasn’t circumstantial joy; it was a holy joy despite earthly sorrow. A joy in knowing how much God loves and care for his children. Today, let joy flood your heart as you enjoy fellowship with the one who holds your life in his hands and promises to never let go.

“His Eye is on the Sparrow”

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heav’n and home,
When Jesus is my portion? My constant Friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

I sing because I’m happy, I sing because I’m free,
For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

“Let not your heart be troubled,” His tender word I hear,
And resting on His goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;
Though by the path He leadeth, but one step I may see;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,
When songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies,
I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Scripture Reading

“Look at the birds in the sky! They don’t plant or harvest. They don’t even store grain in barns. Yet your Father in heaven takes care of them. Aren’t you worth more than the birds?”

MATTHEW 6:26 (CEV)

Pray

Father, I rejoice in knowing that you are always with me. Daily you bless me in so many little ways—too many to count. I am completely overwhelmed by your unconditional love and all the ways you watch over me with your loving kindness.

