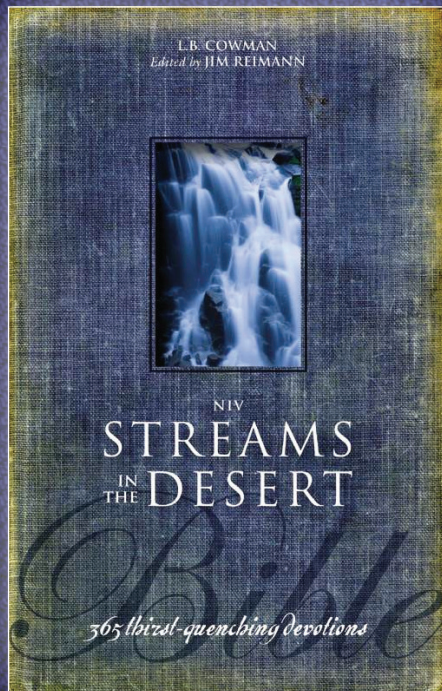




21-DAY PLAN

STREAMS  
IN  
THE DESERT





# STREAMS IN THE DESERT

## 21-DAY PLAN

Let your thirsty soul be restored and refreshed! This 21-day devotional offers encouragement, peace and strength during the hardships and trials of life. Readings from the classic *Streams in the Desert* by L.B. Cowman, edited for modern readers by Jim Reimann.

All devotions are drawn from the *NIV Streams in the Desert Bible*.



# DAY 1

*The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.*

*—Genesis 13:14–15*

Everything you can comprehend through faith’s vision belongs to you. Look as far as you can, for it is all yours. All you long to be as a Christian, and all you long to do for God, are within the possibilities of faith. Then draw closer to him, and with your Bible before you, and your soul completely open to the power of the Spirit, allow your entire being to receive the baptism of his presence. As he opens your understanding, enabling you to see his fullness, believe he has it all for you. Accept for yourself all the promises of his Word, all the desires he awakens within you, and all the possibilities of what you could become as a follower of Jesus. All the land you see is given to you.

The provision of his grace, which helps us along the way to the fulfillment of his promise, is actually tied to the inner vision God has given us. He who puts the natural instinct in the heart of a bird to fly across a continent in search of a warmer climate is too good to deceive it. Just as we are confident he placed the instinct within the bird, we can be assured he has also provided balmy breezes and spring-like sun to meet it when it arrives.

And he who breathes heavenly hope into our hearts will not deceive or fail us when we press forward toward its realization.



# DAY 2

*When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. He shall say: “Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them. For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”*  
—Deuteronomy 20:1–4

**T**he Bible has a great deal to say about waiting for God, and the teaching cannot be too strongly emphasized. We so easily become impatient with God’s delays. Yet much of our trouble in life is the result of our restless, and sometimes reckless, haste. We cannot wait for the fruit to ripen, but insist on picking it while it is still green. We cannot wait for the answers to our prayers, although it may take many years for the things we pray for to be prepared for us. We are encouraged to walk with God, but often God walks very slowly. Yet there is also another side to this teaching: God often waits for us.

Quite often we fail to receive the blessing he has ready for us because we are not moving forward with him. While it is true we miss many blessings by not waiting for God, we also lose numerous blessings by overwaiting. There are times when it takes strength simply to sit still, but there are also times when we are to move forward with a confident step.

Many of God’s promises are conditional, requiring some initial action on our part. Once we begin to obey, he will begin to bless us. Great things were promised to Abraham, but not one of them could have been obtained had he waited in Ur of the Chaldeans. The ten lepers Jesus healed were told to show themselves to the priest, and “as they went, they were cleansed” (Luke 17:14 [emphasis added]). God was waiting to heal them, and the moment their faith began to work, the blessing came.

When the Israelites were trapped by Pharaoh’s pursuing army at the Red Sea, they were commanded to “move on” (Exodus 14:15). No longer was it their duty to wait, but to rise up from bended knees and “move on” with heroic faith.

J. R. Miller



# DAY 3

*But Joshua said to the tribes of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—“You are numerous and very powerful. You will have not only one allotment but the forested hill country as well. Clear it, and its farthest limits will be yours; though the Canaanites have chariots fitted with iron and though they are strong, you can drive them out.”*

—Joshua 17:17-18

**T**here is always room higher in the hills. When the valleys are full of Canaanites, whose mighty iron chariots are slowing your progress, go up to the hills and occupy the higher land. If you find you can no longer do work for God, pray for those who can.

You may not be able to move things on earth with your words, but you may move heaven. If it seems that your continued growth is impossible on the lower slopes due to limited areas of service, the constraints of maintaining the day-to-day necessities, or other hindrances, allow your life to burst forth, reaching toward the unseen, the eternal and the heavenly.

Your faith can level forests. Even if the tribes of Israel had realized what treasures awaited them in the hills above, they would never have dreamed it would be possible to actually harvest the thick forests. But as God instructed them to clear the forests, he also reminded them of the sufficient power they possessed. The sight of seemingly impossible tasks, like leveling these forest covered hills, are not sent to discourage us. They come to motivate us to attempt spiritual feats that would be impossible except for the great strength God has placed within us through his indwelling Holy Spirit.

Difficulties are sent in order to reveal what God can do in answer to faith that prays and works. Are you being squeezed from all sides in the valley? Then “ride on the heights of the land” and be “nourished ... with honey from the rock” (Deuteronomy 32:13). Gain wealth from the terraced slopes that are now hidden by the forests.

From *Daily Devotional Commentary*



# DAY 4

*Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.*

—1 Kings 17:7

**W**eek after week, with an unwavering and steadfast spirit, Elijah watched the brook dwindle and finally dry up. Often tempted to stumble in unbelief, he nevertheless refused to allow his circumstances to come between himself and God. Unbelief looks at God through the circumstances, just as we often see the sun dimmed by clouds or smoke. But faith puts God between itself and its circumstances and looks at them through him.

Elijah's brook dwindled to only a silver thread, which formed pools at the base of the largest rocks. Then the pools evaporated, the birds flew away and the wild animals of the fields and forests no longer came to drink, for the brook became completely dry. And only then, to Elijah's patient and faithful spirit, did the word of the Lord come and say, "Go at once to Zarephath." (1 Kings 17:9).

Most of us would have become anxious and tired and would have made other plans long before God spoke. Our singing would have stopped as soon as the stream flowed less musically over its rocky bed. We would have hung our harps on the willows nearby and begun pacing back and forth on the withering grass, worrying about our predicament. And probably, long before the brook actually dried up, we would have devised some plan, asked God to bless it, and headed elsewhere.

God will often extricate us from the mess we have made, because "his love endures forever" (1 Chronicles 16:34). Yet if we had only been patient and waited to see the unfolding of his plan, we would never have found ourselves in such an impossible maze, seeing no way out. We would also never have had to turn back and retrace our way, with wasted steps and so many tears of shame.

"Wait for the Lord" (Psalm 27:14 [emphasis added]). Patiently wait!

F. B. Meyer



# DAY 5

*For this is what the Lord says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. This is an easy thing in the eyes of the Lord; he will also deliver Moab into your hands. You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones.”*

*The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice, there it was—water flowing from the direction of Edom! And the land was filled with water.  
—2 Kings 3:17–20*

**T**o human reason, what God was promising seemed simply impossible, but nothing is too difficult for him. Without any sound or sign and from sources invisible and seemingly impossible, the water flowed the entire night, and “the next morning ... there it was ...! And the land was filled with water ... the sun was shining on the water ... the water looked red—like blood” (2 Kings 3:20,22).

Our unbelief is always desiring some outward sign, and the faith of many people is largely based on sensationalism. They are not convinced of the genuineness of God’s promises without some visible manifestation. But the greatest triumph of a person’s faith is to “be still, and know that [he is] God” (Psalm 46:10).

The greatest victory of faith is to stand at the shore of the impassable Red Sea and to hear the Master say, “Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today” (Exodus 14:13 [emphasis added]), and “Move on” (Exodus 14:15 [emphasis added]). As we step out in faith, without any sign or sound, taking our first steps into the water, we will see the water divide. Continuing to march ahead, we will see a pathway open through the very midst of the sea.

Whenever I have seen God’s wondrous work in the case of some miraculous healing or some extraordinary deliverance by his providence, the thing that has always impressed me most was the absolute quietness in which it was done. I have also been impressed by the absence of anything sensational and dramatic, and the utter sense of my own uselessness as I stood in the presence of this mighty God, realizing how easy all this was for him to do without even the faintest effort on his part or the slightest help from me.

A. B. Simpson



# DAY 6

*Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”*

—Nehemiah 8:10

**A**nxiety should never be found in a believer. In spite of the magnitude, quantity and diversity of our trials, afflictions and difficulties, anxiety should not exist under any circumstances.

This is because we have a Father in heaven who is almighty, who loves his children as he loves his “one and only Son” (John 3:16), and whose complete joy and delight it is to continually assist them under all circumstances. We should heed his Word, which says, “Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” [Nehemiah 8:10].

... We are to take everything to God—little things, very little things, even what the world calls trivial things ... living all day long in holy fellowship with our heavenly Father and our precious Lord Jesus. We should develop something of a spiritual instinct, causing us to immediately turn to God when a concern keeps us awake at night. During those sleepless nights, we should speak to him, bringing our various concerns before him, no matter how small they may be. Also speak to the Lord about any trial you are facing or any difficulties you may have in your family or professional life.

... Even if we have no possessions, there is one thing for which we can always be [joyful]—that he has saved us from hell. We can also give thanks that he has given us his holy Word, his Holy Spirit, and the most precious gift of all—his Son. Therefore when we consider all this, we have abundant reasons for [joy].

May this be our goal!

From *Life of Trust* by George Mueller



# DAY 7

*I remain confident of this:  
I will see the goodness  
of the LORD  
in the land of the living.  
Wait for the LORD;  
be strong and take  
heart  
and wait for the LORD.*  
—Psalm 27:13–14

Oh, how great the temptation is to despair at times! Our soul becomes depressed and disheartened, and our faith staggers under the severe trials and testing that come into our lives, especially during times of bereavement and suffering. We may come to the place where we say, “I cannot bear this any longer. I am close to despair under these circumstances God has allowed. He tells me not to despair, but what am I supposed to do when I am at this point?”

What have you done in the past when you felt weak physically? You could not do anything. You ceased from doing. In your weakness, you leaned on the shoulder of a strong loved one ...

It is the same when you are tempted to despair under spiritual afflictions. Once you have come close to the point of despair, God’s message is not, “Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1:6), for he knows that your strength and courage have run away. Instead, he says sweetly, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Hudson Taylor was so weak and feeble in the last few months of his life that he told a friend, “I am so weak I cannot write. I cannot read my Bible. I cannot even pray. All I can do is lie still in the arms of God as a little child, trusting him.” This wonderful man of God, who had great spiritual power, came to the point of physical suffering and weakness where all he could do was lie still and trust.

That is all God asks of you as his dear child. When you become weak through the fierce fires of affliction, do not try to “be strong.” Just “be still, and know that [he is] God.” And know that he will sustain you and bring you through the fire.

God reserves his best medicine for our times of deepest despair.



# DAY 8

*Truly my soul finds rest in God;  
my salvation comes from him.  
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;  
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.  
How long will you assault me?  
Would all of you throw me down—  
this leaning wall, this tottering fence?  
Surely they intend to topple me  
from my lofty place;  
they take delight in lies.  
With their mouths they bless,  
but in their hearts they curse.[b]  
Yes, my soul, find rest in God;  
my hope comes from him.  
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;  
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.  
My salvation and my honor depend on  
God[c];  
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.  
—Psalm 62:1-7*

So often we simply neglect to look for the answers to what we have asked, which shows the lack of earnestness in our petitions. A farmer is never content until he reaps a harvest; a marksman observes whether or not his bullet has hit the target; and a physician examines the effect of the medicine he prescribes. Should a Christian be any less careful regarding the effect of his labor in prayer?

Every prayer of the Christian, whether for temporal or spiritual blessings, will be fully answered if it meets certain Biblical requirements. It must be prayed in faith and in accordance with God's will. It must rely on God's promise, be offered up in the name of Jesus Christ, and be prayed under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

God always answers the general intent of his people's prayers. He does so not only to reveal his own glory but also to provide for the Christian's spiritual and eternal welfare. Since we see in Scripture that Jesus Christ never rejected even a single petitioner who came to him, we can believe that no prayer made in his name will be in vain.

The answer to our prayer may be coming, although we may not discern its approach. A seed that is underground during winter, although hidden and seemingly dead and lost, is nevertheless taking root for a later spring and harvest.

Bickersteth



# DAY 9

*Look on my suffering and  
deliver me,*

*for I have not forgotten  
your law.*

*Defend my cause and  
redeem me;*

*preserve my life  
according to your  
promise.*

—Psalm 119:153–154

**S**teel is the product of iron plus fire. Soil is rock plus heat and the crushing of glaciers. Linen is flax plus the water that cleans it, the comb that separates it, the flail that pounds it and the shuttle that weaves it. In the same way, the development of human character requires a plus attached to it, for great character is made not through luxurious living but through suffering. And the world does not forget people of great character.

I once heard the story of a mother who brought a crippled boy with a hunched back into her home as a companion for her own son. She warned her son to be very careful not to refer to the other boy's deformity, since this was a sensitive matter to him. And she encouraged him to play with his new friend as if he were a normal child. But after listening to her son play with him for a few minutes, she heard him ask his companion, "Do you know what that is on your back?" The crippled boy was embarrassed, hesitated a moment, but before he could respond, his friend answered the question for him by saying, "It is the box that holds your wings, and someday God is going to break it open, and you will fly away to be an angel."

Someday God is going to reveal this fact to every Christian: The very things they now rebel against are the instruments he has used to perfect their character and to mold them into perfection, so they may later be used as polished stones in his heaven yet to come.

Cortland Myers



# DAY 10

*Woe to the land of whirring wings  
along the rivers of Cush,  
which sends envoys by sea  
in papyrus boats over the water.  
Go, swift messengers,  
to a people tall and smooth-skinned,  
to a people feared far and wide,  
an aggressive nation of strange speech,  
whose land is divided by rivers.  
All you people of the world,  
you who live on the earth,  
when a banner is raised on the mountains,  
you will see it,  
and when a trumpet sounds,  
you will hear it.  
This is what the Lord says to me:  
“I will remain quiet and will look on from my  
dwelling place, like shimmering heat in the sunshine,  
like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.”  
For, before the harvest, when the blossom is gone  
and the flower becomes a ripening grape,  
he will cut off the shoots with pruning knives,  
and cut down and take away the  
spreading branches. —Isaiah 18:1–5*

**I**n this passage, Assyria is marching against Ethiopia, whose people are described as “tall and smooth-skinned” (Isaiah 18:2). As the army advances, God makes no effort to stop them, and it appears as though they will be allowed to do as they wish. The Lord is watching from his “dwelling place” [Isaiah 18:4] while the sun continues to shine on them, yet “before the harvest” (Isaiah 18:5) the entire proud army is defeated as easily as new growth is pruned from a vine.

Isn’t this a beautiful picture of God—remaining quiet and watching? Yet his silence is not to be confused with passive agreement or consent. He is simply biding his time and will arise at the most opportune moment, just when the plans of the wicked are on the verge of success, in order to overwhelm the enemy with disaster. And as we see the evil of this world, as we watch the apparent success of wrongdoers, and as we suffer the oppression of those who hate us, let us remember those miraculous words of God—“I will remain quiet and will look on” [Isaiah 18:4].

Yes, God does have another point of view, and there is wisdom behind his words. Why did Jesus watch his disciples straining at the oars through the stormy night? Why did he, though unseen by others, watch the sequence of anguishing events unfold in Bethany as Lazarus slowly passed through the stages of his terminal illness, succumbed to death, and was finally buried in a rocky tomb? Jesus was simply waiting for the perfect moment when he could intercede most effectively.

Is the Lord being quiet with you? Nevertheless, he is attentive and still sees everything. He has his finger on your pulse and is extremely sensitive to even the slightest change. And he will come to save you when the perfect moment has arrived.

*From Daily Devotional Commentary*



# DAY 11

*Yet the LORD longs to be  
gracious to you;*

*therefore he will  
rise up to show you  
compassion.*

*For the LORD is a God of  
justice.*

*Blessed are all who  
wait for him!*

*—Isaiah 30:18*

**W**e should not only understand the importance of our waiting on God but also realize something even more wonderful—the Lord waits on us. And the very thought of his waiting on us will give us renewed motivation and inspiration to “wait for him” [Isaiah 30:18]. It will also provide inexpressible confidence that our waiting will never be in vain. Therefore, in the spirit of waiting on God, let us seek to discover exactly what it means right now.

The Lord has an inconceivably glorious purpose for each of his children. “If this is true,” you ask, “why is it that he continues to wait longer and longer to offer his grace and to provide the help I seek, even after I have come and waited on him?” He does so because he is a wise gardener who “waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains” (James 5:7). God knows he cannot gather the fruit until it is ripe, and he knows precisely when we are spiritually ready to receive blessings for our gain and his glory. And waiting in the sunshine of his love is what will ripen our soul for his blessings. Also, waiting under the clouds of trials is as important, for they will ultimately produce showers of blessings.

Rest assured that if God waits longer than we desire, it is simply to make the blessings doubly precious. Remember, he waited four thousand years, “but when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son” (Galatians 4:4). Our time is in his hands, and he will quickly avenge those he has chosen, swiftly coming to our support without ever delaying even one hour too long.

Andrew Murray



# DAY 12

*Pass through, pass  
through the gates!*

*Prepare the way for  
the people.*

*Build up, build up the  
highway!*

*Remove the stones.  
Raise a banner for the  
nations.*

—Isaiah 62:10

God will make our obstacles serve his purposes. We all have mountains in our lives, and often they are people and things that threaten to block the progress of our spiritual life. The obstacles may be untruths told about us; a difficult occupation; “a thorn in [the] flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7); or our daily cross. And often we pray for their removal, for we tend to think that if only these were removed, we would live a more tender, pure and holy life.

“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe ... !” (Luke 24:25). These are the very conditions we need for achievement, and they have been put in our lives as the means of producing the gifts and qualities for which we have been praying so long. We pray for patience for many years, and when something begins to test us beyond our endurance, we run from it. We try to avoid it, we see it as some insurmountable obstacle to our desired goal, and we believe that if it was removed, we would experience immediate deliverance and victory.

This is not true! ... The only way genuine patience can be acquired is by enduring the very trials that seem so unbearable today.

Turn from your running and submit. Claim by faith to be a partaker in the patience of Jesus and face your trials in him. There is nothing in your life that distresses or concerns you that cannot become submissive to the highest purpose. Remember, they are God’s mountains. He puts them there for a reason, and we know he will never fail to keep his promise.

From *Christ in Isaiah*, by F. B. Meyer



# DAY 13

*But as for me, I watch in  
hope for the LORD,  
I wait for God my  
Savior;  
my God will hear me.  
—Micah 7:7*

**W**ithout watchful expectation on our part, what is the sense in waiting on God for help? There will be no help without it. If we ever fail to receive strength and protection from him, it is because we have not been looking for it. Heavenly help is often offered yet goes right past us. We miss it because we are not standing in the tower, carefully watching the horizon for evidence of its approach, and then are unready to throw the gates of our heart open so it may enter. The person who has no expectations and therefore fails to be on the alert will receive little help. Watch for God in the events of your life.

There is an old saying: “They who watch for the providence of God will never lack the providence of God to watch for.”

And we could turn the saying around as well and say, “They who never watch for the providence of God will never have the providence of God to watch for.” Unless you put the water jars out when it rains, you will never collect the water.

We need to be more businesslike and use common sense with God in claiming his promises ... People who go to the bank have a purpose in mind. They present their check, receive their cash, and then leave, having transacted real business. They do not lay their check on the counter, discuss the beauty of the signature, and point out the lovely design on it. No, they want to receive money for their check and will not be satisfied without it ...

Unfortunately, a great many people also play at praying. They do not expect God to give them an answer, so they simply squander their prayer time. Our heavenly Father desires us to transact real business with him in our praying.

Charles H. Spurgeon



# DAY 14

*When they looked up,  
they saw no one except  
Jesus.*

—Matthew 17:8

“Left alone!” What different emotions these words bring to mind for each of us! To some they mean loneliness and grief, but to others they may mean rest and quiet. To be left alone without God would be too horrible for words, while being left alone with him is a taste of heaven! And if his followers spent more time alone with him, we would have spiritual giants again.

Our Master set an example for us. Remember how often he went to be alone with God? And there was a powerful purpose behind his command, “When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray” (Matthew 6:6 [emphasis added]).

The greatest miracles of Elijah and Elisha took place when they were alone with God. Jacob was alone with God when he became a prince (see Genesis 32:28) ... Joshua was alone when the Lord came to him (see Joshua 1:1). Gideon and Jephthah were by themselves when commissioned to save Israel (see Judges 6:11; 11:29). Moses was by himself at the burning bush (see Exodus 3:1–5). Cornelius was praying by himself when the angel of God came to him (see Acts 10:1–4). No one was with Peter on the housetop when he was instructed to go to the Gentiles (see Acts 10:9–28). John the Baptist was alone in the wilderness (see Luke 1:80), and John the Beloved was alone on the island of Patmos when he was the closest to God (see Revelation 1:9).

Earnestly desire to get alone with God. If we neglect to do so, we not only rob ourselves of a blessing but rob others as well, since we will have no blessing to pass on to them. It may mean that we do less outward, visible work, but the work we do will have more depth and power. Another wonderful result will be that people will see “no one except Jesus” (Matthew 17:8) in our lives.

The impact of being alone with God in prayer cannot be overemphasized.



# DAY 15

*There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.*  
—Luke 2:36–37

**T**here is no doubt that it is by praying that we learn to pray, and that the more we pray, the better our prayers will be. People who pray in spurts are never likely to attain to the kind of prayer described in the Scriptures as “powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

Great power in prayer is within our reach, but we must work to obtain it. We should never even imagine that Abraham could have interceded so successfully for Sodom if he had not communed with God throughout the previous years of his life.

Jacob’s entire night of wrestling at Peniel was certainly not the first encounter he had with his God. And we can even look at our Lord’s most beautiful and wonderful prayer in John 17, before his suffering and death, as the fruit of his many nights of devotion, and of his rising often before daybreak to pray.

If a person believes he can become powerful in prayer without making a commitment to it, he is living under a great delusion.

The prayer of Elijah, which stopped the rain from heaven and later opened heaven’s floodgates, was only one example of a long series of his mighty pleadings with God. Oh, if only we Christians would remember that perseverance in prayer is necessary for it to be effective and victorious!

The great intercessors, who are seldom mentioned in connection with the heroes and martyrs of the faith, were nevertheless the greatest benefactors of the church. Yet their becoming the channels of the blessings of mercy to others was only made possible by their abiding at the mercy seat of God.

Remember, we must pray to pray, and continue in prayer so our prayers may continue.

Charles H. Spurgeon



# DAY 16

*He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed,*

*—Luke 22:41*

**I**t is a very difficult thing to be kept in the background during a time of crisis. In the Garden of Gethsemane, eight of the eleven remaining disciples were left behind to do nothing. When Jesus went ahead to pray, Peter, James and John went with him to watch, but the rest sat down to wait ... They were in the garden, but that was all ... It was a stormy time of crisis and great stress, yet they were not allowed to participate.

You and I have certainly had that experience and felt the same disappointment. Perhaps you have seen a great opportunity for Christian service arise, and some people are sent immediately to the work, while still others are being trained to go. Yet you are forced to do nothing but sit and wait ... Whatever your situation, you have been kept from service, and ... do not understand why you should be excluded from this part of the Christian life. It seems unjust that you have been allowed to enter the garden but have found no path assigned to you once inside.

Be still, dear soul—things are not what they seem! You are not excluded from any part of the Christian life. Do you believe that the garden of the Lord only has places for those who walk or those who stand? No! It also has a place set apart for those who are compelled to sit ... There are active people, who go straight to the battle and struggle till the setting of the sun. There are passive people, who stand in the middle and simply report the progress of the fight. Yet there are also [others]—those who can neither fight nor be spectators of the fight but must simply lie down and wait.

When this experience comes, do not think that you have been turned aside. Remember, it is Christ himself who says to you, “Sit here” (Matthew 26:36). Your place in the garden has also been set apart.



# DAY 17

*and many people came to him. They said, “Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true.”*

—John 10:41

Perhaps you are very dissatisfied with yourself. You are not a genius, have no distinctive gifts and are inconspicuous when it comes to having any special abilities. Mediocrity seems to be the measure of your existence. None of your days are noteworthy, except for their sameness and lack of zest. Yet in spite of this you may live a great life.

John the Baptist never performed a miracle, but Jesus said of him, “Among those born of women there is no one greater” (Luke 7:28). His mission was to be “a witness to the light” (John 1:8), and that may be your mission and mine. John was content to be only a voice, if it caused people to think of Christ.

Be willing to be only a voice that is heard but not seen, or a mirror whose glass the eye cannot see because it is reflecting the brilliant glory of the Son. Be willing to be a breeze that arises just before daylight, saying, “The dawn! The dawn!” and then fades away.

Do the most everyday and insignificant tasks knowing that God can see. If you live with difficult people, win them over through love. If you once made a great mistake in life, do not allow it to cloud the rest of your life, but by locking it secretly in your heart, make it yield strength and character.

We are doing more good than we know. The things we do today—sowing seeds or sharing simple truths of Christ—people will someday refer to as the first things that prompted them to think of him. For my part, I will be satisfied not to have some great tombstone over my grave but just to know that common people will gather there once I am gone and say, “He was a good man. He never performed any miracles, but he told me about Christ, which led me to know him for myself.”

George Matheson



# DAY 18

*But thanks be to God,  
who always leads us  
as captives in Christ's  
triumphal procession and  
uses us to spread the  
aroma of the knowledge  
of him everywhere.*

—2 Corinthians 2:14

God wins his greatest victories through apparent defeats. Very often the enemy seems to triumph for a season, and God allows it. But then he comes in and upsets the work of the enemy, overthrows the apparent victory, and as the Bible says, “frustrates the ways of the wicked” (Psalm 146:9). Consequently, he gives us a much greater victory than we would have known had he not allowed the enemy seemingly to triumph in the first place.

The story of the three Hebrew young men who were thrown into the fiery furnace is a familiar one (see Daniel 3:13–27). There was an apparent victory for the enemy. It looked as if the servants of the living God were going to suffer a terrible defeat. We have all been in situations where it seemed as though we were defeated, and the enemy rejoiced. We can only imagine what a complete defeat this appeared to be for Daniel's friends. They were thrown into the terrible flames while their enemies watched to see them burn. Yet the enemy was greatly astonished to see them walking around in the fire ... This apparent defeat resulted in a miraculous victory.

Suppose these three men had lost their faith and courage and had complained, saying, “Why didn't God keep us out of the furnace!” They would have been burned, and God would not have been glorified.

If there is a great trial in your life today, do not acknowledge it as a defeat. Instead, continue by faith to claim the victory through him who is able to make you “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37), and a glorious victory will soon be apparent. May we learn that in all the difficult places God takes us, he is giving us opportunities to exercise our faith in him that will bring about blessed results and greatly glorify his name.

From *Life of Praise*



# DAY 19

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

—Ephesians 4:2

When God finally conquers us and changes our unyielding nature, we receive deep insights into the Spirit of Jesus. Then, as never before, we see his extraordinary gentleness of spirit at work in this dark and unheavenly world. Yet the gifts of “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22) do not automatically become evident in our lives. If we are not discerning enough to recognize their availability to us, to desire them, and then to nourish them in our thoughts, they will never become embedded in our nature or behavior. Every further step of spiritual growth in God’s grace must be preceded by acknowledging our lack of a godly attribute and then by exhibiting a prayerful determination to obtain it.

However, very few Christians are willing to endure the suffering through which complete gentleness is obtained. We must die to ourselves before we are turned into gentleness, and our crucifixion involves suffering. It will mean experiencing genuine brokenness and a crushing of self, which will be used to afflict the heart and conquer the mind.

Today many people are attempting to use their mental capacity and logical thinking to obtain sanctification, yet this is nothing but a religious fabrication. They believe that if they just mentally put themselves on the altar and believe the altar provides the gift of sanctification, they can then logically conclude they are fully sanctified. Then they go happily on their way, expressing their flippant, theological babble about the “deep” things of God.

Yet the heartstrings of their old nature have not been broken, and their unyielding character, which they inherited from Adam, has not been ground to powder. Their soul has not throbbed with the lonely, gushing groans of Gethsemane. Having no scars from their death on Calvary, they will exhibit nothing of the soft, sweet, gentle, restful, victorious, overflowing and triumphant life that flows like a spring morning from an empty tomb.

G. D. W.



# DAY 20

*so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.*  
—Colossians 1:10–12

**H**ave you prayed and prayed, and waited and waited, and still you see no evidence of an answer? Are you tired of seeing no movement? Are you at the point of giving up? Then perhaps you have not waited in the right way, which removes you from the right place—the place where the Lord can meet you.

“Wait for it patiently” (Romans 8:25 [emphasis added]). Patience eliminates worry. The Lord said he would come, and his promise is equal to his presence. Patience eliminates weeping. Why feel sad and discouraged? He knows your needs better than you do, and his purpose in waiting is to receive more glory through it. Patience eliminates self-works. “The work of God is this: to believe” (John 6:29), and once you believe, you may know all is well. Patience eliminates all want. Perhaps your desire to receive what you want is stronger than your desire for the will of God to be fulfilled.

Patience eliminates all weakness. Instead of thinking of waiting as being wasted time, realize that God is preparing his resources and strengthening you as well. Patience eliminates all wobbling. “He touched me and raised me to my feet” (Daniel 8:18). God’s foundations are steady, and when we have his patience within, we are steady while we wait. Patience yields worship. Sometimes the best part of praiseful waiting is experiencing “great endurance and patience ... giving joyful thanks” (Colossians 1:11–12).

C. H. P.



# DAY 21

*Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.*  
—James 5:17

Thank God Elijah was “a human being, even as we are” [James 5:17]! He sat under a tree, complained to God and expressed his unbelief—just as we have often done. Yet this was not the case at all when he was truly in touch with God. “Elijah was a human being, even as we are,” yet “he prayed earnestly.” The literal meaning of this in the Greek is magnificent: Instead of saying, “earnestly,” it says, “He prayed in prayer.” In other words, “He kept on praying.” The lesson here is that you must keep praying.

... After Elijah had called down fire from heaven to defeat the prophets of Baal, rain was needed for God’s prophecy to be fulfilled ... We are told, “Elijah ... bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees” (1 Kings 18:42), shutting out all sights and sounds. He put himself in a position, beneath his robe, to neither see nor hear what was happening.

Elijah then said to his servant, “Go and look toward the sea” (1 Kings 18:43). Upon returning, the servant replied, “There is nothing there” ... Can you imagine what we would do under the same circumstances? ... But did Elijah give up? No. In fact, six times he told his servant, “Go back.” Each time the servant returned saying, “Nothing!”

Yet “the seventh time the servant reported, ‘A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea’” (1 Kings 18:44) ... And the rains came ... fast and furiously ... Yes, in spite of utterly hopeless reports received from sight, this is a story of faith that continues “praying in prayer.”

Do you know how to pray in that way—how to prevail in prayer? Let your sight bring you reports as discouraging as possible, but pay no attention to them. Our heavenly Father lives, and even the delays of answers to our prayers are part of his goodness.

Arthur Tappan Pierson