

365 DAILY DEVOTIONS

*a Year of
Tenacity*

JANET SKETCHLEY

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Foreword

The devotionals in *A Year of Tenacity* have been chosen and updated from almost nine years of weekly devotional posts on my blog, “Tenacity.”

It’s with pleasure, and a prayer for your blessing, that I invite you to journey with me for the next 365 days.

You’ll notice each reading is numbered by day, not by date. I didn’t want you to feel tied to a calendar year, or to struggle playing catch-up if you missed a few days. Because of that, and because observances like Easter don’t fall on the same date each year, I’ve opted not to include seasonal reflections.

May the Lord bless and keep you, and draw you ever nearer to His heart.

Janet Sketchley
Canada, 2017

PS: If you’re particularly attentive to spelling, you’ll notice that other than the King James Version, the Scripture quotations use US spelling, while my text is Canadian (a hybrid of UK and US). The Bible publishers are US-based, which defines their choice of spelling.



Our Good Shepherd

He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.
And he will be our peace...
Micah 5:4-5a, NIV

This seems to be one of those prophecies with different stages. Ultimately, Jesus will return. Every knee will bow, and every tongue acknowledge the sovereignty of God (Romans 14:11). The world will know Jesus is Lord.

But today, He rules in Christians' hearts and lives. He stands — a warrior who cannot be overcome — and shepherds us. He stands in strength, majesty and power. Despite our circumstances, our hearts can be secure — we can live securely — because He is shepherding us.

And He will be our peace.

Be my peace, Jesus, even in the storms. Nothing can separate me from You, and You'll never abandon me. Strengthen my faith to trust You.



God Sees

I cannot find God anywhere —
in front or back of me,
to my left or my right.
God is always at work,
though I never see him.
But he knows what I am doing,
and when he tests me,
I will be pure as gold.
Job 23:8-10, CEV

When he says this, Job is enduring unimaginable suffering. And his friends' pious half-truths aren't helping. He wishes he could find God and plead his case in person. His conscience is clean, and he knows he's not suffering as a punishment. Why won't God rescue him?

Sometimes things are so hard that we can't see God anywhere. But we don't need to panic. God sees us. Where we can only see the problems and pain, He sees how He plans to bring good from it.

When we don't understand, when all we have are questions and fears, we can choose to trust God. He knows. He loves us. And He will never abandon us.

Thank You, God, that You do see me and You are working even when I can't see it. Help me set my hope on You, and grant me the faith I need to persevere.



Wait in Hope

But as for me, I will look expectantly for the Lord *and*
with confidence in Him I will keep watch;
I will wait [with confident expectation] for the God of
my salvation.
My God will hear me.
Micah 7:7, AMP

Micah writes this at a time when people are so corrupt that he says you can't even trust your own friend or lover. Yet he looks ahead to the day God will forgive his people's sin and restore them.

His example sets a pattern for us:

Wait for God. Not impatiently, arms folded, toes tapping. Not passively, resigned, or wondering if He'll really show up. Wait in trust.

Hope in God. Not wish-hoping, like we hope it's good weather on the weekend. Expectantly anticipating, securely confident in Him. Actively putting our trust in Him, knowing He cannot fail.

Talk to God. Not complaining or blaming, although He understands if that's how we start. But finish with praise. He doesn't need to hear how wonderful He is, but we need to remind ourselves. When we're looking at how big God is, our problems come into a better perspective and we can trust Him to look after us. We can worship. Even while we're waiting.

Oh God, please give me confidence in You, so I can wait in hope and expectancy, trusting in Your character and Your goodness. Teach me to worship You in the waiting.



Be Still

He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”
The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
Psalm 46:10-11, NIV

This psalm opens with “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (verse 1). From there, the writer expands on both the greatness of God and the magnitude of the trouble.

Then he calls us to be still.

The context suggests this “Be still” is addressed to the clamouring nations, but it also applies to the frantic Israelites. One might paraphrase it as “Stop fighting the universe.”

Be still... cease struggling... stop fighting. Sounds good, but once we're wound up we can't stop. We're like a toddler on overload who needs a loving parent to draw her into a big hug and whisper “shhh” against her hair.

Know that He is God. When we're still, we can see... experience... understand... learn that He is God.

How? By what He whispers to our hearts. By experiencing His presence. By seeing Him work in our circumstances. All this, and more.

Father, please calm my spirit. Still my soul until I can rest in You. Let me thrive in Your care.



Empowered

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me
and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me
you can do nothing.

John 15:5, NIV

“I can’t do this without You, LORD.”

Many of us pray this way regularly, about hard tasks or scary appointments, or just about hauling our exhausted selves out of bed to face another day.

It’s a fine prayer, and it’s scriptural. Jesus’ warning is clear: “Apart from Me you can do nothing.”

The key is where we put the emphasis. If we focus on the difficulty, “*I can’t do this,*” it weighs us down. If we focus on Jesus, our hope and strength, “*I can’t do this without You,*” it reminds us where our confidence lies.

Acknowledging our weakness keeps us from getting into messes. Focusing there could keep us from doing anything at all. Let our weaknesses remind us that Jesus offers His strength. Our confidence is in Him, and He is enough.

God my Saviour and my Strength, I can’t do life without You. Thank You that You never intended me to try. Please help me grow in reliance on You and in trust of who You are. Thank You that You truly are enough.



Living by Faith

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I
live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave
himself for me.

Galatians 2:20, NIV

“I live by faith in the Son of God...” And Paul mentions two specific things: Jesus loved us, and He gave Himself for us. We’re to live by faith in Jesus, live confident in Him.

Confident in His love. “We know and rely on the love God has for us” (1 John 4:16, NIV).

Confident in the power of His sacrifice. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NIV).

We’re not alone, trying to live a good life in our own weakness. Jesus has paid our debt, cleansed and forgiven us, and restored us to relationship with God the Father.

We can live with confidence in Him today because He loves us. We can choose to live His way, with His help. And when we blow it, we can trust in His justice and not despair. He has already paid the price. He will clean and forgive us, and set us back on track with Him.

What a wonderful God!

Dear Jesus, what can I say but thank You for all You’ve done for me? Your love is more than I can comprehend. Help me grow in relationship with You, for my own benefit and so others will see Your transforming power.



Keep in Step

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25, NIV

Notice Paul doesn't just say "keep step" as in "walk beside," but "keep in step," which implies a pattern, maybe even choreography, as well as pacing.

Ordinarily we'd interpret verses about God directing our steps in terms of His leading. With dance in mind, perhaps this means more than leading us to our destination. It includes any side-steps along the way.

He's the Lord of the Dance, after all. And when couples dance, one leads and the other follows. At least when they dance well. Our challenge is to learn to follow the Leader.

What do you think of the image of the spiritual life as a dance with God? Let's "keep in step with Him."

Lord, please help me remember to listen to the music, to feel the rhythm... and to let You lead.



AUTHOR'S NOTE

Thank you for taking this journey through the Scriptures with me, and I pray the Lord has used this time to bless you. If you've found this book helpful, please share it with your friends, and consider leaving a review at Goodreads.com and/or at your favourite online store.

I'm predominantly a fiction writer, but these devotionals have been a labour of love on my blog, *Tenacity*, for many years. If you enjoy Christian fiction, I invite you to check out my novels, listed on the next page.

Special thanks to my sharp-eyed early readers, Ruth Ann Adams, Janice Dick, Russell Sketchley, and Beverlee Wamboldt. Any mistakes are my own, likely introduced while correcting other issues they found for me.

Blessings,
Janet

PS: I hope the contrast between American spelling in the Scripture quotes and Canadian in the devotional text wasn't too jarring. Bible publishers don't make Canadian versions, for some reason, and I feel strongly about not giving up my native spelling.



Janet Sketchley is an Atlantic Canadian writer whose *Redemption's Edge* Christian suspense novels have each been finalists in The Word Awards. She's also a contributor to the Hot Apple Cider inspirational anthology series.

Janet blogs about faith and books. She loves Jesus and her family, and enjoys reading, worship music, and tea. You can find Janet online at janetsketchley.ca.

Coming soon: the Green Dory Inn mystery series, set in rural Nova Scotia, Canada. My newsletter subscribers will be first to hear about this new series. Sign up at bit.ly/JanetSketchleyNews.

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