

# February Devotions

## Find Your Secret Place

“He who dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the almighty.” **(Psalm 91:1)**

The secret place is a place of peace filled with the sweet presence of the Lord. Here you will find a retreat from “...the cares of the world...” **(Mark 4:19)** Jesus had a secret place according to scripture. “In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.” **(Mark 1:35)**

Have you found your secret place to meet with the Lord? Life can get very busy, with many distractions but what if you are missing the blessing of the Lord because it is not a priority to seek His presence. “Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.” **(Isaiah 55:6)** He is waiting for you to draw near to Him and if you do, you won’t be disappointed, He will draw near to you. Find your secret place and get in His presence and find the peace and joy that comes from seeking the Lord. “My heart has heard You say, “Come and talk with me. “And my heart responds, “Lord, I am coming.” **(Psalm 27:8 NLT)**

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, as I draw near to You, You will draw near to me. I want to set my priority to spend time in my secret place with You. Help me to avoid all the distractions that come my way. In Your name I pray. Amen

**James 4:8, Psalm 16:11**

## Groundhog Day

The roots of Groundhog Day, and although many of us may associate that with Punxsutawney Phil and the movie with Bill Murray reliving the same day over and over until he finally “gets it right,” the day is actually based on a Christian celebration called Candlemas. It marked the midpoint of winter and commemorated the presentation of Jesus in the temple 40 days after His birth. It was also the day that candles to be used in the services were brought to the temple for a blessing as they represented protection, prosperity and light.

We don't have to worry if some rodent sees his shadow, sentencing us to a prolonged winter or to being trapped in a repetitive cycle of trying to get it right. Instead, we can celebrate the Light of the World, who assures us we need never walk in darkness or fear a prolonged “winter”.

**John 8:12** reassures us that Jesus is the light of the world, and whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

**Prayer:** Praise Him for His provision and protection, declare Him as your eternal source of light.

# Joy

In Paul's letter to the church of Philippi, he wrote "Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!!" (**Philippians 4:4**)

What's astounding is that Paul wrote these words while he was shackled in prison! How can anyone be joyful under those conditions? Just dealing with daily inconveniences can chip away at our joy. Yet we are told to ALWAYS be full of joy. Is that even possible?

As we read that verse again, notice the key words "in the Lord." We are to always be full of joy *in the Lord*. This kind of joy comes from spending time with God and by depending on His strength, not our own.

Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. (**Galatians 5:22-23**) When we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit starts producing this kind of spiritual fruit in us. We can have joy even in hard times because joy doesn't come from external circumstances. Ultimate joy comes from Christ who dwells in us through the Holy Spirit.

So if you haven't been feeling joyful lately, draw close to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen you. And reflect on David's words, "I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done. I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praises to your name, O Most High." (**Psalms 9:1**)

Prayer Points:

- Thank God for all the blessings He's given you and as you shift your focus to Him with a grateful heart, your joy in the Lord will increase.
- If your joy is lacking, spend time in the Lord's presence. Ask Him to reveal what's standing in the way so that with God's guidance you can begin to reclaim your joy.
- Ask the God of hope to fill you with joy and peace as you trust in Him so you will overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## All You Need is Love

The Beatles actually had it right - they just missed the mark on the source and expression of love. In fact, the *eros* type of love they sang about isn't even mentioned in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the main Hebrew word for love is *hesed*, and it speaks of benevolence and lovingkindness - a mutual love that is most closely related to the Greek word *charis* which is grace. The four kinds of love listed in the New Testament are: *storge* - which is a family kind of love and is almost always combined with another word, often in a negative way (unloving); *philia* - which is more affectionate, as in friendship, and is more about feelings; and then there's *agape* - the unconditional, sacrificial love that we can only experience and demonstrate in God and in His power.

This is *real* love, and with that we have the foundation for everything we need.

“By this the love of God was displayed in us, in that God has sent His [One and] only begotten Son [the One who is truly unique, the only One of His kind] into the world so that we might live through Him.” (1 John 4:9, Amplified Bible) If He says that *in Him* we *live* and *move* and *exist* (Acts 17:28) then what else could we possibly need?

**Prayer:** Thank You, Father, for Your incomparable, everlasting, unconditional, life-giving love for us. You truly are all we really need.

## Hope In the World

“How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” **(Psalm 119:103)**

Your word has opened my eyes to Your loving kindness. Your word gives me instructions on how to live a life that is pleasing to You. The wisdom of Your word is solid, unchanging and relevant to the culture. Your word has the power to transform and renew one’s mind. Your word has the power to open spiritual blind eyes. Your word has the power to heal. You have revealed yourself through your word. Your word is like a hidden treasure. The more digging into the word, the more treasure you find. “Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path. **(Psalm 119:105)** “You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.” **(Psalm 119:114)** “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word. **(Psalm 119:14-16)**

This is just a little taste of Psalm 119. It is so rich and so beautiful. Such a treasure to behold. Here’s more. “Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. **(Psalm 119:89-90)**

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, I love the beauty of Your word. My hope is in Your word and I want to spend more time finding the treasures and mysteries of Your word. Thank You for putting this on my heart and I am asking You to give me a deeper desire for Your word, In Your name I pray, Amen.

**Romans 12:2, Acts 26:18, Luke 5:13, John 1:14, Matthew 13:44**

## To Do Lists

We can become so preoccupied with our “to do” lists that we find ourselves running on autopilot without stopping to intentionally, thoughtfully analyze and prioritize our time. This can easily turn into the tyranny of the urgent or the rut of the habitual. But if we will just push pause and ask God to direct us, everything else will fall into place. He tells us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and He is eagerly waiting for us to call on Him. He is the First and the Last; He is the Creator of life itself; He has all the answers! Seek Him first and depend on Him to guide your steps and to supply your needs.

I really like the way The Message puts the next two passages:

**Ephesians 5:16-17** “So watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times! Don’t live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants.”

**Isaiah 58:11** “I will always show you where to go. I’ll give you a full life in the emptiest of places - firm muscles, strong bones. You’ll be like a well-watered garden, a gurgling spring that never runs dry.”

Put seeking Him as the first thing on your “to do” list every day and everything else will fall into place.

**Prayer:** Thank you, Father, for directing my steps each day. I put You first in my life, may every decision and action reflect my heart and desire to honor You first. In Jesus’ Name. Amen

## Marvelous Light

“But you are a chosen generation,

A royal priesthood,

A holy nation,

His own special people,

That you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” **(1 Peter 2:9)**

Shout it out loud: You are chosen, you are a royal priesthood, you are holy. You are special. You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. You have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. You are a child of God the Father. These words are true for everyone who has been born again. God has always loved you, even when you were walking in darkness. “...Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” **(Esther 4:14b)** “You are the salt of the earth.” **(Matthew 5:13a)** “You are the light of the world.” **(Matthew 5:14a)** “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify you Father in heaven.” **(Matthew 5:16)** Called out of darkness...yes, He called you out of the darkness. Jesus spoke to a crowd of people and said “...I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” **(John 8:12)** Praise the Lord for His “Marvelous Light”.

**Prayer:** I thank You that You called me out of my darkness and opened my spiritual eyes to the light of Jesus Christ. I give You all the honor and glory for a new life of walking in Your “Marvelous Light.”

**Ephesians 1:13, Revelation 5:9, John 3:16**

## Life In Christ

Whether you're a new Christian or you've been a believer for years, Paul shares some valuable guidance in his letter to the church of Colosse that applies to us all.

“And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow Him. Let your roots grow down into Him and let your lives be built on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.” **(Colossians 2:6-7)**

As believers, our top priority needs to be our *continued* acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the leader over all that we are, say, and do. And then we must accept His leadership daily by being rooted, built up and fortified in our faith.

Jesus wants to be involved in our lives as He guides us and helps us with every decision we make and challenge we face.

Here are three ways we can live for Christ:

1. by committing our life and submitting our will to Him **(Romans 12:1-2)**
2. by seeking to learn from Him and to learn more about Him, His life and His teachings **(Colossians 3:16)**
3. by recognizing and using the Holy Spirit's power within us. **(Acts 1:8 & Galatians 5:22-23)**.

Prayer Points:

- Ask God to instill in you the desire to continue following Jesus daily and make Him leader over every decision and challenge.
- Seek first the Kingdom of God by using Jesus's character as your life pattern.
- Acknowledge the Holy Spirit's power within you. He will intercede by praying for you according to God's will when you don't know what to pray.



## Ask For Help

“The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.” **(Proverbs 15:29)**

It is easy to get wrapped up in worry and anxious thoughts. Just turn on the news or look at your phone and the news can trigger emotions into high gear. Maybe you are stressed over your family, your job, your marriage, your health, your financial situation and the list goes on and on. Jesus didn't promise that life would get easier. In fact, he said “...Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” **(John 16:33 NLT)** But, we can have peace, even in the storms of life that shake us. If you put your trust in the Lord, you can rest assured that Jesus is there every moment of every trial. He is “...a friend that sticks closer than a brother.” **(Proverbs 18:24b)** Most importantly, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.” **(Hebrew 13:8)** The Lord knows what you need before you ask. It's ok to ask for help. Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. **(Matthew 7:7-8)** Jesus is the rock you can lean on. You are loved with an everlasting love. Jesus took your place on the cross and died for your sins and my sins. If you willingly surrender your heart to Him and let him walk with you, He will keep you “...under his wings.” **(Psalm 91:4)** When you pray, you can be confident that He hears your prayers and will answer your prayers. The Apostle Paul, said it this way: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” **(Philippians 4:6)**

**Prayer:** Lord, thank You that You are my helper. I praise You for being my “Rock”. Amen

**Matthew 6:8, Psalm 18:46, Jeremiah 31:3, Peter 2:24, Psalm 91:4, 1 John 5:4**

## Give it Up!

Somehow the human race has a habit of finding ways to twist things that are intended for our good into some form of self-indulgence. Mardi Gras, French for Fat Tuesday, was originally a day to consume all kinds of fatty foods before the period of fasting during Lent; but it was also a time of self-examination, awareness, and repentance for those things that would hinder spiritual growth. Somehow society embraced the indulgence and abandoned the introspections.

As we reflect on the magnitude of what Jesus “gave up” for us, pray that we would approach the season of Lent with gratitude, humility, and a desire to give up anything He reveals to us that would hinder our walk and our relationship with Him.

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” **Romans 12:1-2** New Living Translation

**Prayer:** Father, I present myself to You as a living sacrifice. Thank You that You see me as Your precious child. Thank You, Jesus, for sacrificing Your life that I may be made righteous in the eyes of Father God and be called His Beloved. To You be the Glory in heaven and on earth. Amen.