

7-DAY DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL



LET GOD
SET YOU FREE
FROM SHAME

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Beloved Child

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"—1 John 3:1

Denise grew up feeling unloved and unwanted. Her mom was a drifter who abandoned the family when Denise was in first grade. Her father, a man already prone to rage, drank heavily.

He would scream at her each night when he came home drunk. He pelted her with words that might as well have been stones. Ugly. Worthless. Stupid. Unwanted. Useless.

Though Denise tried hard to please her dad, nothing was ever good enough. When she grew up, she moved to another state. She met a man she loved and married him. They had three kids together.

She and her husband attended church together. Denise even taught a Sunday School class to five-year-olds. But she couldn't shake the feeling that God was deeply disappointed in her.

Lily, an older woman at church, took Denise under her wing. When Denise shared her fears that God felt let down, Lily said, "Your identity doesn't come from what your earthly dad said about you. It comes from God the Father and He sees you as His beloved child."

God, sometimes past wounds make it hard for me to believe who I am. Help me remember I am Your beloved child. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. Have you ever had someone in your life that berated you? What did they say?

2. Who has taken you under their wing? What truth have they spoken over you?

3. What would you say to Denise to encourage her?

Hiding Out

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."—Psalm 51: 10

Frank listened as an argument broke out between his two kids. One had lied, and that caused their fighting. When they brought him into the situation, Frank sent his son, who was telling the truth, out to play.

"But you," He turned to his son, Travis, "have to sit in the corner until you confess what you've done and tell the truth."

Travis stomped over to the corner, and Frank waited. While Travis could be stubborn, Frank was confident that the boredom from sitting in the corner would eventually win out.

But as the minutes turned to hours, Frank grew frustrated. Show me how to handle this, Lord, he prayed before going to sit in the corner beside his son.

"Travis, you know how our dog, Daisy, likes to knock over the trash can?"

Travis turned to look at his dad. "Then she goes and hides."

"Yep, but what happens when she comes back out again? I forgive her. I do that because I love her. I love you too, and that's why I want you to tell the truth."

"You won't be mad?" Travis asked, warily.

"It makes me sad when you lie, but not angry." Frank waited, hoping the words would be taken to heart.

"Because you love me?"

"Because I love you," Frank answered in his most reassuring tone.

Sometimes, it's tempting to hide out from God when you mess up. You might think that God will be angry with you for what you've done. But God is filled with compassion for His children when they confess.

God, I admit that I've sinned by (your sin). I confess my shame and rebellion. Please create in me a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit in me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What's your first reaction when you do something that you know is wrong?

2. Have you ever struggled to know how to handle a situation in a Godly way? What did you do?

3. What do you need to confess to God this week?

The Moment of Betrayal

But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same—Matthew 26:35.

When Jesus talked of His coming death, it was Peter who piped up first. "I'll never deny you, even if I die with you." He proclaims this confidently, thumping his hand over his heart.

But just a short while later, Peter goes back on his word. Not just once or twice, but three times. Three times, he has the chance to proudly proclaim that he knows who Jesus is. Yet each time, he betrays the Rabbi and his friend.

Can you relate? Have you ever betrayed what you knew to be true just so you stayed safe? Maybe you didn't stand up for that kid who was getting bullied. You just turned a blind eye.

Perhaps you didn't turn off that pornographic ad when it came across your phone screen. Maybe you didn't comfort a friend struggling with depression because it would mean you had to relive your most painful moments.

Betrayal flows through our veins. Like Peter, we're left to weep bitterly on the doorstep of failure. But this is not the end of the story. Jesus makes an interesting statement when he predicts Peter's coming betrayal. He says:

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32).

Did you catch that? Jesus used the words "when you have turned back"...failure doesn't have to be a permanent destination. You don't have to live in the shadow of your shame for the rest of time. Jesus has paid the price to set you free and enable you to walk in victory.

Jesus, thank You for the Cross! Thank You for holding onto me even when I fail. Please strengthen me. Help me remember that failure isn't fatal, and it doesn't get the last word. In Your name, Amen.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. How have you betrayed what you've known is true? How did you feel afterward?

2. Do you feel as if your failure is a permanent destination? How does this affect your relationship with God?

3. What would you say to Peter if you found him weeping on the doorstep?

Facing the End

"The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay"—Matthew 28:5-6.

The news spreads among the disciples: Jesus has risen! When Jesus appears in the flesh, the news turns into a celebration. Joyous wonder envelops the group of His followers.

But rewind just three days ago and you'd find anything but joy. There's only pain. Suffering. The feeling of abandonment. The crushing weight of shame. The burn of the thorns. The sting of betrayal. The sound of flesh being ripped from bone. The bitter disappointment. The questions...

Why?! I thought I was following the Messiah...

Was He who He said He was?

He was coming to restore Israel's kingdom...what happened?

In moments like these, the questions swirl without answers. And you're left feeling like this is the end. The end of your life. The end of everything good. The end of joy.

But perhaps that's the paradox of the Crucifixion. What feels like the end is actually the beginning. The beginning of the Holy Spirit's work. The birth of the church. The start of a beautiful eternity.

The next time the enemy whispers in your ear, "This is your end," you remind him that so was the Cross...until three days later. This is the hope of Christians everywhere—that death does not have the final say. That death is not all powerful. That it isn't a foe we have to fear.

It's just another new beginning.

God, thank You for Jesus and His sacrifice. Because of it, I can live with hope and comfort. When all I can see is the end, please remind me once again that You have a knack for turning the end into a beautiful beginning. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What questions are troubling you in your own life?

2. What looks like the end right now?

3. How can the Cross give you hope that one day God will redeem your story?

Peace Be with You

A week later, his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you"—John 20:26.

After Jesus was crucified, His disciples worried they would be the next targets. So, they all gathered in a room and hid out. They locked the doors, turned off the lights, and waited.

Then Jesus shows up. He doesn't knock politely at the door. He doesn't announce His presence loudly. He simply shows up in the middle of the room and proclaims, "Peace be with you!"

It's hard to blame the disciples—we all face situations we want to hide from. Maybe you're waiting for the test results from the doctor and all you want to do is avoid his calls.

Perhaps you've just learned your spouse is cheating and you don't want to come home. Maybe there's a warrant out for your son's arrest and you want to hide from your community.

Whatever happens, you can rest secure knowing that Jesus is with you right now. What He said to His disciples is the same thing He's saying to you, "Peace be with you!"

God, I feel overwhelmed by fear and shame. Everything feels like it's falling apart, and I'm scared. I'm ready to hide out. Please remind me You're here. Grant me the peace that comes from Your presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What is it that you want to hide from right now?

2. What would peace look like for you?

3. How does knowing that God is with you make you feel?

Legacy of Hope

"One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts."—Psalm 145:4

When Sean was young, his mother committed suicide. She'd had untreated anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder following her time as a soldier overseas. Unable to get the help she needed, she ended her life.

In the years that followed, Sean struggled with depression. He often felt worthless and wondered if the world would be better without him. He was terrified of these thoughts and afraid he'd make the same decision as his mother. So, Sean reached out to an older professor when he was in college.

The sixty-year-old woman became like a mother to him. She explained that legacies can be filled with pain. "But with God's help, you can change the legacy, creating a new one filled with hope."

Maybe you're like Sean. Perhaps your family members have struggled with darkness. It could be the pain of teenage pregnancies, depression, pornography, poverty, or physical abuse.

Whatever your family's struggle, God can redeem you and your loved ones. He can bring freedom and healing, no matter how dark your situation might seem.

God, please be the author of my family's comeback story. Set us free from sins that have plagued us for generations. Heal us from this pain. Send sweet mentors to walk beside us as we heal. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What generation struggles are causing you pain?

2. Who has God sent to speak truth over your pain?

3. What situation is making you pray for a comeback?

Your Heavenly Father Loves You

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling."—Psalm 68:5

Samuel, an Old Testament prophet, was called to anoint the next king of Israel. God had told him that the next king would be one of Jesse's sons. So, Samuel had Jesse present his sons.

One by one, the young men came before Samuel, but God selected none of the boys. Finally, Samuel turned to Jesse. "Do you have any more sons?"

At this moment, Jesse mentions the youngest one—a boy named David. When David is presented, Samuel recognizes that God has chosen him.

His father overlooked David. Perhaps you can relate. Maybe your dad provided for all your material needs but didn't take an interest in your life. Perhaps you never knew your dad because he abandoned you before you were born. Or maybe your father was violent and left you with deep emotional scars.

Sometimes, earthly fathers don't protect, provide for, and nurture their children. But like David, you can take comfort because your Heavenly Father delights in you. Even when your dad overlooks you, God sees you. When your dad rejects you, God accepts you. When your dad hurts you, God heals you. He is a good Father who loves you completely.

God, thank You for calling me Your child. You see me. You accept me. You heal all my wounds. Help me rest in Your love today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What is your relationship with your father like?

2. What wounds has your father left you with? How do these wounds affect how you relate to God?

3. What would you say to David when he realized his father left him out?
