

TRUSTING GOD
day by day

365 DAILY DEVOTIONS



JOYCE MEYER

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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NEW YORK BOSTON NASHVILLE

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January 1

Do Your Best with What You Have

You shall not covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

EXODUS 20:17

How do you feel about your life? Do you like it, love it, and enjoy it, or do you hate it and wish you had a different one than you have? Do you look at other people and their lives and wish you were them and had their lives? Do you want to look the way they look, own what they own, have their career or their family? Or are you happy with the life God has given you?

In the Bible, wanting what others have is called coveting, and it is forbidden by God. He even included it in the Ten Commandments. You are never going to have anyone else's life, so wanting it is a waste of time. You won't look like them, either, so learn to do the best you can with what you have to work with.

I have adopted a new phrase lately, and it is helping me to deal with reality and not waste my time being upset about things I cannot do anything about. I have been saying, "It is what it is!" Somehow, that is a reality check for me, and I quickly realize I need to deal with things the way they are, not the way I wish they were.

Nobody has a perfect life, and it is entirely possible that if you want someone else's life, they are busy wanting someone else's, too; perhaps they even want your life. Unknown people want to be movie stars, and movie stars want privacy. The regular employee wants to be the boss, and the boss wishes he did not have so much responsibility. A single woman wants to be married, and sometimes a married woman wishes she were single. Contentment with life is not a feeling, but it is a decision we must make. Contentment does not mean that we never want to see change or improvement, but it does mean we can be happy where we are and will do the best we can with what we have. It also means we will maintain an attitude that allows us to enjoy the gift of life.

Trust in Him If God wants you to have what someone else has, you can trust Him to bring it to you, but first you must be happy with what you have and do the best you can with it.

January 2

Talk About the Good Stuff

But I tell you, on the day of judgment men will have to give account for every idle (inoperative, nonworking) word they speak.

MATTHEW 12:36

It seems to me that we talk about how we feel more than practically anything else. We feel good or bad, happy or sad, excited or discouraged, and a thousand other things. The inventory of the various ways we feel is almost endless. Feelings are ever-changing, usually without notification. These feelings don't need our permission to fluctuate; they merely seem to do as they please for no specific reason we can identify. We have all experienced going to bed feeling just fine physically and emotionally, only to wake up the next morning feeling tired and irritable. "Why? Why do I feel this way?" we ask ourselves, and then we usually begin to tell anyone who will listen how we feel. It is interesting to note that we tend to talk a lot more about our negative feelings than we do our positive ones.

If I wake up feeling energetic and excited about the day, I rarely announce it to everyone I come in contact with; however, if I feel tired and discouraged, I want to tell everyone. It has taken me years to learn that talking about how I feel increases the intensity of those feelings. So it seems to me that we should keep quiet about the negative feelings and talk about the positive ones.

You can always tell God how you feel and ask for His help and strength, but talking about negative feelings just to be talking does no good at all. If negative feelings persist, asking for prayer or seeking

advice based on biblical truth is a good thing, but once again I want to stress that talking just to be talking is useless.

If we have to wait to see how we feel before we know if we can enjoy the day, then we are giving feelings control over us. But if we are willing to make right choices regardless of how we feel, God will always be faithful to give us the strength to do so.

Trust in Him How are you feeling? If your feelings are positive, tell someone. If they are negative, tell God, and trust Him to work things out. Regardless of how you feel, choose to enjoy your day!

January 3

Success Starts with Your Thoughts

We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:5 NLT

Nobody is successful in any venture just by wishing they would be. Successful people make a plan and talk to themselves about that plan constantly. You can think things on purpose, and if you make what you think about match what you actually want to do, your feelings may not like it, but they will go along.

I slept great last night, and when I woke up at 5:00 a.m., I didn't feel like getting up. It was so cozy under the fluffy cover, and I felt like staying right there. But I had a plan. I had decided how many hours I would write today, and in order to do that I had to get up. I thought, *I am going to get up now*, and I got up!

Do you make an effort to choose your thoughts, or do you just meditate on whatever falls into your head, even if it is in total disagreement

with what you have said you want out of life? When your thoughts are going in a wrong direction, do you capture them and submit them to Christ as the Bible instructs (see 2 Cor. 10:5)?

I want to encourage you today—the good news is you can change. As I have said for years, we are in a war and the mind is the battlefield. We either win or lose our battles based on winning or losing the war in our minds. Learn to think according to the Word of God, and your emotions will start lining up with your thoughts.

If you have had years of experiencing wrong thinking and letting your emotions lead you as I did, making the change may not be easy, and it will definitely require a commitment of study, time, and effort. But the results will be worth it. Don't say, "*I am just an emotional person, and I can't help the way I feel.*" Take control. You can do it!

Trust in Him Keep your thoughts in line with the plan God has for your life—a plan to prosper you, and not to harm you (see Jer. 29:11). Take control of your thoughts by trusting them to Him.

January 4

You're Not Built for Guilt

Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own.

PHILIPPIANS 3:12

Making people feel guilty about anything is not God's mode of operation. The source of guilt is the devil. He is the accuser of the brethren, according to the Bible (see Rev. 12:10). God will convict us of wrong choices and actions, but He never tries to make us feel guilty. Guilt presses us down, but godly conviction brings an opportunity to change and progress.

We are not built for guilt. God never intended His children to be loaded down with guilt, so our systems don't handle it well at all. Had God wanted us to feel guilty, He would not have sent Jesus to redeem us from guilt. He bore, or paid for, our iniquities and the guilt they cause (see Isa. 53:6 and 1 Pet. 2:24–25). As believers in Jesus Christ and as sons and daughters of God, we have been set free from the power of sin (see Rom. 6:6–10). That doesn't mean we'll never sin, but it does mean that when we do, we can admit it, receive forgiveness, and be free from guilt. Our journey with God toward right behavior and holiness is progressive, and if we have to drag the guilt from past mistakes along with us, we'll never make progress toward true freedom and joy. Perhaps this is the main reason why so few people actually enter into and enjoy the inheritance promised through relationship with Jesus Christ.

Your future has no room for your past. How much time do you waste feeling guilty? It is important that you think about this, because spending time dwelling on past mistakes is something God has told us not to do. No one is perfect. The good news is Jesus came for those who were sick (imperfect), not those who were well (perfect).

Trust in Him What triggers your struggle with guilt (when you make a mistake, or when you're thinking about your past, when you see someone who was a part of your life during that period, etc.)? Pray specifically about that incident, and trust God to set you free.

January 5

Torn Between Right and Wrong

I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns]. ROMANS 7:15

We often feel like a war is going on within us. One part of us (the inner person) wants to do what we know to be right, and another part (the outer person) wants to do what is wrong. The wrong thing can feel right, while the right thing feels wrong. Remember, we cannot judge the moral value of any action by how we feel. Our feelings are unreliable and cannot be trusted to convey truth.

Frequently we find that we want to do right and wrong at the same time. Our renewed spirit craves holiness and righteousness, but the carnal (fleshly) soul still craves worldly things. Even the apostle Paul describes feeling the same way in Romans, chapter 7. Paul says that he has the intention and urge to do what is right, but he fails to carry it out. He fails to practice the good that he desires to do and instead does evil. Thankfully, by the end of the chapter, Paul has realized that only Christ can deliver him from the fleshly action, and as we continue to study his life, we learn that he developed an ability to say no to himself if what he wanted did not agree with God's Word. He learned to lean on God for strength and then use his will to choose what was right no matter how he felt. Paul said he died daily, which meant that he died to his own fleshly desires in order to glorify God (see 1 Cor. 15:31).

The truth is that we must die to ourselves if we want to genuinely and truly live the lives God has provided for us through Jesus Christ. When we are willing to live by biblical principles rather than emotion, we are dying to selfishness and will enjoy the abundant life of God. I am sure you've heard the saying, "No pain... no gain!" Every good thing in life requires an initial investment before we see the reward.

Trust in Him Pray and ask God to show you a specific area where you need to let go of selfishness. Once He shows you, don't get discouraged or be afraid—trust God to change you!

January 6

There's Great Value in Variety

Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is for one to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment in all the labor in which he labors under the sun all the days which God gives him—for this is his [allotted] part.

ECCLESIASTES 5:18

If we do the same thing over and over, sooner or later we're going to get bored. We don't have to wait for something nice to happen to us, we can be aggressive and do something nice for ourselves. For many of you, I know this is a new thought that may seem foreign and even unspiritual. But I can assure you that it is part of God's plan. You can create variety, and it will keep your life more exciting.

I sat with my computer on my lap for about four hours this morning and then stopped for a while to do some other things I needed to do. When I went back to my writing, I decided to sit in a different part of the house just for variety. I chose a place that had plenty of light where I could look out the window. Simple little things like this cost nothing, but they are very valuable.

No day needs to be ordinary if we realize the gift God is giving us when He gives us another day to live and enjoy. An extraordinary attitude can quickly turn an ordinary day into an amazing adventure. Jesus said He came so that we might have and enjoy life (see John 10:10). If we refuse to enjoy it, then it's no one's fault but our own.

I would like to suggest that you take responsibility for your joy and never again give anyone else the job of keeping you happy. Add a little variety to your life—break up your routine, do something different, and so on. When you do, expect God to meet you and help make your ordinary . . . extraordinary!

Trust in Him What are two specific things you're going to do differently today? Add some variety to your ordinary, daily routine, and trust that God is going to bless it.

January 7

Form New Habits

Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

God's Word teaches us that when we receive Christ as our Savior and Lord, He gives us a new nature. He gives us *His* nature. He also gives us a spirit of discipline and self-control, which is vital in allowing us to choose the ways of our new nature. He gives us a sound mind (see 2 Tim. 1:7), and that means we can think about things properly without being controlled by emotion. The way we once were passes away, and we have all the equipment we need for a brand-new way of behaving. God gives us the ability and offers to help us, but we are not puppets and God will not manipulate us. We must choose spirit over flesh and right over wrong. Our renewed spirits will then control our souls and bodies or, to say it another way, the inner person will control the outer person.

Without God's help we have difficulty doing things in moderation. We frequently eat too much, spend too much money, have too much entertainment, and talk too much. We are excessive in our actions because we behave emotionally. And after the thing is done and cannot be undone, we regret doing it. But we can choose to form new habits, not doing something just because we feel like it but instead doing what will produce the best result in the end.

We do not have to live in regret. God gives us His Spirit to enable us to make right and wise choices. He urges us, guides and leads us,

but we still have to cast the deciding vote. If you have been casting the wrong vote, all you need to do is change your vote. Forming new habits will require making a decision to not do what you feel like doing unless it agrees with God's will.

Trust in Him God wants you to live out of your new nature, not your old one. Every time you put your trust in Him and cast the deciding vote to obey, His Spirit transforms you and makes you more like Him.

January 8

Take Care of What God Has Given You

Do you not know that your body is the temple (the very sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you, Whom you have received [as a Gift] from God? You are not your own . . . 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19

What if you went to a church and it was run-down? Peeling paint, broken doors, and smudged windows that didn't let the light in? You'd wonder about the pastor, wouldn't you? The church is his instrument for celebrating the glory of God, yet if he doesn't respect the church enough to take the time to keep it in good condition, what does this say about his relationship with God?

The same question applies to your own body—taking care of the body God has given you is the most important kind of “home maintenance” you can do! Your body is the home of your spirit where God dwells. To do the work you were meant to do, you need to keep it in shape.

I still have to remind myself of this. Once I hurt my voice by speaking in a seminar with an extremely sore throat. That morning when I woke up, I knew I shouldn't speak, but I thought about the disappointment of the audience if I didn't. So I forced myself to speak, but the next day I could not make a sound. I couldn't the next day, either, or the day after that. The condition continued, and I began to worry. I

finally went to the doctor, who told me I had damaged my vocal cords. He said each time we push ourselves beyond reasonable limits, we do some damage, and if we do it too often, we get to a point where we can't recover. He said it might reach a point where I could not teach at all if I did not respect my voice and take care of it.

I nearly jeopardized my entire public ministry! If I had permanently damaged my voice, I would have wound up helping far fewer people and derailing my life's calling. Now I'm more careful about protecting the tools I need to do God's work—my voice, my mind, my heart, my emotions, and my body. Please take care of yourself so you can glorify God and do all that He has intended for you to do.

Trust in Him How can you take better care of your body—the place where God dwells? Show God you love Him and trust Him by taking good care of your temple.

January 9

Making Right Choices Makes Life So Much Better

Strive to enter by the narrow door [force yourselves through it], for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able.

LUKE 13:24

Like most of us, you are probably tempted to take all the easy paths, but God's path is rarely easy. The Bible describes those other paths—the ones that lead to destruction—as “broad” because not a lot of effort is required to remain on them. We are encouraged by God to take the narrow path, the more difficult one, which is also the one that leads to life.

We have to make a strong effort to push through the negativity in the world, but if we will do our part, God will always do His. Not everyone is willing to make the effort. They are addicted to ease and simply flow with their feelings. Jesus died for us so we could have a wonderful, abundant

life that is filled with peace, joy, power, success, and every good thing. He was willing to go to the cross and pay for our sins even though physically, mentally, and emotionally it was very difficult. We, too, must be willing to do what is right, and our reward will surely come. God's grace will always enable us to do the right thing if we are willing to do so.

Study the Word of God regularly, and then when trouble comes, you will already have your spiritual tank full of fuel that will enable you to make right choices. Don't be the kind of person who prays or has time for God only when you feel like it or have a disaster. Seek God because you know you cannot navigate safely in this world without Him.

You and I can let our minds drift aimlessly day after day, and we can be controlled by our emotions, or we can strive to gird up our minds, choose our thoughts carefully, and manage our emotions. God has set before us life and death, good and evil, and has given us the responsibility of making the choice (see Deut. 30:19). Choose life!

Trust in Him What choice are you currently facing? What path will you choose? Remember, the right choice won't always be easy, but you can trust God, Who gives you strength and rewards you, to help you do it.

January 10

Looking Nice Is Not a Sin

Let not yours be the [merely] external adorning with [elaborate] interweaving and knotting of the hair, the wearing of jewelry, or changes of clothes; but let it be the inward adorning and beauty of the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible and unfading charm of a gentle and peaceful spirit, which . . . is very precious in the sight of God.

1 PETER 3:3-4

Many Christians misunderstand the challenge to value inner beauty over outer appearance, as stated in the above passage. They take the

concept to an extreme, believing that any effort to look nice is a sin. What Peter is encouraging us to do, however, is to resist the temptation to confuse outer beauty for what is most important, which is a gentle and peaceful spirit. In other words, don't be vain or put all your confidence in how you look, because God focuses on what is inside.

But Peter doesn't say the only way to be virtuous is to wear a brown sack, stop bathing, and give away all your possessions! True, a few people have found God by renouncing all material possessions, but I think in general it is much harder to find *anything* if you suffer from the constant distractions of discomfort, or if you go out of your way to be as unattractive as possible and get mistreated by others because they think you are a religious fanatic. God cares most that you go forth clothed in righteousness. But righteousness *plus* a nice outfit never hurt anyone! If people see that you respect yourself, they'll respect you, too.

Like everything else in life, it is a question of balance. Keep the big picture in mind. Ask yourself, "*What is the work that God has put me on earth to do?*" Then decide what amount of attention you should pay to how you look and feel to get the maximum energy, health, and charisma you need to do that work as successfully as possible.

Trust in Him Do you spend an appropriate amount of time taking care of the body and spirit God has given you? He wants you to look your best, inside and out. Do your part to be a good steward of what He gave you, and trust Him to let you know if you are out of balance.

January 11

Nevertheless

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever.

ISAIAH 9:1 NLT

I once read a book that was based entirely on the word *nevertheless*. It taught the reader to take every problem in his or her life, look at it honestly, and then say, “nevertheless,” and find some offsetting positive thing in the individual’s life that brought the problem into perspective.

It might sound something like this: “*I have a lot of hard work to get accomplished in the next two weeks; nevertheless, after that my schedule is much more open, and I will be able to have some fun and get some extra rest.*” All mothers get weary from time to time and might say, “*My kids are driving me crazy; nevertheless, I’m so blessed to have these children in my life, and I know there are families who can’t have children at all.*” A father who has to work two jobs to make ends meet might say, “*I am so tired of working all the time; nevertheless, I am thankful that God has provided me with jobs.*”

No matter who we are or what our challenge in life is, there is always a “nevertheless”—some positive thing we can look at or talk about that brings the rest of life into perspective. Why don’t you try it? The next time you are tempted to complain about your life in any way, go ahead and state your complaint, and then say, “nevertheless,” and find something positive about your life to offset the complaint.

Trust in Him No matter what you are going through in life, you can trust God to be with you. Think about your current situation and find your “nevertheless.” Say it out loud to encourage yourself by finding the positive in every situation.

January 12

When to Start and When to Stop

TO EVERYTHING there is a season, and a time for every matter or purpose under heaven . . .

ECCLESIASTES 3:1

We often study the *steps* of Jesus, but fail to study the *stops* of Jesus. We all need to learn when to stop. Jesus stopped what He was doing in order to listen to people and help them. He stopped to rest, to have dinner with friends, to make wine for a wedding, and to do lots of other simple but important things. One of my biggest problems for many years was that I simply did not know when to stop.

My chiropractor has told me to stop every forty-five minutes when I am writing, to get up and stretch out the muscles in my back so I don't end up in pain. But when I am in a flow, it is so hard to stop! If we don't know when to stop, we will end up with regrets later.

When Jesus visited Mary and Martha, Mary knew when to stop, but Martha didn't. Mary sat at Jesus' feet so she would not miss the moment, but Martha just kept working (see Luke 10:38–41). I wonder how many times in my life I missed the moment because I would not stop working. I know I missed moments with my children when they were small because I valued work over playing with them.

Ecclesiastes tells us there is a time for everything, and that everything is beautiful in its time. Work is beautiful, but if we work when it is time to play, then work is no longer beautiful. It can create a stress that has the ability to destroy our health. Play is beautiful, but if we play when we should be working, then play becomes a lack of discipline that can destroy us. A good life is all about balance. We have to know when to start and when to stop.

Trust in Him Psalm 62:8 tells us we can trust God at all times because He is our refuge. A refuge is a safe place where we can rest from busyness and worry. Take time to stop and let Him be your refuge.