

Timeless

LIVING EVERY DAY IN THE TIMELESS TRUTHS OF HIS GRACE

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Introduction

Last week I had a conversation with a psychology professor from an eastern university whose special area of interest is people's attitudes and thought processes regarding physical fitness. "What do you think is the number-one reason people give for not exercising?" he challenged me. I offered several answers. "Wrong, wrong, and wrong," he replied. "By far the biggest reason we hear is that people say they don't have time."

I guess I should have thought of that, since it's my favorite excuse. And to be honest, it's an excuse, not a real reason. Truthfully, I can find time for anything I think is important. I never have trouble finding or making time for things I like.

Why don't people read their Bibles or devotional materials? You know the answer—it's the same. God's wonderful Word won't jump into your brain. His book lies quietly where you put it last, and it won't open up and yield its treasures of wisdom, guidance, and strength until you choose to pick it up.

How can you change your personal life patterns to have more God in your day? Here are some simple choices: (1) Put your Bible next to your favorite chair. (2) Use the buddy system. Just as you're more likely to work out if you have a partner, having a devotion partner cuts in half the likelihood that you'll forget your devotion or procrastinate. (3) Keep the Bible readings or devotions short as you're building the habit.

I hope that's why you like Grace Moments—they are Scripture-based, down-to-earth, and short. It is my great pleasure, and the pleasure of our contributing writers, to provide you with devotions for another year of God's grace.

Pastor Maule Jeske

January

"THE LORD HIMSELF GOES BEFORE YOU
AND WILL BE WITH YOU; HE WILL NEVER LEAVE
YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU.
DO NOT BE AFRAID; DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED."
DEUTERONOMY 31:8

January 1

What did you do right?
Pastor Mark Jeske

Did you do anything right last year?

No, really. I'm serious. It's good to push yourself to improve, and the beginning of January is the best time for personal tune-ups, but you can overdo self-criticism to the point where you focus only on your weaknesses and failings.

You are *not* a loser. God did not make a piece of junk when he made you. As we stand on the crack between two years, it's a great time to reflect on what God did for you in the past year, but you might also recall the things you did right. The Spirit of the Lord who planted faith in your heart will also produce righteous fruits. **"God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and self-discipline"** (2 Timothy 1:7).

Itemize five things that you're proud of doing—kindness shown to a struggler, gifts given freely, a listening ear and open heart to a friend in trouble, patience and a tight lip with a cranky coworker, or words of praise to one who hears little of that kind of talk. You are called to be salt and light in a dark and unsavory world. But get this—God promises to infuse you with the wisdom and strength of his Spirit to get 'er done.

January 2

I'm afraid of death

Pastor Mark Jeske

Death is creepy. Every film that calls itself a *horror* movie has death in it. A casket is not a happy symbol in our culture, is it?

When people shuffle in line past a grieving family at a wake, their words usually sound sad. "I'm so sorry." "My deepest sympathy." "How hard this must be for you." People put on black clothes to show how sad they are. We look grave because we're thinking of the grave. How can we not dread this experience for our loved ones or for ourselves?

David was a brave man, maybe the bravest in the whole Bible. But death scared him too: **"My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me"** (Psalm 55:4). Death seems to make it certain that the body will never move again, that the heart will never beat nor the lungs breathe again. The mind will never think again nor feel any emotion again. Death seems final, the final blow, Satan's last laugh.

Only the events of Holy Week can change that fear into confidence. Jesus' death fixed everything that is wrong in the world as he accepted the blame and consequences for a world of evil. His resurrection demonstrated that his atoning death was successful and that life and immortality now belong to all believers.

He won. We win too. Fear, begone!
