

set *free* by  
**GRACE**

Daily Reminders  
of God's Love

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# Introduction

At the restaurant where I worked in my student days, one of the waitresses sighed one day. “I wish I had faith,” she said. “I really would like to believe in God.” But if all she did was sigh now and then, nothing would ever change.

Where does faith come from? How can a small faith become a strong faith? God has the answer. **“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ”** (Romans 10:17). It is contact with the Word of God that makes you more knowledgeable, more confident, more secure, more connected, more passionate, more Christ-like in your behaviors, and more armored against Satan’s attacks. Only the Word of God can help you find the roots of your origin, find the purpose and meaning for your life, and find certainty for eternal life in heaven.

It is only the Word of God that assures you of God’s unconditional love for you; the free and full forgiveness of your evil words, thoughts, and actions; and the incredible works of God in human history on your behalf. Only the Word of God can guide you in choosing how to please God with your life and find joy in service over self.

My hope is that these Grace Moments, which are a taste of the Word for each day, will encourage you as you serve God and that through them the Word will do its wondrous work in your heart of strengthening your faith in our wonderful Savior Jesus.

*Pastor Maule JEske*

january

“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

*Philippians 3:13,14*

January 1

## Jesus' resolution

Linda Buxa

As far as resolutions go, I think Jesus had the strangest one. **“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem”** (Luke 9:51).

Now, I'm guessing your resolutions are all about how you are going to decrease your suffering and improve your life. Because January 1 is a clean slate, you woke up excited and hopeful that this year—*finally!*—you would get things under control.

From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, God knew his relationship with you was broken—and your life would be eternally out of control. There is no way you could exercise enough, be sorry enough, organize enough, or earn your own salvation enough to change your hopeless situation. So he gave Jesus the job. As he lived on earth, Jesus resolved that—even though he started his task seemingly weak in a manger—he would finish strong to the cross.

Our resolutions fizzle out because we allow ourselves to be distracted. Jesus stayed focused, resolving to increase his personal suffering so he could improve your life. The moment he said, “It is finished,” he became the only one ever to keep a resolution perfectly. And in that moment, your life came back under control, because you were put back on God's side.

Now, not only is every year a clean slate; every morning is too. **“Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness”** (Lamentations 3:22,23). Happy New Year!

January 2

# Hurt by the church

Jason Nelson

As I've made my rounds in life, I've run into some hurting people. None with festering wounds quite like those hurt by their church. The circumstances vary, but when they needed it most, the ministry of God's grace in its various forms was withheld from them by their church. They were disfellowshipped, shunned, made to humiliate themselves publicly, denied sacred rites, or given an irrelevant penance to perform. These are high hurdles for the weakest people to clear in order to satisfy the *true believers*.

A woman caught in adultery was almost killed by her church. The rules said that such a grievous sin was punishable by death and the fatal pummeling could be a group activity. That group taunted the bowed-low Jesus: "What do you say, rabbi, you want in on this?" Then Mercy stood up. With God's authority Jesus said, "**Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her**" (John 8:7). No one hung around to take him up on the offer. Jesus said, "**Neither do I condemn you . . . go now and leave your life of sin**" (verse 11). She did and never stopped following him.

It is amazing that I have met most of these people in a church, not the church that hurt them but one that helped them heal because the love of Jesus predominates everything there. This is praiseworthy evidence that God's grace, in its various forms, will trump anyone's foolish mistakes, bind up a broken heart, heal all wounds, and redirect a wayward soul.