



Devotions for Teens by Teens

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE • SAINT LOUIS

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to
TKD, Jeannette, Mark,
Rich, Marge, Cindy,
and the many people
who helped along the way.
Special thanks to the teen authors
who poured out their best.—Ron

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®.

NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

All rights reserved. Cover illustration © Jon Berkeley.

Excerpts from *Luther's Small Catechism*

© 1986 Concordia Publishing House are used by permission.

Copyright © 2001 Concordia Publishing House

3558 S. Jefferson Ave. St. Louis, MO 63118-3968

Manufactured in the United States of America

All Rights Reserved. Used with permission. Other than downloading and reproduction for congregational use, no part of this material may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of Concordia Publishing House.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stand your ground : devotions for teens by teens.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-570-05291-2

1. Teenagers--Prayer-books and devotions--English. 2. Teenagers' writings, American. [1. Prayer books and devotions. 2. Christian life. 3. Conduct of life. 4. Youths' writings.]

BV4850 .S73 2001

242' .63--dc21

2001001367

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03

Our thanks to our teen authors

Matt Augustine

Erin Baker

Heather Boyd

Eric Cannedy

Jacob Carr

David Cecil

Megan Corson

Erica Demel

Ross Engel

Nate Farber

Donine Fink

Scott D. Whitehouse-Gercken

Kristen R. Heimsoth

Justin Hoag

Laura Joyce

Kristina Johnson

Tim Kassouf

Christel Kopitzke

Steven T. Lessner

Justin C. Lohr

Terry Lucas

Brittany McIntyre

Katie Maske

Katie Moehrig

Amber Morris

Kristina Neumann

Kim Niehaus

Ashley E. Oliver

Lisa Olson

Kristen Reeb

Tom Roma

Alissa Smelser

Michelle Lynn Sperberg

Annie Tiberg

Bethany Tweeten

Emily Vance

Lisa Widlowski

Amanda Wilhelm

Allison Wilson

Amy Zepp



P r e f a c e

My office is full of surprises: the unusual and usual; joy and sorrow; tears and fears; complaints and praise; confessions and forgiveness; pleas and thanks. Name the situation or the emotion, and it's been in my office. In the years I've spent as a school chaplain, nothing has touched my soul like watching a young person reach beyond mud-stained trouble to stand, by God's grace, on higher ground. As faith grows and feet become steady, I know it's a blessing of the Holy Spirit. It's a metanoia—a change of heart, soul, words, lips, feet, hands, attitude, and latitude. It's receiving Christ's forgiveness offered in love. It's standing your ground through Christ's stand-alone mercy. It's helping one another—teen to teen, parent to teen, teen to adult. It is God's Word—active and living.

During this time when teens break free of childhood and dependency on parents to enter adulthood, you need a perspective on life that reveals its deeper purpose and its deeper hope, which extends far beyond the promise of tomorrow. At the heart of such a life-shaping perspective is faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. These devotions affirm that God is alive and working in the lives of His chosen people.

These devotions were written by teens to whom God is a reality. These writers don't know you personally, but as you read their words, you will come to

know a little about them and their understanding of who God is, what life is about, and what faith means as we each live out our God-given purpose. The teen authors have written about real problems, real dreams and joys, and real events. They have written in love and seek to reflect a confidence in God's forgiveness and acceptance in Christ. Each writer shares, in his or her own way, a trust that our heavenly Father's plan for His children is good and will bring us ultimately to be with Him in heaven.

As I sat in my office and selected these devotions, I experienced many more surprises—at the talent demonstrated in the writing; at the insights of the young contributors; at the faith walks shared; at the ways these teens have, through faith, stood their ground. I pray that these words will surprise you, delight you, help you, and affirm your faith in God for years to come.

Use these devotions in the privacy of your room, with a friend at a favorite place, or with a group. Read them in times of joy, crisis, sorrow, or uncertainty. And if, by the power of the Holy Spirit, these reflections on God's Word, His faithful promises, and His work in your life help you to stand your ground, this project was a success.

Ron Roma
General Editor



I n t r o d u c t i o n

Have you ever had a “mountaintop experience”? You know, when you have that euphoric feeling? It’s like you’re on top of the world and things couldn’t possibly get any better. Everything is wonderful, and you know that God is the reason things are so great. It’s just God and you, and you sing with the psalmist: “Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise, in the city of God, His holy mountain” (Psalm 48:1). At times like these, it’s easy to stand your ground—and the view couldn’t be better.

But there are low times, darker times, more challenging times as well. Everybody experiences valleys. At these moments, the footing seems shakier, less firm. It’s harder to stay standing, to maintain balance. But we’re not left alone in the quicksand. As God’s people, we also can confess with the psalmist: “I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1–2). And with God’s help, we are enabled to “stand our ground,” even when everything around us seems to be sinking sand.

No matter life’s circumstances, as God’s people, we are invited to “set [our] hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1). In Christ, we have hope and

love, forgiveness and encouragement. We experience the generous grace of God and His powerful presence in our lives. God's Holy Spirit enables us to stand our ground in the valleys, even below sea level, as well as on the mountaintops. These are God's sure promises to us!

These devotions express the faith of these Christian teenagers—a faith they want to share with you. In these pages, teen writers describe what it means to them to “set your heart on things above.” They offer you encouragement even as they express Christian joy and confidence. Each devotion contains thought-full words that say, “Take heart. Stand your ground. Trust the Lord to help you do it!” These are mountaintop words for teens by teens—words by which God empowers young people to claim the higher ground.

May these pages be a blessing to all who read them, and may God be glorified through them.

Terry K. Dittmer

*Interim Director, LCMS Congregational
Services—Youth Ministry
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*



Reaching Higher Ground

Read: Matthew 19:21–26

In Matthew 19, Jesus speaks to a rich young man, telling him what he must do to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus said, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell all your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me” (Matthew 19:21).

When Jesus tells this man he would “be perfect,” He wasn’t speaking in the human, temporal sense. He was explaining how the young man could remove some of the distractions in his life. Does this mean that believers should give up everything they own? No, we still have the responsibility to care for the needs of our families and ourselves so we are not a burden on others. The point Jesus was making is that nothing on this earth should come between ourselves and God. With God’s help, we willingly can give up anything, at any time, so we will be able to serve God and His people better. When Christ is above any possession, earthly relationship, or material goal, our focus is on the life that God intends for us.

Last July, my youth group from Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, took a servant trip to West

Virginia. We spent an entire week in a small mountain town fixing old houses to make conditions more livable. We paid our own way to get there, slept on a crowded floor, and worked in 100-degree heat every day. Despite the things we gave up, most of us came away saying it was one of the greatest, most faith-building, experiences of our lives.

Think of the one thing that you love the most in your life. Would you be willing to give it up if God asked you to do so?

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank You so much for sending Your Son, Jesus, to die for me so I can be with You. I want to be closer to You, Lord. Help me not to make excuses when asked to serve Your people. Make me willing to give up anything to follow You. Help me to let nothing come between myself and You, God. Guide me to that “higher ground” by Your side. In Jesus’ precious name I pray. Amen.



Temptation

Read: 1 Peter 5:8–11

Every day we are confronted by the temptations of this world. We are surrounded by a world that continually sins. Someone might try to get us to do something that we know is wrong, and these situations can be very frustrating. As Christians we are called to live for God and Him alone, not in the temptations of this world. Sometimes the devil tries to persuade us that giving in to temptations seems right. With God's help, we can resist the devil and keep our eyes on Christ, who saved us from all sin.

Job, in the Old Testament, was a Godly man who followed God's commands, and God blessed him. So Satan said to God, "But stretch out Your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face" (Job 1:11). Satan was trying to prove that Job would curse God. Strengthened by his faith, Job never cursed God. God blessed him, and he regained all that he had lost and even more.

Sometimes things might not go our way or something terrible might happen. Our faith in God reminds us that He will never leave us or forsake us. God uses these times of testing to "perfect, estab-

lish, and strengthen” us so when we overcome temptation we are restored, made strong and firm in Christ. (See James 1:13 and 1 Peter 5:10.) As children of God, we are called to fear and love Him and put away temptations and be holy before Him. We all fall short of the kingdom of God, but Christ came and took our punishment so we can have eternal life.

We were bought at a price so by God’s power we can resist all the temptations of this world. As we put our focus on Christ, we have great rewards in heaven.

Prayer: Dear Lord, sometimes temptations seem to be too large to handle, and I feel helpless. Help me to trust in You, to focus on Your will for me, so I may overcome temptations and take the “higher ground.” Amen.



In the Hands of God

Read: Psalm 34:15–22

There is a vicious infection that plagues millions of Americans, young and old. It can be a killer or acrippler of the emotional senses. Almost everyone has it, and there is a simple, yet miraculous cure that often is overlooked.

The infection is called “stress,” and the miracle cure is God. Psalm 34:19 says: “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all.” This promise is stated again in Nahum 1:7: “The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him.”

This promise of God is something that often is forgotten amid the term papers, relationships, gossip, heartbreak, and other hardships that plague us teens. We spend night after night tossing and turning, worrying about how we will handle everything when we wake up. What things in your life cause you to be stressed? How do you usually deal with being stressed?

What we often don’t realize is that God will take those troubles out of our hands and into His own so we don’t have to worry about them any-

more. He loves us that much! All it takes is a few moments spent in quiet prayer.

At your Baptism, God took you into His family. You became a forgiven child in His kingdom. He promises to care for you forever, to help you carry the overwhelming burdens of life, to love you, and to give you eternal life.

When you spend less time worrying and stressing, you will have more time to enjoy the gift of life that God so graciously gave to you. Thank Him for relieving your burdened shoulders. Let God take on your stress. He can handle it!

Prayer: Lord, thank You for taking my burdens on Yourself. Thank You for making me part of Your family and promising to care for me forever. Amen.