

# FreeFall

HOLDING ONTO FAITH  
WHEN THE  
UNTHINKABLE  
STRIKES

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SUNRISE  
REFLECTIONS



# Sunrise Reflections

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

—Proverbs 3:5–6

The pieces of my life puzzle were found and placed within the pages of my Sunrise Reflections. Over the course of the last ten years they have evolved from simple stream-of-conscious writing to journaling to finally my Sunrise Reflections and Life Sketching system. In all of that time, only a handful of days were started without this daily routine. On days when there was something to do or somewhere I had to be first thing in the morning, I would get up an hour early to make time. Most of the exceptions were because of staying up all night with a laboring daughter or taking an overnight flight. My commitment hasn't been because I am naturally studious. Far from it. By nature I'm much more of a free spirit. But the system I'm about to share with you has literally saved my life. I have used this system daily for the last ten years because it has been my lifeline. Through the scribblings on these pages I have been able to clear away the mental clutter and hear the Holy Spirit over the torments of my broken heart.

It's commonly believed that it takes twenty-one days to create a habit. So the next section gives you a twenty-one-day launch pad. After the first twenty-one days are up, your Sunrise Reflection

and Life Sketching time will become a habit. But don't stop there. Commit to another twenty-one days. According to Dr. Caroline Leaf, the next twenty-one days will create new pathways in your brain. By continuing, the thoughts and patterns you have created through your writing will become part of your DNA.

You are not just creating a journaling habit. Creating a new habit is just the beginning. What we are looking for is real life-changing, soul-searching, healing results. You are renewing your mind and spirit. All of which comes from allowing your subconscious to wrestle your reasoning mind and pin it to the mat so it can be renewed. Although the renewing of the mind begins as a spiritual endeavor, it is also a physical exercise that changes the thought patterns in your brain.

Learning to trust your intuition can be difficult. It's really not something most of us are taught as children. We are taught and encouraged to use our reasoning mind. Its voice is the most dominant. When your intuition speaks to you, oftentimes there is a second voice that comes right behind it, discounting the first. That is your reasoning mind overriding your intuition. Another way to say it is that your carnal mind is silencing your spirit. While you're writing your daily reflections, listen for that quiet voice. Listen for your God-given intuition. That is your spirit speaking to you. Write it down. Give it a voice.

# How to Create Sunrise Reflections

## Something to Write In

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Begin with two journals. One will not be used or read again, the other is your blueprint for healing. This can be done in several ways. Rather than using two separate journals, I have actually used one journal by writing in the front, then turning it upside down and writing in the back, making two books in one. Or you can use a divided spiral notebook. The thing is not to let your idea of just the right tools stop you. These are just tools. You don't need an Italian leather journal with rosebuds burned into it. Unless, of course, you have one laying around. The real product is inside you.

## Pens

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One thing that has amazed me is how fast I can run out a pen. My theory is pen makers count on me losing it before it runs out so I'll never know how little they put in it. The longest-lasting pen I've found is the Pilot G2; personally, I enjoy writing more with the .07 size. But that is a personal preference.

## Thirty Minutes of Quiet Time

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Thirty minutes is sufficient. At least most of the time. You may find you want more. If you set a timer for the allotted thirty minutes, it

can alleviate the stress of feeling as though you are wasting time or it has been too long and you need to be more productive elsewhere. This is an important part of the day, but our reasoning minds tend to keep us on a short leash. It takes some time for it to allow your spirit the time it needs.

## **Start with Your Routine**

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We touched on daily routines in chapters 7 and 8. Now is time to really consider what those look like in your life. Everyone has them. Only not everyone is intentional in the way they do it. I'm asking you to be intentional. To think about your morning routine and prepare for it the night before.

I make sure there is water in the teakettle and my journals and pen are in the spot I'm going to sit in. All I have to do is boil water for my tea and sit down to write. I curl up at the corner of my couch with my journal, a cup, and a small teapot filled with my current favorite tea. I write in my pajamas. Over the years there have been slight variations. Overall, it has stayed pretty much the same so that this practice is my autopilot.

If at all possible, get up before the sunrise or at least in time to see it. Don't miss the majesty and the power of the sunrise.

## **Sunrise Reflections**

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First, pause and breathe the name of God. Take five slow, deep breaths, lifting your face to heaven with an inhale and bowing in thankfulness with your exhale. Two very important things happen here spiritually and physically. By taking in these deep breaths you are oxygenating your brain. The life-giving oxygen will help revive your mind. You are acknowledging God as you consciously utter His name with your breath.

This is about trust. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

This puts your own understanding aside, acknowledges Him, and allows you to watch Him make your paths straight. The New King James Version translates Proverbs 3:5–6 this way, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” I’ve found this translation to be exactly what has happened in my life; as I searched for direction, he directs my path.

After you have acknowledged him, begin to write. Within the first thirty minutes of getting up, sit down to write while your brain is still a bit foggy. Date your page and begin to write in stream-of-consciousness form. Write whatever comes into your conscious mind. Anything. Everything. What you are doing is dumping your mental mess onto the paper. This is where you take out the trivial trash that pollutes your mind. The daily to-do list, the chores, the conversations, whatever is on your mind. Begin here. Once the trash is taken out, your conscious mind will start to bring things up that it is holding on to for you.

## **Beware of Mental Hoarding**

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Have you ever seen the television show *Hoarders* or known a hoarder? Their homes are so filled with clutter there are only pathways to walk through the house. The drapes are always closed. Every flat surface is covered, including most of the furniture. Walls of boxes, books, and clutter line the paths through the house. There comes a point where the hoarder can no longer tell the difference between garbage and treasures. All of the clutter becomes treasures, so all of the treasures become trash. The garbage takes over. This happens in your mind as well.

Holding on to the hurts and toxic thoughts create the same state of clutter in your mind. Storing these thoughts and not releasing them is the same as holding on to physical clutter. You hoard them as though they are treasures, and they become noxious to your spirit and body.

Consider for a moment a time when someone offended you. Did you respond in the way you wanted to? Or did you just rehearse what you now consider the correct response in your mind? Then you dropped that thought right where you left it, somewhere tossed in the back of your mind.

The daily routine of taking out the mental trash clears the pathways for more important thoughts. The pathways in your mind become wider every day until they aren't pathways at all. Even a well-fed spirit that is mature in the Lord can sometimes not be heard when there is mental hoarding. Your unconscious mind can communicate with your spirit. When your mental clutter is cleared away, your spirit takes the lead, and your pen becomes the tool of the unconscious mind. It gives it a voice.

As you continue to write and the clutter is cleared it gives way to the conscious, then the subconscious mind bubbles up to the surface. By giving your subconscious a voice, your paper becomes a platform for your conscious and subconscious minds. Those thoughts need to wrestle and untangle the issues that tie the hands of the Holy Spirit within you. Ask questions that plague you. You will be surprised how clearly the Holy Spirit will answer you.

Again, you are writing longhand, with a pen, a minimum of three pages or thirty minutes of continuous writing. End in words of praise and gratitude. Find and write about three things you're thankful for. Always begin with acknowledging the Lord, and end in gratitude.

Learning to trust your intuition can be difficult. It's really not something most of us are taught as children. We are taught

and encouraged to use our reasoning mind. Therefore that voice is the most dominant. When your intuition speaks to you, oftentimes there is a second voice that comes right behind it, discounting the first. That is your reasoning mind overriding your intuition or spirit. While you're writing your reflections, listen for that voice. Listen for your God-given intuition. Write it down. Give it a voice.

## **Let Sunrise Reflections Cast the Perfect Light on Your Life Sketching**

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This is the fun part. Go back and highlight anything that was profound or instructional. Did you receive insight into something? Or a thought that needs to be considered in more depth? Perhaps as you were taking out the trash you realized there is something you are forgetting to do. Put all of this in a separate journal. This is your Life Sketching journal.

As your daily sunrise reflections unfold, you will find they give way to a clear path as God makes your way straight.

Every action begins with a thought. Oftentimes those thoughts are shot down in our own minds before they can take root. But something almost magical happens when you put the same thoughts on paper over and over. You can watch the inner struggle between will and spirit fight for control. In the end, given enough time, the spirit gains strength and always wins.

One simplistic but practical example of a struggle I've had that impacts my daily life is caring for my health. Many mornings of my complaining in my reflections include how bad I feel, how my body hurts, and how I need to change some of my bad habits. When I get too heavy the pain gets bad. I know how to fix it. Eat a healthy diet. However that takes a certain amount of will power I'm not naturally endowed with. For months I wrote about my need to

change my eating habits. When it came time to make something or grocery shop, my reasoning mind talked me right out of it. Pasta meals are cheaper. I'll do it next week. I can't start until I create a menu plan. So it just didn't happen. The diet my doctor gave me for inflammation looked like a starvation diet—at least those were the thoughts going through my mind.

Then overnight everything changed. The diet wasn't a bad idea. I could do this. I wanted to do this. I went on my prescribed diet without any struggle. What happened? I had written about my need for so long my subconscious mind rewired my thought patterns. Over and over this has happened through the years. Something I would struggle with would suddenly become as natural as breathing. The battle always begins in the mind. Thought patterns are entrenched. Through daily writing and allowing your spirit to bubble up and rewire your thought processes, you are renewing your mind—spiritually and physically. As these thoughts pour onto the paper, the plans God has for your life will come into focus. The story of you will unfold, written and directed by the Creator.

Capture the thoughts and visions and put them into the back of your journal or into a second journal. This is your Life Sketching journal. Day by day the pieces will start coming together. This is the journal the Holy Spirit is writing. In it, He will give you the next steps in God's plan.

Not the entire plan. Only the next steps.

Remember the dark rooms we talked about in a previous chapter? Daily writing in these pages will amaze you as you watch God flip on the lights for you. Your twenty-one days of journaling will become a habit, renew your mind, and ultimately renew your life. As your Sunrise Reflections shed a heavenly light on your Life Sketching, the masterpiece of you will unfold under His hand.

21 DAYS OF  
SUNRISE  
REFLECTIONS



## Day 1: What Time Is It?

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There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

—Ecclesiastes 3:1

**Y**ou, Father God, set the morning star in its place. You are the same today, yesterday, and forever to come. The seasons change by Your command. Nothing stays the same. Still, Lord, my heart yearns for the world of yesterday. To see the faces of laughter, to feel the sun on my face without pain in my heart. I fear time has frozen and I will stay in this winter. This winter of my soul. I long for what I cannot have—a season past.

And yet You call the spring flowers to break through the winter's snow and lift their faces toward the sun. The stars pull the ocean tides to churn time toward another season. I know my life has seasons too. My life, heart, and soul are not exempt from the solitude of winter. I will not stay in this season of darkness forever. I feel Your fingers on my chin lifting my face toward Your Son. I will lift my head to the warmth of Your healing light. Like the flower that blooms in the snow, I will burst forth out of this season with all the life You have given me.

### Sunrise Reflections

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Can you look over past years and see the path you have forged? Your journey down that path is your life story—so far. The future is not going to be the same as it is today. But how it looks does build upon what you do today. What time and season is it? Is it a time to mourn? A time to tear down? Or a time to heal? It may not be the

time you think it should be or the time you want, but it has purpose. As you write this morning, ask the Lord *what time is it?*

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from the beginning to end.

—Ecclesiastes 3:11

## **Be Still and Know**

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The bareness of winter is always followed by the beauty of spring. The light always overpowers the darkness. He has set eternity in my heart. God is making my story beautiful.

## Day 2 Strength of Another Color

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The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

—Psalm 34:18

**I** can't pretend any longer, Lord. I am not strong. Like a fine china plate smashed on the ground and stomped into fragments—I am broken. I don't want anyone to see my brokenness. I don't want the starkness of my pain to break them too. People think I am strong. I'm not. I'm hiding. I can't pretend with You, God. You know my inner thoughts. You know my heart is broken and my spirit is crushed. I want to crawl up on Your lap like a child and stay there.

My pain draws You near. I will not push You away. I need to feel Your presence like never before. I know You are here. Right now. With me. I can feel Your compress of peace pressing into my heart. You call my soul to You. I feel it drawn into you as You draw closer to me. Lord, I have no room in my heart for anything other than Your healing touch. The heaviness of my heart can only be carried with your strength. Remove from me any bitterness and unforgiveness. Keep strife far from me. I don't have room for these poisons in my life anymore. All I have room for is the pain in my chest and the healing power of Your peace. This is my life. You show me what true strength is. I will stand and look suffering in the eye and embrace it. Because Your arms are around me. You fill me with a joy that gives me strength. My strength comes from the touch of Your hand as You reach for mine.

## Sunrise Reflections

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It doesn't take strength to pretend. Real strength comes from pressing into the pain while allowing God to dress your wound. When you can lift your face toward heaven and speak words of praise through tears, He will anoint your forehead with the oil of joy. You won't have to paint on a fake smile or pretend to be strong. Your strength will not come from your own power. It will come from the Holy Spirit when you're weak.

Are you leaning into the pain you feel? Or are you pushing it away?

When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings.

—Psalm 84:6 NLT

## Be Still and Know

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My God walks with me, and He will give me the strength to face this day. It doesn't matter what it will bring. He will make for me pools of blessings. I will praise Him in the rain, and He will clothe me with the strength of joy.

## Day 3: Treasures in the Dark

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I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places.

—Isaiah 45:3

**T**he dark places of my soul, Father, feel so far from You. And yet at the same time I can feel Your breath still within me. So many voices around me saying I must not remain in the darkness. Yet this is where I belong right now. Happiness is not within my grasp. I only want to collapse into Your arms, press into Your chest, and feel Your arms around me. I'm not afraid of the dark. Darkness and tears have become my friend. I am alone, even with many people around me. My soul is in solitude. I don't have the strength to fight off the heaviness that surrounds me. I don't want to fight it off.

You give me the strength to stay in the darkness of grief. You are with me in my pain. You feel it too. Because I know You are beside me, I know You will lead the way out. The rest of my days will not be marred by this dark time. You will show me the treasures hidden deep in the dark. Allow my eyes to see what You have for me in this place. The strength I receive is from your Holy Spirit. That strength tells me to live. To face my pain another day. To press into it and feel it for all its fury. Because that is what was true. But it is also true You hid riches in secret places. They are not for those who don't know You. They are for those who call on Your name. You light the way out of the dark, Lord, and I will follow You. My heart is full with the treasures You have revealed.

## Sunrise Reflection

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There is beauty in the darkest night sky. Like a blanket of black velvet studded with diamonds spread over the earth, the heavens glimmer and show off their splendor. There is strength in the darkness that is hidden in the daylight. Have you asked for the strength to sit in the darkness and find the treasures the Lord has hidden for you there?

## Be Still and Know

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Darkness always turns to light. The darkness does not rule the earth. Jesus is the morning star, and yet He's not hidden even in the darkest night. His light is always present. *My hand is open, Lord. You have riches and treasures for me that I will carry out of this darkness with me.*

## Day 4: My Inheritance

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Peace has been stripped away, and I have forgotten what prosperity is. I cry out, “My splendor is gone! Everything I had hoped for from the LORD is lost!” . . . I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, “The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!”

—Lamentations 3:17–18, 20–24 NLT

**E**verything I had hoped for in the Lord is lost!” I know that feeling. I probably said it out loud, though maybe not so poetically. Nothing mattered. Nothing. Everything I once loved and laughingly believed defined who I was all melted into a pile of contempt.

That was when the vision of my life was thrown to the ground. It’s also the very moment when I come face to face with the realization that I have absolutely no control. Circumstances beyond my control marched in and changed my life without apology. Not only will I never forget this awful time, but it is also a marker in the timeline of my life. There was life before and after. One event split my time continuum beyond repair. Why didn’t the earth shake or the stars fall from the sky? Oh, but they did. Only no one could see. It was my inner world that shook to its core. I remained a prisoner trapped in an earthen body hosting a tattered heart.

And yet His mercies come in drops like rain. An unexpected burst of laughter with tears still wet on my cheeks. An unexpected

kindness from a friend long forgotten. God, Your compass of peace presses against my wounded heart. Your mercies are new every morning indeed. Your love is faithful and restores my soul. In You I dare to hope for a more beautiful sunrise tomorrow.

## **Sunrise Reflections**

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The pain of yesterday is locked away in a memory. Do you hold the pain like a treasure? Or do you let it give way to hope? Humankind has always built monuments to mark an event in time or a victorious battle. What about the battles of the soul? Headstones mark graves. But what marks the death and resurrection of a broken heart? What is the monument that marks the change in your life that says *it stopped here*, but now everything is made new?

## **Be Still and Know**

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The Lord is my inheritance. His hope and loving-kindnesses are fresh and new today. From this day on, I will lean into the hope of the Lord. He is faithful. I am His.

## Day 5: Peace for the Weary

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And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 4:7

Grief siphoned my physical strength and drained it onto the hospital floor. I could feel it go. With my head resting on Mike's shoulder and while staring at the floor I imagined my strength flowing out of my body, through an invisible tube, and pouring down the metal drain before me.

No one ever told me grief was so exhausting. The simplest tasks seemed insurmountable. Sleep was no longer a problem. Wanting to wake up was becoming a real issue. It was our thirty-second wedding anniversary. We spent the entire day sitting on the unyielding metal chairs that lined the hospital walls. An enormous amount of glass was still embedded in Tommy's body. The pieces, large and small, were supposed to "work themselves" out. There was just too much.

A friend came to sit with us. She was at a tipping point in her son's life. He was all but lost to her. While we were rushing into the storm in search of our boys, she was standing in the rain, trying to convince her son suicide was not the answer he sought. We sat together for hours while the doctor dug chunks of glass from my son's neck. We sat mostly in silence, feeling each other's torment.

The peace God brings is a warm blanket that smothers out the fires of fear. When my soul is weary with sorrow, You, oh Lord, strengthen me with Your peace. It engulfs me with a calm, quiet strength to face the unthinkable. I stand before You in my

weakness. My soul is naked before You, dripping in sorrow. You dress me in Your strength because I have none of my own.

It's in the incomprehensible peace that You bring that makes me know You are near. I will keep my trust in You because You keep me close. I will not allow my mind to step away from Your peace.

## **Sunrise Reflection**

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Are you exhausted? Is your soul weary from fighting the circumstances that want to swallow you? Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Steal grief's siphon hose and use pencil and pen to drain your burdens onto paper. Release them into the hands of Christ, and allow Him to give you the rest that brings strength and, above all, hope.

## **Be Still and Know**

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Isaiah 40:29 says, "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." Because I am weak and weary, my God strengthens me in new ways every day. He infuses me with the power to face the sunrise with steadfast trust in His peace.

## Day 6: How Long, Lord?

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How long, LORD? . . . How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? . . . But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me.

—Psalm 13:1–2, 5–6

**T**ime seems as though it goes on for eternity. The now is so fleeting and yet seems so permanent all at the same time. The days drag into nights, and the nights hold no rest. My thoughts attack me when I am not yet fully awake or asleep. My body is here, but I am not. I feel like a shell, a heavy-weighted shell filled with regret. Shame wants to sneak in the back door of my mind. My own thoughts torment me while my heart cracks. I wrestle thoughts of guilt. I try not to let them in, but they ride in on a tide of sorrow. *This is all my fault. If only I had . . .* The whisper is soft, and it sounds like my own voice. I know they are lies. I know those thoughts are stepping-stones to the depth of despair. I will not go.

When thoughts of hopelessness invade, I will not allow it to take root in my mind or live in my heart. The love my God has for me cannot change. He whispers to me, "You are Mine." I will lift my voice to You. I will lift my face to the light of Your goodness. You are good. You are the God who knows my inner thoughts. You are the God who lifts my chin and wipes my tears. In You alone do I trust. Your joy fills my emptiness and sweeps out the lies. I will sing to You my songs of sorrow and of joy. I will say out loud that You are the God who restores my soul.

## **Sunrise Reflections**

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Are you wrestling with your thoughts? Where are they coming from? Tell the Lord today about the lies coming into your mind. Give Him a place to bathe them in His truth.

## **Be Still and Know**

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Second Corinthians 12:9 says, “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

Christ sees my weakness. He knows my inadequacies. His grace has them all covered. I will keep my mind on the Lord whose love, power, and grace rests on me, and I rest in them.

## Day 7: What Am I Afraid Of?

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So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

—Isaiah 41:10

**I** thought I had it all figured out. I thought I was being good. I thought evil could not befall me because I am Yours. I woke up this morning and saw my life has changed. Nothing feels the same. There is a heavy lump in my chest where my heart once was. I'm afraid this is the way my life will be forever—marred by tragedy. The looks of people's pity haunt me. I don't want them to feel sorry for me. I want them to not see me but rather see You. You are with me.

I will not look at my troubles and ask where You are in the midst of them. You are my God. I know You are here with me. Today I will pick up a piece of my life and smile. I can smile because You give me the strength to stand. You help me up. I can see the light of your righteousness. It leads me to Your perfect peace. No anxiety can hold me because I belong to You. Jesus was tempted. I am tempted. I have Your words to fight temptation when my own fail me. The thief comes to kill, but You came that I may have life. The enemy of my soul has hurt me. But You have come to heal me.

### Sunrise Reflections

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Where does your strength come from? Are you putting your faith in something you are doing? Or maybe something someone said? Have you sought out ways to see the hope and help God has

already given you? Have you seen His fingerprints? The Bible tells us we must know that all things work together for the good of those who love God. It is His plan and His hope for you to not be dismayed, that He will uphold you and strengthen you. Where have you seen this in your life already? What has He brought you through before now?

## **Be Still and Know**

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He is my God. I am not afraid. I will not grow tired because He promised to give me His strength. God never fails me. I will not fail to see His hand in my life. His unseen hand lifts me above my trouble, sorrow, and pain. His steadfast love sustains me in the storm.

## Day 8: The Masterpiece of Me

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“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you.”

—Jeremiah 29:11–14

**Y**ou knew me in my mother’s womb. You looked at my fragile form and smiled. I am Your creation. The dreams and hopes I have for my children pale in the face of what You plan. My dreams for myself are all but lost. I can’t see tomorrow through my tears. Everywhere I look, I don’t see a future. Everything that once brought joy now brings pain. My plans have all become dust. How can I plan a life I don’t want to live? You have also made plans. Plans formed within me before my birth.

You, Lord, have plans of prosperity and goodness. As You fashioned me You knew what my life would hold. Nothing has come as a surprise to You. Nothing. I will look for You in every situation. I know You have plans to do good for me and would never harm me. My heart rests safely in You. This day I call on You, Lord; I call on You to see my life and where my plans were once so important, know that they are no longer. I want only Your plans for my life. Only the goodness that can come from Your hand. It will not corrupt or turn to ash. I want to find You with my whole heart. Open my eyes to see Your provisions and plans for my life.

## Sunrise Reflections

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If you could do anything with the guarantee that you would not fail, what would you do? Is there a vision on your heart that God has written by His own hand? Are you afraid that it is your own desires and not His because it seems too good to be true? Write your life from this day forward, how you want it to be. Did you hear God's whisper?

## Be Still and Know

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I am a masterpiece of the Creator of heaven and earth. Where I am flawed, He pours in His grace. He has a plan for my life that I am perfectly and wonderfully made to bring to completion. No one else can take my place.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

—Ephesians 2:10

## Day 9: There Is a God, and I'm Not Him

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For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

—1 Corinthians 13:12

**I** thought I knew who I was. I created a world around me to reflect my life and everything I love—my children, my home, what I believe. I believed I was walking in Your will because I tried to be good—a good mom, a good friend, a good church member. But I'm not really good am I, Lord? I am fragile and broken. Good really never had anything to do with it after all. Anything that has befallen me has been endured before me by people much better than I. The rain falls on the just and the unjust. I am not exempt from the sorrow of this world. If You make the most beautiful roses bloom in the desert, You can make me bloom in the rain.

You, Lord, know fully what this seed I call my life truly is. You alone know what fruit I am capable of bearing. My circumstances did not change who You created me to become. They cause me to grow in You into the person You fully know I will one day become: the person who stands in front of Your throne. The mirror I view myself in is not true. It is filtered with my own faulty beliefs. When I can see myself fully as You see me, will I be amazed? Yes. I am your handiwork. Who will not be in awe over the works of Your hands?

## **Sunrise Reflections**

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Have you ever wondered just how well you know yourself? I really hadn't. I thought I knew myself really well. Truth is, I only knew what I believed. There's a different concept to contemplate.

Looking back on a life marred by so much sorrow, Corrie ten Boom said, "You can never learn that Christ is all you need until Christ is all you have." Have you let go fully of your image of what your life is?

## **Be Still and Know**

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God sees me as who I was created to become, not the circumstances that surround me. My imperfections don't offend Him. He is not finished with me. I will one day stand before the throne of grace and be fully known. Not as I see me but as my Creator sees me through the filter of His Son and the love He fashioned me with.

## Day 10: My Garden or His?

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We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

—Romans 5:3–5 NASB

**M**y life is like a garden full of weeds. There are the roses, honeysuckle, and sage I love and have cultivated. They bring me joy when I see the morning dew dripping off their petals. The weeds have their own deceptive beauty. Some have odd little flowers of their own. Others have hidden powers of healing tucked into their leaves or flowing in their stems. The ivy has vines that weave its way around the flowers. They are pleasant to look at. Their leaves are pretty, and their vines are dainty. But they have gone their own way. The vines have crawled up the stems of my roses and wrapped around the necks of the new buds, choking them and bringing them to the ground. Seeds planted by the birds and the wind all claim their place in my garden.

The weeds of my life also threaten to choke out the beauty I so carefully planted. My garden takes perseverance, long hours of labor, and the outpouring of my love for it to not leave it to its own demise. So too, Lord, is my own life. There are both weeds and flowers I did not plant. Among them are plants that have yet to show their beauty and their unique powers to heal. I will tend the garden of my life well, Lord. I will persevere through all the weeds of sorrow, trauma, and trials. They will not choke the beauty from

my life. Because my hope is in You. My hope is in the love You have for me. The love You have for me shines brighter than the sun and brings healing rain.

## **Sunrise Reflections**

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Have you ever noticed how much detail the Lord puts into butterflies, dragonflies, and the lowly caterpillar? And these are just insects man thinks nothing of. He smashes it under his foot without a thought. They are infinitesimal in the grand beauty of all creation. It is a reminder that God pays attention to every single detail of his creation. How much more does He pay attention to our inner lives, the beauty of our souls He created to dwell with Him in the heavens. Have you ever considered your place in creation? What details has He painted on your spirit that may be in danger of being overrun with weeds?

## **Be Still and Know**

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The Lord satisfies me in the morning. His joy fills me and sweeps away the sorrows of the storm. His morning light reminds me His love is poured out in His Holy Spirit.

## Day 11: Twilight Always Surrenders to the Morning Star

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In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning  
I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.

—Psalms 5:3

**T**here is a time just before the dawn when my body is asleep but my spirit lies awake, defenseless. The voice of condemnation creeps in and whispers lies and half-truths into the ears of my soul. It torments me with visions I cannot change. With dreams that come in the night and leave me with tears on my pillow. Sleep is no longer a refuge for me. Sleep has become an unguarded pathway for the enemy of my soul to attack my spirit. My mind hears my soul crying and wakes me.

You are my morning light, Father. As the sunlight peeks over the horizon, my tears fall into Your hands. It's now, when the stars are still in place and the morning shows her first light, that You hear my voice. You wipe away the tears of the night. You fill my heart with Your unwavering love. With Your love comes hope. The new day holds hope in its outstretched hands. My hope is in You. I will sing louder than the morning birds of Your goodness and power. You are my redeemer. You are my strength. I can be glad all my life because You and You alone sustain me. My enemy has no power over me. He is nothing more than the howling wind, a voice with no power. Thank You for the joy You restored in my heart as I sing Your praise in the morning along with all creation.

### Sunrise Reflections

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There is a space between night and morning where the enemy of our souls roams the earth looking for whom he can devour. This is

a vulnerable time of day. But God does not leave you defenseless. There is power in your will to praise the God of the universe. As you lift your voice to the heavens, the enemy flees. God hears you. How are you fighting the attacks that lift themselves above the knowledge of God's love and grace for you?

## **Be Still and Know**

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The God of all creation hears my voice. Like a mother knows her own baby's cry, so my Father knows mine. I will seek Him in the morning, and He will hear me. I will lift my voice to heaven, and He will fill me with His joy. All of my days will be filled with thankfulness because of His loving-kindness for me.

## Day 12: I Trust in You

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My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak. . . . But I trust in you, LORD; I say, “You are my God.”

—Psalm 31:10, 14

**T**rouble wants to follow me. I can't hide from her. She waits for me, hiding. She sees me coming, and in an instant, she throws sorrow in my path. My eyes are so full of tears I can't see the way home to You. I thought I was on the right path. I thought we were well. But now everything has changed. I don't know my way, I want to go back, but there is no going back. Only forward. I don't have the strength to put one foot in front of the other. You carry me in Your arms when I am too weak to walk this path on my own. Trouble may seek to take my life, but she can't take me out of Your arms. The harder she pulls the tighter you pull me in.

I trust in the strength of Your embrace. You are my God. My Father. The one who loves me no matter how hard the path I walk becomes. When the darkness closes around me You light the way. My life is in Your hands. It doesn't matter what the enemy of my soul does. It doesn't matter how loud the voices of doubt scream at me, You hold my entire lifespan in the palm of Your hand. In You I trust.

### Sunrise Reflections

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There are seasons that seem all is right with the world. That at last you can rest and enjoy the best life has to offer. Then without

warning everything changes. There really doesn't have to be a reason. Sometimes things just are. We are quick to attach reasons to everything life throws at us—good or bad. But that really just isn't so. Or at least the reason is not always within our grasp. That's where trust comes in. What do you put your trust in? Is it your bank account? Your spouse? Parents? What makes you feel safe in an unsafe and turbulent world? Where does your deepest trust lie?

## **Be Still and Know**

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I am the apple of my creator's eye. Sorrow, sickness, and death have no power over me. I will trust in the grip of my God to keep me in perfect peace no matter what life gives or takes away. Everything is in His hands—including my life. He is my God. He is my salvation to the end of my days. I trust only in Him.

## Day 13: What Am I Waiting For?

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I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.

—Psalm 130:5–6

**I** don't feel You, Lord. Where are You in this dark time? I call Your name, and my prayers feel like they are hitting the ceiling and falling down around my feet. My requests continue to pile and go unanswered. Why can't I feel you right now? Why have you withdrawn Your hand from me? I cannot do this without You. I don't want to be alone. My life feels dry, my joy is just a memory. My whole being waits for Your voice. Silence sweeps over my soul. And still I will wait. I will hold on to the hope You have given me.

Just as I know the morning light will come even though I can't see it I know You are near to me. You have not forgotten me. You will never forsake me. I don't have to feel You to know You are near. I put my hope in Your promises. You never change. You are the same today as You were when I heard Your voice tell me You have me in Your hand. You are near. Your Word never fails. I will wait for You. Here I will sit in the knowledge that Your Word is true. I will bathe in the hope that brings new life. Your goodness and mercies are renewed every morning. As the watchmen of old waited at the gates of the city watching for the morning, so will I wait for You to transform this darkness into light. There is no darkness that can extinguish my hope in You.

## **Sunrise Reflections**

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Have you thought about how much our lives are like the seasons? There are times of rain and sun. Drought and floods. Our spiritual lives are like that too. There are times when it seems as though we are living in a spiritual desert. Your soul is thirsty, but nothing can quench it. Those are the times of waiting. He is not gone. He is near. This is your time to wait for Him. Waiting and trust go hand in hand. In order to wait you have to trust that He will come. Are you waiting for answers to prayers that don't seem to come? Or do you trust that God cares and anchor your hope in that knowledge? What, or who, are you really waiting for?

## **Be Still and Know**

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God knows my heart. He has my tears in a bottle. His love never fails. I will wait on the Lord. Because His timing is perfect. I put my hope and trust in His Word that tells me He will never leave me or forsake me.

## Day 14: Who Am I?

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I have loved you with an everlasting love.

—Jeremiah 31:3

**W**ho am I that You would love me? I try to paint on the face that says all is well. But You know better. I try to hide from You. My sins are many. I don't want You to see me for who I really am. I think You will surely reject me when You know the truth. I have lied. I lie to myself most of all. I'm scared. Deep inside I know I am not worthy of Your love. Nothing I can do can change that. Why do You keep calling my name? Why do You pursue me with Your love? Don't You know who I am? I don't even know who I am. But I know who I belong to. I belong to the Creator of heaven and earth.

You made me from dust. I am fragile and weak in spirit. But in my weakness, You are strong. You sought me in the desert and poured Your spirit over me. When I hid, You called me out. You took my garments of shame and wrapped me in Your white robe of grace. You clothe me with Your peace and place a crown of honor on my head. I am Yours. You have loved me from the foundations of the earth. You held me in my mother's womb. You have prepared a place for me to spend eternity with You. You have loved me with an everlasting love that is beyond my ability to understand. You loved me when I was unlovable. When I didn't deserve Your love, You gave it freely. I love You, Lord, because You first loved me.

### Sunrise Reflections

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Which do you think is more beautiful—your inside or your outside? Most of us tend to pay quite a bit of attention to our appearance.

While everyone has his or her comfort level, it always lands on what makes us feel acceptable. We strive to be accepted by our spouses, coworkers, or friends. We were created to connect with one another. And yet it's so easy to reject ourselves. The everlasting love of the Father is a love far beyond what we are capable of; it's hard for us to fully understand. So we hide. Are there areas of your life you feel are too ugly for the Lord to love? He's calling you out from your hiding place. He already knows you fully. What will you lay in His hands this morning?

## **Be Still and Know**

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God loves me where I am today. He will never love me more than He does this very minute. Because He has always loved me with an everlasting love that transcends all my iniquities.

## Day 15: The Path with the Most Resistance

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Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

—Proverbs 3:5

Which way do I go, Lord? To the right seems fraught with problems. To the left seems easy, but I don't have peace about it. Nowhere I turn has good answers. My mind and my heart wrestle in my chest. They won't give me peace. I don't know what to do. It seems no matter my choice, it is not good for someone. All I see is more pain, and I can't avoid it. How can I know what is the right way to go? If I follow my heart and do what I believe You would have me do, I am choosing the hardest path.

I trust in You. I know my understanding is limited. My knowledge of this life is but a glimpse of what You see. You, Lord, have my heart and my life. I trust in You. You alone can make a way where there is none. You are the God who parted the sea, so part the seas of indecision. Make my path clear and straight before me. I will put my trust in You. Even though I can't see what tomorrow will bring, You can. I will not weigh my reasonings; I will trust You with all my heart.

### Sunrise Reflections

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Is your heart telling you what you need to do but fear keeps creeping alongside it? Fear can't touch you. It can haunt you and rob you of your trust in the God who loves you. Could it be that whatever God is asking you to do, the fear that latches onto it is the equal and opposite reaction of the goodness God has planned for you? What is it you are afraid to do?

## **Be Still and Know**

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I trust in my Lord with all my heart. The same God who parted the sea will make a way for me to be my best self. He is the one who created me and is still creating me. There is no wisdom this world has to offer me that surpasses the love God has for me. All that He is calling me to do is already within my grasp. I don't have to figure everything out myself or make detailed plans. I choose to trust His Word and the assurance He has put in my heart. He will direct me step by step.

## Day 16: Where Does My Strength Come From?

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I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

—Philippians 4:13 KJV

**T**he simplest tasks can overwhelm me. They seem so easy to do, and yet I don't do them. The things I don't want to do come without trouble or resistance. Why am I so weak in spirit, Lord? My strength is almost gone, and yet I hear You say keep going. I pray for Your strength when mine is gone. But Lord, I am running on my own strength most of the time. I want to believe I am strong. I want others to think I am strong. I'm really not, though, am I, Lord? I am Yours. Make Your strength mine.

I don't want to run on my own power anymore. I need Your strength. I need Your strength to walk into the lion's den. I need Your strength to press into the path set before me without wavering, without seeking a way around the fire. Whatever comes to me, whatever my life will hold, I will say, "Blessed is the Lord of hosts, he is my God who strengthens me." You give me strength through Christ; in Him I am a warrior able to snatch the fiery darts of despair the enemy throws at me. You lift me up. I ride on the shoulders of a loving Father in heaven. You dress me in Your strength, not mine.

### Sunrise Reflections

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Self-reliance is so ingrained in American culture that we have a hard time even admitting to God we need His strength sometimes.

We run on our own power. When that finally runs out, we ask for help. When we think we have everything under control and can handle it—do we really? We can do *all* things through Christ. Or have we just allowed ourselves to be content with what we can do on our own without Christ?

## **Be Still and Know**

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There is nothing this life can throw at me that I cannot walk through in the power of the Son of God. He strengthens me. My weakness is where He fills me with His strength. I choose not to try to do anything within my own power. All my strength comes from the Lord. My strength to have hard conversations comes from Him. I will not fear. My strength to face the unknown comes from my Lord; I am brave. My strength to love fiercely without fear comes from Jesus who loved me enough to die for me.

## Day 17: I Will Trust the Lord

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But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.

—Jeremiah 17:7

**E**verywhere I look I see those who proclaim they have Your blessings. The beautiful people with flawless skin and perfect smiles tell me their way is the way to happiness—the homes beyond my reach, the travel, the cars, all the shiny things that sparkle with success. Each one claims to hold the key to happiness. And yet I see no happiness there. The fulfillment they offer is fleeting. I need more than they can offer, Lord. I need Your sustaining joy. I need the deep, uplifting joy that can only be found in You.

I am blessed. I am blessed with the knowledge You alone bring happiness, Lord. It is You. I know happiness cannot be bought, sought, or even found in anything on this earth. Happiness is a by-product of walking in Your presence. The joy that comes when You fill my heart when I remember the good things You have done in my life for me. True, abiding happiness always follows. I trust that no matter what I possess or never obtain, in You, Lord, I will be satisfied.

### Sunrise Reflections

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*If I can just get through this . . . Once this is over . . . If I can hold on until . . .* are all the false promises we give ourselves. We try to direct our hope to a happiness that is always just beyond our grasp. Happiness is always near. But it is elusive. If you try to

chase it, it will flee from you. If you try to capture it, you will smother it. Happiness is what fills the belly of contentment. Contentment is conceived in trust. When you can trust in the Lord, that everything you now are enduring will work for your good, you will be blessed in all circumstances both now and in the future. What are you waiting to happen, or to pass, before you will trust Him?

## **Be Still and Know**

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The Lord blesses those who are poor in spirit. I will see the kingdom of heaven. My mourning does not separate me from God; it brings Him closer to comfort me. God is near to me when I am weak. I do not have to wait until my circumstances change to feel happiness, contentment, or peace because I trust in the Living God who brings all things to good. Evil will never triumph over me. Circumstances have no power to take my happiness. I am blessed beyond measure because I trust in the Holy One of Israel.

## Day 18: Choose Joy

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Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. . . . hold on to what is good.

—1 Thessalonians 5:16–21

**H**ave I suffocated your Holy Spirit with my anguish, Father? Your voice has become a whisper my spirit strains to hear. I have fed my sorrow a steady diet of doubt and fears. The heaviness of my complaining grows daily. I'm not sure if I can bear its weight. Where is my joy? Have I traded my regrets for Your joy? My moaning against my circumstances has replaced my prayers of thankfulness. I no longer look for your goodness in every situation. Father, with everything that is in me, I will hold on to Your goodness.

I choose Your joy. In all things, I will choose the joy that comes with thanksgiving and praise. My heart will sing of your goodness day and night. When I rise in the morning, I will reach for You. When I lay my head down at night, I will thank You for every good thing the day has brought and lay at Your feet the rest. In every situation, I will look for Your fingerprints. It doesn't matter what it looks like to me. I will never stop praying, my spirit is sustained by Your presence. I belong to You.

### Sunrise Reflections

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In Philippians 4:8 we read, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Nothing in life happens in a vacuum. Have you ever noticed there is seldom a time

when everything is wonderful? Or everything is horrible? More often than not when everything seems either one way or another it is because it is how you choose to see it. The renewing of the mind means we choose to see good in every situation. When we do, we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. This is how God the Father has equipped you to be an overcomer in every situation. Is there an area or situation of your life in which you have poured more doubts or fear into than prayers? Have you followed the will of God by holding on to what is good today?

## **Be Still and Know**

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I will adhere to the Lord's words. In all things, I will listen for His word to guide me. I will keep His words in the midst of my heart. For they are life. They are my life, health, and happiness. I will not stifle the Holy Spirit. I am called by Christ's name. In all things I will seek what is good, pure, and praiseworthy. Thanksgiving will always be on my lips, in all things and in all circumstances. Because I belong to the Lord Christ Jesus, and in Him I trust.

## Day 19: Resting in Him

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Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

—Matthew 11:28

**M**y body can't rest. It has lost all of its strength. Sleep runs from me. My mind wrestles day and night with fear, regret, and sorrow. I am weary, Lord. Worry slips into what sleep I can find and masquerades as nightmares. I don't know what tomorrow will bring. I fear it will bring more hardship than today. Yet when I look at today, I don't see the lies I believed yesterday. At least, not when I look for You. I see Your goodness.

I feel You call me. You bid me come. I will run to the shadow of Your grace and lay down my sorrow at Your feet. My burdens don't scare or surprise You. Your rest is new life. It brings me hope in the midst of sorrow and joy in the throes of circumstances I cannot change. You care for me in ways I cannot imagine. You don't want me to try to carry the worries and burdens of my life; instead You want me to give them to You. Why is that so hard for me to do, Lord? Take from me that which I cannot change. What I can change, I place into Your hands to mold in me the image of Your Son.

### Sunrise Reflections

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Why do we wrestle so hard with the cares of this life when we are powerless to change them? Are you trying to change your life with your own power? Your own limited understanding of the life God has given you? Is there an area of your life you need to go to Jesus and allow Him to carry it for you?

## **Be Still and Know**

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The Son of God came that we could have a full life. Our weakness, our weariness, and our sorrows are not ours to carry alone. There is nothing you face, now or in the future, that the living God did not already make a way through for you. It began when He sent His Son to conquer death and wipe away our shame with the forgiveness of our sins. His love is everlasting.

## Day 20: No Room for Worry

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Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

—Philippians 4:6

**M**y chest is heavy. Thoughts of the unknown haunt me. They taunt me with scenes of my life's destruction. Or worse, the loss and despair of those I love. How long, Lord, do I have to wait for the days of plenty? Where are Your blessings? How long will I have to endure not knowing what my future will hold? I feel as though I am caught in the web of the evil one's lies. I struggle to free myself, but my floundering only binds me tighter. Father, set me free from the entanglements that keep me from You.

Thank You, Lord, for loving me enough to hear my cry. I will remember the goodness You have shown me. The times of trouble when I needed You there, called on Your name, and You answered. I will wait for You because Your timing is never the same as mine. It is perfect. I am not. You care about the health of my body, mind, and spirit. I will bring my needs to You with a thankful heart that You already know and want to fulfill them.

### Sunrise Reflections

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How do you approach the God of the universe? Do you speak to Him in formal terms? Do you come to the throne as a child seeking an audience with the King? Scripture tells us the way to come to God is without worry. Do you pour worry into your prayers? When was the last time your Sunrise Reflections were filled with thankfulness?

When we approach the throne of heaven with thanksgiving in the place of worry, we can make our needs known with confidence. More than that, it opens our lives to receive the goodness He has for us. Where can you exchange thankfulness in place of worry?

## **Be Still and Know**

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God knows what I have need of. I am thankful for all He has given me. His mercies have given me hope for a new life. His peace has filled the empty spaces in my heart. He has broken the chains of death and snapped the back of fear. I will not be afraid. Anxiety has no place in me. He fills my heart with an everlasting love and casts out all my fears. I bring my requests to Him in the full knowledge that, in His time, He will not just take care of me but will pour out His goodness upon me.

## Day 21: The Author

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And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

—Romans 8:28

**I** see no good coming from this sorrow I endure. How can good come from evil? How does good come from death, sickness, or addictions? There is nothing good in this pain I feel. The hands of time just keep going and refuse to stop. I would stop time if I could and go back to the last day my life was whole and right. I miss the joy I found there. The joy I had in the goodness You poured over me.

And yet I know these are not the circumstances You created. They are the consequences of a fallen world. One that has denied You and gone its own way. You hear my cries. You hold my tears. Although I cannot see one single good thing to wring out of these circumstances that would equal the cost, I will praise You. My love for You will not waver. My trust in You is as deep as my hurt. Your ways are not my ways. Your ways are higher than mine. You care not only for my circumstances but beyond into eternity. Therefore I trust that You will bring forth good out of what the enemy of my soul sought to destroy.

### Sunrise Reflections

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Silver linings don't come after every storm. But new life does. Where we cannot see the good in what has come into our lives is where we have to plant seeds of trust. Our assurance comes from knowing His Word is true and He has not allowed this pain to destroy us. In everything, we can give thanks in knowing the story is not over.

Imagine yourself the superhero in the middle of a movie—maybe hanging off the cliff by one hand or free falling to what looks like certain death. The Author of life, your life, has the end in mind. This is not the end. Where are You in the story God is writing?

## **Be Still and Know**

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I am called by God's purpose. It doesn't matter what my circumstances tell me. I know He is the author and finisher of my faith—and my life. Where all looks bad, He who made the stars from the words of His mouth can bring goodness. I am not the author of my story, the Father is. But He made me the hero, just as He did to a shepherd boy named David and a slave named Moses.