

52

DEVOTIONS

MORE  
POWER  
TO  
YOU

DECLARATIONS TO BREAK FREE

FROM SHAME &

TAKE BACK YOUR LIFE

MARGARET FEINBERG

 ZONDERVAN®

*More Power to You*

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# THE POWER OF DAILY DECLARATIONS

One of the benefits of forthright friends is their ability to cut through the poppycock and deliver the unvarnished truth.

During a recent trip to California, my husband, Leif, and I lunched with one of our most matter-of-fact confidantes, Chris. I explained how discouragement had descended without warning, stealing my joy and thrusting me into a crisis that left me ever-spinning over my identity, decision making, future. This wasn't the type of chemically induced melancholy that could be helped by Xanax or Lexapro. I've experienced those and have zero qualms with taking medication when necessary. No, this was altogether different—more existential and more spiritual. Dark days rolled into murky months until lostness and lethargy became my new normal.

Chris can be somewhat reserved in group settings, and he waited for me to finish my gripe session before he put down his fork, stared me straight in the eyes, and dropped a truth bomb: “I



don't know how or when it happened, but you've made some agreements with the universe that just aren't true."

Startled by his bluntness, I recoiled and grew defensive, but he continued on. Over the past few years, he said, my descriptions of myself, my career, my relationships, and my perception of God had morphed. When we had first met fifteen years earlier, I cruised along with optimism and expectancy. I believed God was for me and with me, and I was capable of fulfilling my calling. I saw myself as a bridge builder, an overcomer of obstacles, a competent Bible teacher in a world where women often have to work twice as hard to gain half the opportunities of their male counterparts.

Then life happened without warning or apology. A series of brutal struggles—a cancer diagnosis, financial woes, failed friendships, a painful betrayal, unanswered prayers—all worked together to corrode my confidence, leaving me shaky and uncertain.

The confusion and discouragement left me defenseless. That's when a voice slithered in and whispered the lies . . .

*You're a has-been.*

*You have nothing more to give.*

*You're a failure.*

*You should just give up.*

I dismissed these negative ruminations at first. Then I acknowledged

## THE POWER OF DAILY DECLARATIONS

them and, over time, I found myself agreeing with them. Soon I was flooded by a deluge of negativity until life felt more like existing than living. Like a rudderless ship, I had grown powerless, tossed this way and that by limiting thoughts and downward spirals. I had given away the power to determine how I felt, which assumptions I lived by, how I viewed myself and others, and how I responded to conflict.

On the plane ride back from California, I searched the Scriptures for wisdom about how to change course. Right there in seat 21A, somewhere over Nevada, a verse I'd loved since childhood spoke to me as if for the first time. "Do not conform to the pattern of this world," Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

IF I WANTED TO TAKE BACK MY  
LIFE AND REGAIN MY POWER,  
I NEEDED TO UNTANGLE THE  
LIES FROM THE TRUTH.



Chris was right. The negative patterns emerging in my life had arisen in my mind. I remembered that the word "repentance" (*metanoia*)

literally means to change one's mind. Not just to change your behavior, but to transform your mind.

If I wanted to take back my life and regain my power, I needed to untangle the lies from the truth.

As soon as I returned home, I scoured the internet for resources on how Christians can renew their minds and stumbled on a spiritual

practice used by my pastor friend Craig Groeschel.<sup>1</sup> He recites particular statements of truth each day to align his thoughts with Christ's. This was just what I needed.

I snatched some paper from the printer and penned my own Daily Declarations specifically designed to confront the lies that seem to be so prevalent in my life and culture today. Starting that day, I devoted two minutes each morning to reading through the list—often out loud. One by one, I rejected the lies I'd accepted as truth and made bold Daily Declarations rooted in Scripture about God's goodness, the fierce love of Christ, and my worth. Seventy-two hours later, Leif said, "Something's radically different about you—you're lighter and freer than I've seen in months."

Though it may sound hard to believe, taking two minutes each morning to recite these Daily Declarations has changed my life, my outlook, my impact. When the Accuser whispers in my ear, I shut him down with the truth of who God is, what God says, and who am I as God's child.

Looking back, I realize that breakdown preceded breakthrough. This is the way life so often works. When we are at our lowest, out of gas and out of options, God can work greater miracles. I now have more power in my life to pour into others, share my faith, love my spouse, overcome negative thoughts, and live out my destiny as a child of God. This is the same power that God gives to every one of his children—including you.

## THE POWER OF DAILY DECLARATIONS

I bet you've made some untrue agreements with the universe too. Perhaps you've accepted the lie that your best days are behind you, that you've grown unattractive, that you're a bad parent or an inadequate spouse, that your life is less glamorous than the lives of all your "friends" on social media. These kinds of thoughts fuel our fears and insecurities.

The good news is you're here, and that tells me you're ready to expose these lies, regain control of your life, and restore the confidence you once harbored. It tells me you're willing to endure the growing pains that always accompany breakthrough. It tells me you are more powerful than you realize—because the first step to radical transformation is having the courage to show up.

I designed this devotional to empower you to experience this dynamic, effective practice of Daily Declarations in your life. You'll launch into each day with the 90-Second Challenge by reading the Daily Declarations aloud. After reciting the declarations, read through the devotions at your own pace. Each of the fifty-two entries explores the *what* and the *why* behind the declarations. These are designed to beat back the Accuser and unleash the true you.

As you embark on this life transformation, grab a journal, a pen, and a few friends. You can engage in this practice on your own, but gathering with others to reflect on your celebrations and struggles will give you more opportunities to identify what God

is speaking to you, provide accountability to prevent you from stalling out, and offer you a circle of encouragers to spur you forward in your journey to embracing your best self.

If the Spirit of Almighty God lives inside of you, then you are a spiritual powerhouse. God created you, called you, and equipped you. And thanks to him, there is power *for* you, *with* you, and *in* you to defeat the powers that be. The time has come for you to shake off the lies that have shackled you to shame, married you to mediocrity, and drowned you in doubt.

If you're ready to break free from shame and take your life back, then more power to you!

Margaret

# THE 90-SECOND DAILY CHALLENGE

## POWERFUL DAILY DECLARATIONS

Take ninety seconds each day to read the following Daily Declarations aloud. All are rooted in Scripture, and you'll find this list on page [[TK]] with accompanying Scripture references. You may find one particular statement reverberating in you like a sacred echo and want to repeat that phrase a few extra times. Pay attention to what the Holy Spirit may be highlighting about you and calling you toward.

- \* Jesus is King of my life.
- \* I am who Christ says I am.
- \* I take every thought captive. I break every agreement that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.
- \* My purpose is to love, serve, glorify, and enjoy God forever.
- \* I am filled with the Holy Spirit. The same power that resurrected Christ from the dead lives in me.
- \* I am God's beloved child in whom he is well pleased. I am fearfully and wonderfully made, beautiful beyond measure.
- \* The power of God guards my thoughts, the Word of God guides my steps, and the favor of God rests on me.
- \* Worry is not my boss. I trust in the Lord with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding. In all my ways I will acknowledge him, and he will make my paths straight.
- \* The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.
- \* God is my strength, my shield. He's always with me, always for me, always sees me. No weapon formed against me will prosper.
- \* I am anointed, empowered, and called to reach people far from God.
- \* My words have power. I will look for every opportunity to speak life, show compassion, and bring out the best in others.
- \* Shame is not my master. God's power is perfected in my vulnerability.
- \* I refuse to be held hostage by unforgiveness. I will forgive seventy times seven and beyond because I am forgiven.
- \* I am an overcomer. I refuse to bow to the knee of the Accuser, listen to the voice of the Adversary, or flinch in the face of adversity.
- \* God works all things together for my good and his glory.
- \* I will look for the character and competence of God in every situation.
- \* I am on God's offensive team today.





# 1 JESUS IS KING OF MY LIFE.

LIE: I'D BE HAPPY IF ONLY \_\_\_\_\_.

You shall have no other gods before me.

EXODUS 20:3

When Moses, the leader of the Israelites, disappears up the side of a mountain, those left behind grow restless. For all they know, their leader has fallen off a rocky ledge never to return. The people approach Moses's brother Aaron and say they'll *be happy if only* they can have a god to go before them. They develop the bright idea to collect everyone's gold earrings, melt them down, and forge a gaudy cow sculpture. Then they throw a party and parade the golden bovine all over camp.

Convinced God is too difficult to follow, they create a god they can lead wherever they want.

The Lord fumes at their betrayal as Moses returns to camp with two stone tablets in hand. Moses plays interception, and God spares the lives of the Israelites. Moses becomes so incensed at

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their revelry, he smashes the tablets and grinds the golden calf into powder, never to be seen nor celebrated again.

Moses treks up the mountain a second time. He returns with replacement tablets and hands the people carefully chiseled prohibitions on all forms of idolatry. God commands his people to neither have other gods nor make images to whom they bow a knee (Exodus 20:3–4). God doesn't mince words.

“For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,” (Exodus 20:5). Eek! Why does God take such a zero-tolerance policy toward other gods? God knows that it's not only the Israelites who have a penchant for crafting alternative gods who make big promises. We do too. Ours probably aren't cow-shaped; instead, they may take the form of an investment account that promises protection. Or a fancy car that promises status. Or a new role that promises power. Or a house expansion that promises comfort. Or, or, or . . .

While idols may vary in form, they are all built on the same foundational assumption:


***I'D BE HAPPY IF ONLY \_\_\_\_\_.***

Whatever you place in that blank is also what you're placing on the throne of your life.

As author Barbara Brown Taylor observes, you can line up all these little golden calves on a mantelpiece, and almost none of them are inherently bad. The raw material of golden calves is rarely a bad thing. It's usually good. The conflict arises when a good thing is made into the ultimate thing.<sup>1</sup>

Like the Israelites, we're prone to reach for false gods when we're restless, when we aren't finding our satisfaction in God. That's when we eye the alternatives. Those false gods are tricky, though, because they produce results for a period of time. Sometimes a long time. But eventually they'll stop and turn on you with a bill that will take your breath away.

God knows the damage and destruction that await when you look to anything other than him to rescue or fulfill. Your baby gods—those trinkets you give your time and attention and money to—promise to save and satisfy, but ultimately they sabotage. They make you feel good until they ensnare you with addiction. They trick you into pouring your one precious life into something that's nothing more than a bottomless pit.



IF WE ACKNOWLEDGE JESUS AS THE  
ONE-AND-ONLY RULER OF OUR LIVES,  
WE WILL EXPERIENCE DIVINE RESCUE  
FROM DARKNESS.

The Lord has designed a better way for all of us to live. If we acknowledge Jesus as the one-and-only ruler of our lives, we will

**MORE POWER TO YOU**

experience divine rescue from darkness and evil, and enter into an abundant, extravagant, eternal life. The choice is ours.



**DECLARATION**  
**JESUS IS KING OF MY LIFE.**

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## 2 I AM WHO CHRIST SAYS I AM.

LIE: I'M NOT ENOUGH.

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,  
God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of  
him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 PETER 2:9

God handcrafts all of creation in abounding joy. With each day, he echoes its goodness until the sixth day when God sculpts humanity and declares it as very good. Then a dark character slithers into the scenery and whispers a twisty truth. He suggests that God does not really want the original couple to be like God. That's why God is holding back the fruit (Genesis 3:4). The serpent plants seeds of inadequacy to create separation. Eve is hoodwinked into believing that if she will eat the fruit, then she will be enough.

Sometimes I wonder how Eve could have fallen for this mistruth. Yet how often I've fallen for the same falsehood. I may not say

“I’m not enough” with my words, but like reaching for a forbidden fruit, my actions shout otherwise.

Looking back, I realize I started young as a pressure-cooker kid. In high school, I lived under the anxiety that I wasn’t enough and worked extra hard to prove otherwise. I was so scared that I wouldn’t meet expectations, apply to the right colleges, pick the right career path, win the right competitions, and earn the approval of my teachers and parents that I started bleeding inside. A doctor identified an ulcer and instructed me to dramatically decrease my stress. His advice, while necessary, added another item to my to do list and made me feel shame for making myself sick.

Beneath the mountain of anxiety rested an insidious lie, an agreement I had made with the Accuser that I was not enough. This “not enoughness” led to a life marked by striving, discontentment, and fear.

*You. Are. Not. Enough.* These four words comprise one of the enemy’s cruelest and most destructive lies. Maybe you carry an unspoken feeling that you are not enough for your spouse or your children. Not enough for your parents. Not enough as a leader, teacher, coach, or employee. Not even enough for God.

This lie is so effective that in the wilderness Satan uses it on Jesus: “If you are the Son of God” . . . then turn these stones into fresh

baked loaves, leap from the top of the temple, kneel to me and have all the kingdoms of the world. In other words, you don't have enough provision, enough power, enough potential. You. Are. Not. Enough.

Jesus counters each lie with the words, "It is written . . .," grounding himself in God's word (Matthew 4:1–11). He allows Scripture to guide his steps and shape his responses. In the heavenly Father, Jesus is deeply loved, celebrated, and empowered. And so are you.

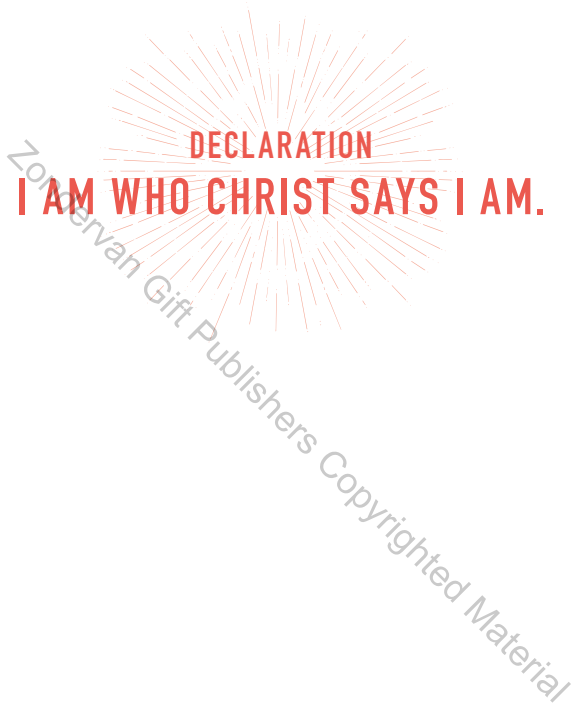
Later, the apostle Paul would consistently tell believers *exactly* who God said they were, and you can still use those truths to refute Satan's lie that you are not enough. Because you, yes, *you* are holy, chosen, an adopted child and heir of God. You are redeemed, forgiven, and gifted of God (Ephesians 1:1–8). You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God claims you as his own (1 Peter 2:9). You're lavished with God's love—you aren't just God's friend, you're family (1 John 3:1).

**YOU. ARE. NOT. ENOUGH. THESE  
FOUR WORDS COMPRISE ONE  
OF THE ENEMY'S CRUELEST  
AND MOST DESTRUCTIVE LIES.**

Like Eve in the garden and Jesus in the wilderness, the enemy will try to convince you that you're not enough, but through the power of God's Word you can send that viper back where he belongs. If Christ sits on the throne of your life, then he retains the final

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say about who you are, what you're called to do, and what you're capable of. Jesus sees you when others overlook you, he hears you when others ignore you, and he makes you more powerful than you imagine.





# 3 I TAKE EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE.

LIE: THIS IS JUST HOW IT IS.

We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:5

My friend Holden purchased a precious puppy with whom he fell madly in love. The fluffball napped in his lap, frolicked at his feet, and won his affection in a matter of weeks. When Holden took the dog in for a routine procedure, his beloved pet passed away on the veterinarian's table.

As I grieved with Holden, I imagined the death of my super-pup, Hershey. No dog lives forever, and Hershey ranks as a senior citizen in dog years. I've always known that one day Hershey will pass on. Hearing my friend's story affected my thoughts and morphed into a fixation. I convinced myself the grim reaper was coming for my dog just as he had snatched my friend's.

You've probably been caught in a mind spiral like this a time or two. A group of friends host a party, and you don't make the guest

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list. Soon you're imagining all the nasty things they were maybe, probably, definitely saying behind your back. Or a coworker outperforms you in a series of projects, and you become tormented by the idea that everyone sees you as a wash-up.

Psychologists call this “overthinking,” which describes the tendency to lose control of one’s thoughts and obsess over a situation with negative ruminations. Overthinking often springs from our

**YOU ULTIMATELY BECOME  
WHAT YOU THINK.**

deepest insecurities. These downward spirals can lead to anxiety, discouragement, even post-traumatic stress disorder.

To numb the pain, many turn to binge-eating, binge-drinking, binge-watching, binge-anything.<sup>1</sup>

You ultimately become what you think.

You can choose to allow either life-giving or soul-sucking thoughts into your life. What you allow to bridle your mind will direct your day. No wonder God is so committed to drawing your attention back to himself.

Neuropsychologist Donald Hebb coined the idea that the neurons that fire together wire together. That is, when we repeatedly activate neural networks or thinking patterns in our brains, these pathways thread together.<sup>2</sup> More simply put, you can train your brain—or, as the apostle Paul said, take every thought captive

(2 Corinthians 10:5). A thought may show up to say hello, but that doesn't mean you need to rent it a room. You don't have to live under the tyranny of self-sabotaging thoughts.

Pay attention to your inner dialogue. The simple act of recognizing negative thought spirals interrupts their progress. Next, redirect your mind. Replace those invalidating thoughts with Spirit-filled, life-giving ones. Whisper a prayer, a word of hope, a compliment, an exhale of gratitude. Recite a Daily Declaration, quote a scripture, sing a worship song. In doing so, you give your neural pathways the opportunity to chart a different course.

Whenever your thoughts spiral, work to identify the lie at the core your negative thinking. Look up what Scripture says about it, denounce the lie, and declare the truth aloud with boldness. You'll be astonished at how speaking these declarations aloud strengthens you. Remember, the neurons that fire together wire together, so you *can* reroute and redeem your thinking patterns.

Find a few trusted friends to share your negative thoughts with, even if—like me—you're embarrassed to speak them. Yes, it may feel frightening at first to be so vulnerable, but you'll find that you're not alone in your struggles. The Holy Spirit will often work through your friends to reinforce the idea that these thoughts and beliefs are untrue. In the process, you'll find healing, restoration, and new freedom through the Spirit's power.

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**DECLARATION**  
**I TAKE EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE.**

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