



DAILY
STRENGTH

A DEVOTIONAL FOR MEN

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DAILY STRENGTH

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A DEVOTIONAL FOR MEN

SAM STORMS

GENERAL EDITOR

 **CROSSWAY®**

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Daily Strength: A Devotional for Men

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Introduction

THE AUTHOR OF the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that “it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace” (13:9). *Daily Strength: A Devotional for Men* is uniquely designed for men to achieve that very goal. Based on the daily devotionals originally appearing in the *ESV Men’s Devotional Bible*, this new book presents those devotionals in a “one a day” format for regular reading throughout the calendar year.

This resource does more than inform the mind. Its aim is to equip and encourage men who long to experience spiritual and moral transformation in the depths of their heart. More than fifty men who serve as pastors, professors, and Christian leaders have contributed 365 daily devotional studies on biblical themes of practical importance to the lives of men today.

Perhaps never before in the history of the church have men faced the intensity of temptation and relentless assault from the world, the flesh, and the devil that we are witnessing in our day. The essence of biblical masculinity is being undermined as we are repeatedly told that a “real man” must be wealthy, influential, autonomous, self-made, sexually liberated, and self-reliant. The result is that marriages are being destroyed, families are in crisis, and countless men are increasingly losing their sense of identity in Jesus Christ. *Daily Strength* speaks pointedly to men who long for lives of integrity, self-sacrifice, love, and passionate devotion to their families and, above all, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our goal is to strengthen and transform the hearts of men through the power of the Spirit-inspired word of God. *Daily Strength* provides daily insights into Scripture that not only enlighten the mind but especially feed, nurture, and empower the hearts of men to enjoy all that God is for them in Jesus Christ. Each daily devotional study is tied to a particular

biblical passage that speaks to the most pressing needs and concerns that men face today. The contributors are themselves men who understand the unique challenges we encounter in today's world, and they have written with an eye to the application of Scripture to our most practical needs. Their insights are theologically rich, honest, vulnerable, penetrating, and always gospel-centered.

The devotionals included in *Daily Strength* follow the biblical text from Genesis through Revelation. The devotionals are not arranged topically or thematically but rather are tethered closely to the text on which each is based. To get the most out of the devotional readings, we strongly recommend that you read the Bible text for each day before you read the related devotional. There is at least one devotional for each book of the Bible, connected with the passages that most clearly capture key themes of that book. If the 365 devotionals are read consecutively throughout the year, along with the passages on which they are based, beginning in Genesis and ending in Revelation, the reader will have gained by the end of the year an extensive overview of Scripture and the history of salvation.

May the Lord's grace strengthen and encourage you as you immerse yourself in his life-changing word.

Sam Storms
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God's Purpose in Marriage

R. KENT HUGHES

IT WAS GOD, not Adam, who knew that it was not good for the man to be alone; it was God who honed Adam's awareness of his need by having him provide a name for every living creature, so that he would become aware that there was no helper among them who was fit for him. And it was God who caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and removed one of his ribs, moist with Adam's fluids and warm with his marrow and DNA, and literally *built* it into a woman. And then, it was God (like an earthly father) who presented her to Adam.

Adam's ecstatic response contains the first human words recorded in the Bible, and the first poetic couplet:

This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man. (Gen. 2:23)

Because God had honed Adam's naming powers, Adam restated his own name embedded in the woman's. He saw her as a mirror of himself, with some very agreeable differences! He had found his companion and his longed-for love. He was no longer alone. Such intimacy—all of God.

Adam's voice subsides, and Moses immediately declares, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (v. 24). One-flesh intimacy is the marital ideal, the marital pursuit. Men, understand that we are to be the keepers of this intimacy, rooted in the very act of creation on the culmination of the sixth day.

Such a high calling. But there is more, because, in Ephesians chapter 5, the apostle Paul concludes his teaching on marriage by referencing the declaration, "the two shall become one flesh," and then adding, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church"

(Eph. 5:31–32). When God created “one-flesh” intimacy it was a creational prophecy of the intimacy of Christ and the church. Therefore, all who name the name of Christ must understand that the relationship of a man and his wife is meant to be a window into the relationship of Christ and the church—a gospel window going all the way back to creation.

The call, “Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25), is ultimately a call to preach the gospel.

JANUARY 2 • GENESIS 3

The Urgency of Hearing and Heeding God’s Word

R. KENT HUGHES

THE FALL OF MANKIND began when the serpent/Satan asked, with feigned incredulity, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1). This “innocent” question was actually a calculated slur on God’s goodness, implying that he is ungenerous. In truth, God had told Adam, “You may surely eat of *every* tree of the garden” (2:16). But no matter, a seed of doubt had been planted in Eve’s heart that would bear immediate fruit in her response.

First, Eve *diminished* God’s word by leaving out the word “every” in her own response: “And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden’” (3:2a). Her inexact, shrunken rendition of God’s word discounted God’s generosity. Second, Eve *added to* God’s word. God had told the first couple that *eating* of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would bring death (2:17), but Eve told Satan that merely *touching* the tree was forbidden (3:3). Thus, she magnified God’s harshness: an inadvertent touch, and “you’re history.” Lastly, Eve *softened* God’s word as she left out the word “surely” from God’s original statement, “you shall surely die” (2:17). Her omission removed the certitude of death for eating from the tree.

With that, Satan was emboldened to declare God’s word a deception: “The serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die’” (3:4). “Eve,” he

seemed to say, “the threat of death is a divine scare tactic: God is repressive and he’s jealous; he’s afraid that you might ascend too high.”

It was too much for Eve. She should have run screaming from the serpent. But instead she reached forth a lovely hand and resolutely took the fruit, believing that divinity would soon be hers. Shocking! But here’s the real shocker: Adam was *with* her (v. 6). And, moreover, Adam was *not* deceived by the snake (see 1 Tim. 2:14). Adam sinned with his eyes wide open. He had watched Eve take the fruit, and nothing happened to her. So, he sinned willfully, assuming there would be no consequences.

Everything was upside down: *Eve followed the snake, Adam followed Eve, and no one followed God.*

Men, if there ever was a call to be a man of the word, this is it. And here is what the ultimate Man says: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Feed on it and live it—for the glory of God in your life, your family, the church, and the lost world.

JANUARY 3 • GENESIS 12:1-9

The Life of Faith

R. KENT HUGHES

THE PROMISES OF blessing that God made to Abram amid pagan, moon-worshipping Ur were immense in their personal and global scope. The personal promises were staggering: “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing” (Gen. 12:2). The parallel *global* promise of blessing was equally overwhelming: “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (v. 3). The immensity of these promises was beyond imagination.

Nevertheless, Abram believed and obeyed the word of God, and by faith led his entire family and entourage on an eight hundred-mile journey to the land of Canaan—where his sojourn in the Promised Land gives us wisdom about the life of faith.

The life of faith calls God's people to be *pilgrims* in this world, as the writer of Hebrews says of Abram, "By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents. . . . For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Heb. 11:9–10). Father Abram personally understood and believed that "this world is not my home, I'm just a passing through." What a challenge to the dominant earth-bound ideologies of our age!

The truth is, Abram never did build a home in the Promised Land. The only land that he owned was a cave that he purchased as Sarah's grave (Genesis 23). But he did become a builder, building not a tower, nor a city, nor a house—but *altars* for worship across the land. The first was in Shechem (12:6–7) and the second was in Bethel (vv. 8–9), both prominent places of pagan worship; and there he offered sacrifices to the true God.

How beautiful: the only architecture that remained after Abram's life was altars to the Lord, the artifacts of a worshiping heart. Faithful Abram worshiped wherever he went.

Today, "if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29)—and pilgrims who are called to build altars not of stone but of the heart, wherever you are, to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1).

JANUARY 4 • GENESIS 15

By Faith Alone

R. KENT HUGHES

CONSIDERABLE TIME HAD passed since Abram first obeyed God's call to leave Ur, which had opened with the dazzling promise, "I will make of you a great nation." But Sarai, his wife, was barren, and the shadow of barrenness had only deepened through the ups and downs of the couple's sojourns. Thus it was on a dark, fearful night that God met Abram in a vision, and Abram poured out his fear that his servant Eliezer would, of

necessity, become his heir. God's response to Abram that dark night was a revelation: a son would come from his own body.

As Abram reeled from the revelation, God took him outside and directed his vision upward, saying, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them. . . . So shall your offspring be" (Gen. 15:5). Alone under the silent stars with God Almighty, with the incredible promise still ringing, Abram was speechless.

What was happening in the heart of silent Abram? Though Abram does not tell us, the Scripture does: "he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (v. 6). Abram's soul uttered a silent "amen." He *rested everything* on God's word of promise, and God counted (or reckoned, or imputed) Abram's faith to him as righteousness. Faith alone had brought Abram the free gift of righteousness—salvation.

No other biblical text has exercised such an influence on our understanding of faith, or, indeed, such an influence on the New Testament in its entirety. For example, the fourth chapter of Romans is an extended exposition of Genesis 15:6; in fact, Paul quotes verse 6 three times and repeats the key word "counted" eleven times as he drives home the glorious truth that salvation has always been by faith alone.

Faith alone is the vocabulary of rest. We are called to cease from our works and rest everything on the promise of the finished work of Christ. Here is the gospel of rest: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8–9). Faith's refrain is,

Jesus, I am resting, resting
In the joy of what Thou art.

Laughter!

R. KENT HUGHES

HERE IS AN ACCOUNT filled with laughter—all kinds of laughter—and ultimately the laughter of heaven.

God Almighty had just renamed Abram *Abraham* (“father of a multitude”), promising him that kings would come from him. And here God changes Sarai (“princess”) to *Sarah*, which also means “princess,” as a doubled affirmation that royalty would come from her barren ninety-year-old womb (Gen. 17:15–17). When Abraham heard God say, “I will give you a son by her,” he fell on his face and laughed! But it wasn’t necessarily the laughter of unbelief; perhaps it was simply incredulous hilarity. After all, the Bible tells us that he never wavered concerning the promise (see Rom. 4:18–21). God directly informed Abraham (with a smile?) that his and Sarah’s son would be named *Isaac*, literally “laughter.”

Abraham then received three mysterious visitors, whom he entertained with a sumptuous feast (Gen. 18:1–9). In retrospect, Abraham would understand that his guests were the Lord himself, along with two attending angels. God came to dinner! And the covenantal function of the meal with the Lord and his angels was to restate the promise of a son through Sarah, and for the old princess to hear it herself as she listened at the door of the tent and heard the Lord say, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” Sarah’s response was inward and silent: “So Sarah laughed to herself” (18:12). It was melancholy, hopeless, unbelieving laughter. Happily, her silent, hopeless humor would soon be transformed into the laughter of belief.

The epilogue in 21:3–6 chronicles the old couple’s mirth: “Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac [Laughter]. And Abraham circumcised his son [Laughter] when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son [Laughter] was born to him. And Sarah said, ‘God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me.’” There

was laughter everywhere. The old man and his wife laughed and continued to laugh as they held tiny Laughter in their arms. Heaven smiled.

Abraham and Sarah had indeed birthed a royal dynasty of kings through their son Isaac, from which would come the King of kings amid peals of merriment as the angels proclaimed,

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.
(Luke 2:14)

JANUARY 6 • GENESIS 22

God Will Provide

R. KENT HUGHES

ABRAHAM WAS INTENTIONALLY vague when he said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you” (Gen. 22:5). “Worship” veiled his intention to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering, and “come again to you” indicated his belief in the resurrection. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19), when as yet there was nothing in history to suggest that such a thing could happen. What bold, original, amazing faith!

As father and son ascended the mount in silence, Isaac’s piercing question, “My father! . . . Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Gen. 22:7), led to Abraham’s immortal answer, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son” (v. 8), which is the turning point in the account. *God will provide* states Abraham’s absolute trust in God. Abraham believed that nations and kings would come from Isaac, and he left everything in God’s good hands.

Abraham’s often-told obedience and God’s astonishing provision came together as Abraham prepared the pyre, bound his beloved Isaac so that he might not flee in sudden fear, took the knife in his trembling hand, and tightened his grip for the sacrificial cut—only to hear God

roar his name twice from the heavens with the command, “Do not lay your hand on the boy” (v. 12). In the same instant, Abraham saw the substitute provision: the account says that “Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son” (v. 13). Never was there a more joyous and eager sacrifice!

In ecstasy, “Abraham called the name of that place, ‘the Lord will provide [*Jehovah Jireh*]’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided’” (v. 14). Abraham’s declaration of faith—*God will provide*—as he and Isaac ascended the mountain had now become the wondrous conclusion. We see that the God who tests is the God who provides. When God tests you, he will always provide for you.

JANUARY 7 • GENESIS 24

The Beauty of Divine Providence

R. KENT HUGHES

FOR ABRAHAM, SARAH’S death was a fresh awakening to his own advanced age and his responsibility to make sure that his forty-something son, Isaac, would marry well and produce heirs. So he called his most trusted servant and had him take a formal vow that he would return to Abraham’s country and his kindred to find a wife for Isaac. He assured the servant of divine guidance, saying that God “will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son there” (Gen. 24:7). Abraham believed that God’s unseen hand would do it all. He rested in God’s providential guidance.

There would be no miracle in this account (as we usually think of miracles)—no suddenly barren rivers, no solar pauses, no healings. Rather, God would bring about the discovery of Isaac’s bride through the “normal” events of life.

The positioning of this story here at the end of Abraham’s life serves, in effect, to tell us that this is the way God works in our everyday lives. The God of Scripture is not simply a God of miracles who occasionally

injects his power into life. He is far greater, because he arranges all of life to suit and effect his providence.

The servant's search spanned hundreds of miles as his caravan traveled north and then east to Nahor in Mesopotamia. There in the slanting rays of dusk, when women come out to draw water, Abraham's servant directed his camels to kneel near the town well, where he offered this extraordinary prayer: "Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water the camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac" (v. 14). To be sure, the criteria were demanding! But it was not a request for a miraculous sign. He did not ask for a fleece (see Judg. 6:36–40). He did not ask for the normal effects of nature to be suspended. Nevertheless, it was a "mundane miracle"—a glimpse behind the everyday curtain of life.

This story means that we must live in full consciousness of the miracle of divine providence, understanding that God has total hands-on control of the world—and that all of life is to be lived for him without fear and with increasing expectation.

JANUARY 8 • GENESIS 27

Resting in God's Sure Word

R. KENT HUGHES

GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD to the matriarch Rebekah, as her twin boys struggled in her womb, was that "the older shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). And, indeed, though her firstborn, Esau, did initially inherit the birthright, he sold it to Jacob for a bowl of stew. "Thus Esau despised his birthright" (25:34). One would think that this disgraceful event would seal Jacob's position once and for all in the family's mind. But Genesis 27 chronicles two in-house responses to the prophetic word that indicate that neither Isaac and Esau, on the one hand, nor Rebekah and Jacob, on the other, believed that God's sure word would stand.

To begin with, old, visually impaired Isaac believed that he could nullify God's word when he asked Esau to hunt game and then prepare a meal