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ZONDERVAN

Day-votions™ for Women

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encouragement for women

Professionals may not agree as to what women really need in life. Even we, as women, don't always know ourselves. Overstressed and in need of rest, we search for quiet places to restore and regroup. Yet feeling isolated and alone, we crave understanding and companionship — others who will share our load and celebrate our joys.

We are not all alike. God created us as unique individuals. And yet we are the same. Every woman needs — and wants — encouragement and deeper, more meaningful relationships.

For years I've tried to write devotions that would encourage readers to connect on a deeper level with God and others: to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind," and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). But sometimes "life" happens, and we women forget how to do that. We realize that love hurts and relationships take work. Energy gets zapped, hearts are broken, and our minds get confused. We forget what we were made for, and we forget how much God truly loves us. Yet the longing for connection lingers, like the fragrance in a home when a sweet candle's flame has been extinguished.

I could offer you a few motivational thoughts to lift your spirits temporarily, but they would not satisfy your heart hunger for long. In this new series of Day-votions™, I've tried to say to you as

women, “You are not alone.” None of us are. Our very existence depends on strong relationships. In bite-sized, *day-votions* for everyday living, I’ve written some nuggets of spiritual encouragement that I hope will help you strengthen your relationship with God and others. I pray these stories, insights, and biblical truths will direct you to the only One who can meet all of your needs. As you draw close to Jesus, I believe he will connect the dots to more meaningful relationships with others as well.

Whether you’re dealing with finances, inadequacy, loneliness, or guilt, you’re not alone in your struggle. Other women have — and are — walking the same path as you. It doesn’t matter if you’re single, married, young, middle-aged, or a senior, God is by your side, applauding your work, extending fresh hope, and drawing you close to himself so he can whisper, “You *are* making a difference. I’m here to help you, and I will take care of you. I love you. I always will.”

Through these pages, I hope you’ll laugh a little and maybe cry a little; but more than anything, my heart’s desire is that you will be encouraged to keep on loving, laughing, serving, and sharing — and that you will gain a new sense of joy and purpose in this beautiful, God-ordained role of being a woman.

“May our Lord Jesus himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word” (2 Thessalonians 2:16 – 17).

Rebecca

day I
the perfect storm

*He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters;
the storm subsided, and all was calm.*

Luke 8:24

It wasn't exactly a *bad* day. *Challenging*, definitely.

The apricot and white tabby looked so cute on my back doorstep curled up in a ball. I had seen it slinking under the gate and into my backyard several times, but I usually ignored it. *Maybe it will catch our newly discovered mice*, I thought. I had no idea who owned the cat, if anyone. It had no tags, only a flea collar.

I stepped outside and leaned down to pet the cat. At first it purred softly as if to say, "*More, More!*" Then suddenly the cat lunged, sinking its needle-sharp teeth into my right hand. I yelped and ran inside.

It was 7:30 a.m. and we were unable to locate the owner. So I called Animal Control. They called back when they opened, suggesting I call my doctor. Later I talked to a neighbor who thought she knew the cat's owners, who were at work.

I couldn't get a doctor's appointment until later that afternoon. His office was an hour away. "You need a tetanus shot and possibly antibiotics," said the nurse.

Later she called back. "We have no vaccine. Do you still want

to come in?" I knew I probably needed antibiotics, because my hand was already swollen with red streaks. I secured the appointment but spent the next two hours playing phone tag trying to find a place where I could get a tetanus shot. In order to save time, I finally tried a community health clinic in another town on the way to my doctor.

Before I left town, I needed to trade cars with my husband at his workplace. Exhausted by the ordeal already, I began quietly quoting, "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you" (Isaiah 26:3). But perfect peace doesn't always mean perfect circumstances. Sometimes it includes the perfect storm.

*Perfect peace doesn't always mean perfect circumstances.
Sometimes it includes the perfect storm.*

I traded cars, but backed straight into another parked car in my path. By this time I was shaking as I found my husband and reported the bad news. The other car wasn't even scratched, but the impact cracked our bumper across the middle. Larry just held me. "It will be all right. Don't worry about it."

Thirty minutes later I arrived at the clinic for my tetanus shot and saw a room full of waiting patients, coughing children and adults. It was flu season.

An hour and a half later I walked into the doors of my doctor's office building. The revolving doors stuck — shut down completely — with me in it. I pushed hard, finally opening it. When I reached the doctor's office upstairs, I realized my doctor had moved. So I retreated and drove to what I thought was his

new location. Wrong place. Fortunately, I had the office number on my cell phone, so I called to get directions.

Later in his office my doctor took one look at my wound and promptly prescribed antibiotics. He knew we were leaving town in five days, so he cautioned me about keeping in touch with Animal Control and the ten-day window for rabies treatment. "You need to find the cat and have it quarantined." *No*, I thought. *Probably not a good idea for me to find the cat.*

It was late afternoon by the time I returned home. I figured we were safe by now. After all, the day was winding down. Surely Animal Control had quarantined the cat by now. Wrong. As I drove into my driveway, my cell phone rang.

"Mrs. Jordan? It's Animal Control. We've been driving around your neighborhood all day, but we haven't found the cat." About that time, the cat strolled by, not twenty yards away.

"Come now!" I yelled. "Here's the cat!"

After he arrived, we both tried — and failed — to coax the cat into the waiting truck. Still no sign of the owners. I finally left to get my prescription. Waiting time? An hour. So I bought groceries. My hand was puffy, bleeding, and throbbing. An hour and a half later I pulled into my driveway with my expensive supply of antibiotics and trunk full of groceries. As I shut the trunk, the car alarm sounded, "Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!" announcing my arrival to the neighbors. I ran into the house, scrounging for my keys to shut off the noise.

A few minutes later, my husband walked in the door with a bouquet of roses and took me in his arms. "These are for you. I know you've had a bad day. By the way, they quarantined the cat."

And in that moment, all the frustrations and "challenges" of

the day melted away as I fell into my husband's embrace, weeping. To me, he was a picture of God "with skin on."

Sometimes as a woman, you may feel like storm clouds hover over you day in and day out. Whether accompanied by angry winds or persistent rain, at the end of your "perfect storm," you may or may not have someone with skin on to greet you and wipe away your tears. But at the end of every day, there is One who *will* be standing there, arms open wide, whispering, "I'm here. I care. And I love you." Sweeter than the most fragrant bouquet is Jesus, the Rose of Sharon.

And when that happens, suddenly your "bad, challenging day" is but a distant memory as you bask in the sheer joy of his comforting embrace.

DAY-BREAK

Describe one of your most challenging days. How did you handle it? If it happened again, what would you do differently, if anything? What did God teach you through that experience?

DAY-BRIEF

Purr-fect days only exist in the movies.

DAY-VOTEDLY YOURS

Jesus, what would I do without you? Where would I turn if you were not there? Thank you for giving me strength when I feel none of my own. Thank you for holding me when I feel like falling apart.