

Strength & Grace

DAILY DEVOTIONS



APRIL / MAY 2025



Prayer for Strength

*Father, when my heart longs for answers to life's
difficult questions, I trust Your wisdom will guide me.
I trust Your promises to give me wisdom when I ask.*

SHELLI VIRTUE

APRIL 1

You Got New Shoes!

Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked?"

Blessed be the man who took notice of you."

—RUTH 2:19 (NRSVUE)

Every day, I have lunch with my wife, Candy, at the memory care residence where she now lives. On a recent day, she wasn't very responsive and spoke only in broken fragments of single words. Loss of speech and language is common for people with Alzheimer's. At first, she didn't seem interested in eating, but I tried coaxing her by feeding her small bites. She reached for the glass of cranberry juice. I helped her hold it up to sip, then she took over and drank it all. She brightened up and fed herself almost all her lunch.

She smiled at me when I said, "Let's go back to your room." As I unlocked the wheelchair brakes, she looked down at my feet. "You have new shoes!" "Yes," I said. "I just got them." They are gray sneakers, as were the worn ones they replaced. She did not speak another discernible word as we sat together before I headed home.

Somewhere, underneath Candy's cloudy confusion, she noticed my new shoes, which meant she had remembered my old ones. She was reminding me that she was still in there, even when she was unable to reach beyond her fog. She was assuring me that she still noticed my loving hugs and kisses, help with lunch, and our sitting together after lunch.

*Thank You, God, that You are within us by Your Spirit,
even on the foggiest of days.*

NORM STOLPE

APRIL 2

Mom's Hands

See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

—ISAIAH 49:16 (NIV)

My mom had the most beautiful hands. Long, slim fingers and perfectly manicured fingernails. Red was her color of choice for polish, and she managed to make her manicure last through diaper changes, housework, preparing meals, and everything that went with raising six children. As a little girl, I was fascinated with Mom's hands, and I used to beg her to play songs on the piano just so I could watch her fingers dance across the keys.

Now, I am the caretaker of my mom's hands, which are crippled with arthritis. Every week, I fill a large bowl with warm, soapy water and place her hands in it for a good soak. When she's done soaking, I push back her cuticles, trim her nails, and finish with a light coat of pale polish and hand lotion.

I was remembering Mom's pretty hands and her fiery red nails one day as I massaged her fingers. Cool hands on my fevered forehead, comforting hands smoothing my hair as I cried over a boyfriend, steady hands before my clarinet solo. Praying hands every night before bedtime. Soothing hands as we grieved the loss of Katy, my daughter and her granddaughter.

"Thank you, Mom," I whispered.

"For what?"

For comfort and guidance and faith, for being here, for loving us, I thought. But the words stuck in my throat.

Finally, "For everything," I managed, blinking back tears.

Mom smiled, covering my hand with hers.

Thank You, Father, for the comfort and beauty of our loved ones' hands, just as we rest our lives in Yours.

MONICA MORRIS

APRIL 3

The Love Is There

We love because he first loved us.

—1 JOHN 4:19 (NIV)

There were times when loneliness came over me as I was caring for my son, Ian. Ian has autism and uses as few words as possible to communicate. He's not a hugger, and when I do hug him, he tends to stiffen up some. Even so, I've always been determined not to withhold hugs from him because it's important for him to know that he is dearly loved.

Recently, I was going to attend a women's conference for a few days and had arranged for Ian to be cared for by others. He knew I was leaving when he saw my suitcase at the door. As I always did when I left him, I hugged him and said, "Bye, Ian. I love you." Usually Ian would just say, "Bye," but this time he said, "You'll be back." At that moment, it was as if my son had said "I love you" in his own way because I knew he was going to miss me. I immediately gave him another hug, and then he said, "Bye."

As I left, I realized that just because love isn't outwardly reciprocated doesn't mean it's not there. At times, I don't always feel God's love, but I know it's there because He tells me so in His Word. In unexpected moments, God has a way of showing His love to me through others.

Lord, thank You for the spontaneous ways You show Your love to us. Help me remember that my love for others comes from the fact that You first loved me.

LINDA D. WAUGH

APRIL 4

Forgive and Forget

“For I will forgive their wickedness and
will remember their sins no more.”

—HEBREWS 8:12 (NIV)

Although having been taught the importance of forgiving and forgetting since childhood, I’ve gained a new appreciation for it in recent years. Especially the forgetting part.

Since my husband’s brain tumor, heart attack, stroke, and fall with traumatic brain injury, he has become an expert at forgetting. He suffers both long- and short-term memory loss, but the short-term loss challenges him most. He may or may not remember what happened minutes before. At times, he amazes me with all he remembers. Other times, he surprises me with what he forgets. Yet, in many cases, I now look upon his forgetfulness as a gift.

Recently, while I was working in another room, he abandoned his walker and squeezed into a tight space to open the window blinds. The problem was, he couldn’t turn to exit without falling. When I discovered his predicament, my fear, coupled with impatience, caused me to lash out at him. A little later, I regained my composure and was filled with regret. When I apologized for my hatefulness, my husband simply smiled and said, “I don’t remember you being hateful.” Our relationship was restored before I sought his pardon.

That’s what I desire when anyone apologizes to me. I want to be able to smile and say, “Let’s just forget you did that,” and then forget it.

Lord, teach me to forgive and forget as You do.

DIANA DERRINGER

APRIL 5

Chest Pains

Do your best, prepare for the worst—then trust God to bring victory.
—PROVERBS 21:31 (MSG)

Mom, are you okay?" I asked.
"Chest pains," she said.

I rang for the on-site nurse, who rushed to Mom's room.

"Are you okay, Flo?" she asked.

"I already told that lady." Mom pointed at me as though I were a stranger. "My chest hurts."

The nurse and I exchanged concerned looks as she lifted her stethoscope to Mom's heart. The nurse tried unsuccessfully to hold back a laugh.

"Is she okay?" I asked, puzzled at her reaction.

"Yes, I think she'll make a full recovery." She lifted Mom's blouse to show that her bra was on backward. We adjusted it correctly.

"Is that better?" I asked.

"Is what better?" Mom asked. "I'm hungry."

Lord, remind me not to always assume the worst in situations. I need to trust You to bring the victory. Thank You for Your victories.

KRISTY DEWBERRY