

CELEBRATE
RECOVERY
— 30 —
ANNIVERSARY

Celebrate Recovery®

Healing from Hurts, Habits, and Hang-ups

NEWLY UPDATED EDITION

365 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

JOHN BAKER
JOHNNY BAKER
MAC OWEN

To

From

Date

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Dedication

This book is joyfully dedicated to the following:

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The
one and only true Higher Power!

Our families, especially our wives, for their love and support.

To all the Celebrate Recovery Leaders from all over the world.

And to those just starting their Celebrate Recovery journey.

In His steps,
John, Johnny, and Mac



Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Rodney Holmstrom for his input, ideas, and continued prayer support for the *Celebrate Recovery Daily Devotional*.

Rodney truly loves Jesus, his family, and Celebrate Recovery!

Thank you,
John, Johnny, and Mac



Introduction

Hi, my name is John Baker. I'm a believer who struggles with alcoholism and food addiction."

Even before God gave me the vision for Celebrate Recovery, reading daily devotionals was a major part of my recovery. However, the recovery devotionals back in the '80s were all missing one very important element—the most important element of our recoveries and lives—Jesus Christ!


I can vividly remember waking up each morning, reaching for my two devotionals, and reading the thoughts for that day. As the days passed, my hunger for growing in my relationship with my Higher Power, the one and only true High Power, Jesus Christ, continued to increase.

It was during that time that God gave me the vision for Celebrate Recovery. For the next six weeks, my wife, Cheryl, and I spent hour after hour putting that vision into words. When we were done, the vision was contained in a thirteen-page, single-spaced letter. I gave that letter to my pastor, Rick Warren. Within a week, he called me into his office and said, "Great, John. You do it!"

Celebrate Recovery was born! The first meeting was held on November 21, 1991. The ministry is now in its third decade. And now we finally have the *Celebrate Recovery Daily Devotional*.

It is my prayer that the *Celebrate Recovery Daily Devotional* will be a very helpful tool in your recovery journey. Each daily devotion contains a Bible verse and an inspirational story. The devotion ends with a short prayer for you to share directly with God to help you live out a new growth opportunity for each day.

If you are a newcomer to Celebrate Recovery, I encourage you to be faithful in using this devotional. It will help you stay connected to your program as it daily encourages you. If you have been in recovery for



years, you will be refreshed as you are daily reminded of the progress you have made in your recovery. But, more importantly, you will continue to grow as you focus on each day's new challenges and discover God's ever-present strength and care for you.

I believe that everyone will benefit from hearing from the three different authors of this devotional. You will receive three different perspectives of what we each have learned on our individual roads to recovery. Johnny Baker and Mac Owen are gifted speakers, teachers, and storytellers. The three voices in this devotional all have a different writing style, but our daily messages are all based on what God can do for us through His power and working the Celebrate Recovery program.

The best way to use this devotional is to make it a healthy habit. Use it every day. It doesn't matter if you read it when you wake up or before you go to sleep. Just continue to use it. It is my prayer that as you do, you will daily discover deeper relationships, especially with your Lord and Savior!

To God be the glory!

John Baker

The First Step

"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."

ROMANS 7:18

No one gets to start in the middle—we're all beginners in one area of our lives or another. But for many of us, what we need is more like a new beginning, a fresh start, a walking journey from chaos to wholeness that is accomplished one step at a time. We call that journey "recovery." Let's look at that first step:

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors. That our lives had become unmanageable.

Our first step is a big one. We are finally ready to admit that we are powerless to control an addiction or a behavior. The harder we try, the more unmanageable it becomes. Our lives have descended into chaos. When we take that first big step—giving up control—we are stepping away from denial and acknowledging our own need.

There is hope in that first step, for we can't be helped until we admit that we need help. Until then we are trying to be God in our own lives, and really we just aren't up to the task. We are powerless to control much of anything by our own power. Step 1 allows us to find freedom from ourselves.

PRAYER

Father God, today I take that first important step toward healing and wholeness. I admit to you that I'm powerless over the strongholds that have taken over my life. I desperately need your help. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Single Step

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

HEBREWS 12:1

I can remember being at a point when I knew my life was spinning out of control. I knew there were a lot of things I needed to change. But I didn't want to alter my current lifestyle too much. So I looked for ways to get some help without having to make drastic changes. I attended some secular meetings, for example, but didn't really commit to their programs. Then when nothing happened, I would say, "Why isn't this working? Maybe God doesn't love me. Maybe I don't deserve to change."

The truth is, I didn't need one more thing to cram into my messed-up life. What I needed was something to *replace* my messed-up life. I needed to let go of my old life and hand it over to God. I finally did that and now, twenty years later, I can't imagine why it took me so long to do something so right and true and amazing.

A race begins with a single step, and so does recovery. The only way to run with perseverance is to hang on to God's hand and let him take the lead. True change comes only when we die to ourselves and allow Christ to set the pace.

PRAYER

Father God, thank you for taking charge of my mess and helping me run my race with confidence. You are responsible for everything I am and ever hope to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

On a Mission

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4

We had a full house this year for Thanksgiving dinner—kids and grandkids everywhere. Once all our guests had been served, we got our plates and went to find a place to sit. My wife chose to join the ladies, and I sat down with the grandkids. The kids finished quickly, put their dishes in the sink, and hurried outside to play. And I found myself sitting all alone at the table.

I wasn't alone for long, though. In just a minute, our oldest granddaughter came back in and sat down with me. "I really don't want to go out and play right now. I think I'll just stay here with you, Grandpa," she said sweetly. It touched my heart to know that she was already learning how important it is not to leave people alone. We had a great conversation as I finished my meal. Then she went outside to play.

When we see someone sitting alone, we ought to be the ones who go over and sit down beside them. We don't even have to say much. Just our presence means more than we will ever know. God has promised that he will never desert us or leave us alone. Let's thank him for his faithfulness by being there for others.

PRAYER

Father, you have promised never to leave us alone. Help us to be that comforting presence to others as we have opportunity. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Best-Laid Plans

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.

JAMES 4:13

We all know that our plans don't always go the way we expect them to. For example, recently I was sitting in an airplane, listening to the couple in front of me. They were upset, and with good reason. They had been delayed getting through security and missed their connection, which caused them to lose a day of their vacation in Mexico. Now they were sharing their experience with anyone who would listen. "We have to get a hotel when we land and wait until tomorrow to make our connection." You could tell they were trying to have a good attitude about it, but finding it hard to accept any kind of positive spin.

Such occurrences are just facts of life. We've all made plans and watched them collapse around us. Those are the times we need to leave space for God in our lives. He always has a reason when he disrupts our plans, but he won't necessarily share that reason with us. A traffic tie-up, an unplanned phone call, or a missed connection is very often God's doing, even if it ruins our own carefully laid plans.

I don't know if that couple on my flight will have a God moment as a result of a long TSA line, but I know this: If God decides to mess with our plans, get ready. He will almost surely have something better planned for our day.

PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, order my day, direct my steps, make my plans conform to yours.
I long to do your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

What Is Freedom?

"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

JOHN 8:32 NCV

Many years ago when I was in the service, the Fourth of July was approaching. It was the job of my squadron's safety officer to develop a slogan and put up posters discouraging drinking over the holiday weekend.

We had no accidents that year, and it was attributed partly to the slogan this guy came up with: "He who comes forth with a fifth on the fourth may not come forth on the fifth."

What comes to mind when you hear the words *Fourth of July*? *Independence Day*? *The Declaration of Independence*? *World War II*? When I think of the Fourth of July, I think of freedom. But what is true freedom?

Abraham Lincoln said, "Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and, under a just God, cannot long retain it." And we have all heard the great quote from Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death." But, here again, what is true liberty?

The basic test of freedom is not in what we are free to do but rather in what we are free *not* to do! Today, I am free not to drink! For me that's a very precious freedom.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I want to celebrate freedom in my life. Help me to openly and honestly deal with those things that take away my freedom to live in a manner that pleases you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Anti-Sway

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

JOHN 14:16–17

My wife and I were traveling from Louisiana to Colorado, pulling a trailer behind our truck. We weren't on the road long before the trailer started swaying almost uncontrollably. Two hours later, after driving well below the speed limit, we pulled into a trailer company to see what could be done.

One of the employees said he could install an anti-sway bar on the trailer, and that should solve the problem. One hour and \$120 later, we were back on the road. And lo and behold, the trailer tracked right behind the truck perfectly. We had stopped, admitted we had a problem, taken the advice of the technician, and made the application. Now we could travel on and do it safely.

In Celebrate Recovery we learn that we can't walk the road to recovery alone. Just like the trailer, we can develop a "sway" that will throw us off track and back into our addictions. So we start by stepping out of denial and admitting that we do have problems. Then we turn our lives over to Jesus Christ, the Great Technician. He gives us the Holy Spirit, who takes up residence within us and serves as an anti-sway Counselor-Comforter. The Holy Spirit keeps us safe and assures us that we never have to walk this road alone again.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for your Holy Spirit who keeps us safe in this temptation-filled world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Baking Cakes

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'"

LUKE 14:28–30

Right now my wife and my mother are decorating a birthday cake for my daughter. It's a pretty princess cake. When I peeked in earlier, they were getting everything ready, checking to be sure they had everything they needed.

The whole cake business seems pretty simple to me—you bake it, frost it, eat it. But apparently, to do the job right, there are steps, lots of steps. For instance, my wife just told me that a cake needs to cool down before it's decorated. Who knew? They aren't just putting some frosting on the cake and hoping for the best. They're being very methodical, thinking through each step.

That commitment to doing things right can be applied to all of us. Whether we're building or baking or rebooting our lives, we need to take the time to do the job right. It's important to make sure we are set up, ready to go, at each place in our lives *before* we move on to the next step.

Let's take a moment to stop and think about the process. What is it God wants to do in our lives next?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me to be wise as I walk through the steps of my life. Show me how to prepare my heart for each step in its time. In Jesus' name, Amen.

What's a Nickel Worth?

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other; or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

MATTHEW 6:24

It's impossible to serve two masters—really, just physically, mentally, and emotionally impossible. Those who foolishly try will find themselves failing at both. Why? The heart that pursues money and possessions will never be satisfied. It will always want more and more—a big house, a new car, a six-foot big-screen TV, trips, and all the other things money can buy.

When those things have been obtained, other things will pop up until finally, they push out everything else in our lives. We find ourselves running around pouring all our time and effort into protecting and maintaining our money and possessions. At that point, what we think we own really owns us!

I know, because this is how I tried to live. All I got for my trouble was an insatiable emptiness on the inside. But that changed when I surrendered my life to Christ! I set my heart in pursuit of God and found all I had been looking for.

I finally understood that the only lasting thing that could fill my emptiness was a personal relationship with the Savior! I began to see that everything I had was a gift from God. Today, I attempt to live my life by using the treasures God entrusts me with to help others. The joy and fullness I experience from living this way is truly indescribable!

PRAYER

Thank you, Father God, for filling me with your presence. You are all that I desire, all I could ever want or need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Even When I'm Cranky

Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

ISAIAH 49:13

As my wife and I boarded a flight for London to teach at a training seminar, we were told that there would be a delay. The plane was full, and after two hours on the runway, most of us were hot, tired, sweaty, and becoming more and more cranky and agitated. But seated in front of us was a woman who provided a much-needed example of Christlike behavior in uncomfortable circumstances.

This woman was a grandmother, who was juggling a screaming toddler. Though the baby cried for the full two hours, the woman never once lost her composure or let the smile slip from her face. Instead she continued to try to comfort the child. Once the plane finally took off, the baby went to sleep. But the grandmother continued to hold her for the next nine hours. Never once did she complain, set the baby down, or hand her to someone else.

Long after the flight was over, I thought about how our heavenly Father is much like that grandmother. He puts up with us when we are cranky, tired, crying, complaining, and just plain no fun to be around. He never loses his cool or his desire to comfort us. He's right there carrying us, never putting us down or handing us off to someone else. No matter what we're going through, we can trust that he will always be there for us.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I'm thankful for your faithful watch-care over us. You have promised never to leave us no matter what circumstances we encounter. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hide and Seek

*"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne,
just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."*

REVELATION 3:21

I was watching my wife play hide-and-seek with our grandkids. All the kids ran off to hide—except one. Our three-year-old grandson ran around a little bit and then put his hands over his eyes. Apparently, he thought that if he couldn't see anyone else, they couldn't see him.

That sounds silly, but when it comes to spiritual things, I sometimes do the same thing. I have been known to reason that if I can't see the devil, maybe he isn't there. Of course, I find out pretty quickly, as did my grandson, the error in that way of thinking. When we cover our eyes, we only make ourselves more vulnerable.

Instead of hiding our eyes, we must stand up and fight—for our recovery, for our relationships, for our lives. Jesus didn't take a seat until he overcame the enemy's most powerful weapon—death! We can't stop fighting either, not until we sit down with our Father in heavenly places.

PRAYER

Lord God, strengthen me as I stand to fight the good fight of faith. I want to take my stand against the enemy until the day you take me home to be with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.