

Jesus Always

EMBRACING JOY
in HIS PRESENCE



Note-Taking Edition

Sarah Young



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

*I dedicate this book to Jesus—
my Lord and my God, my Savior and Friend.*

Then will I go to the altar of God, to
God, my joy and my delight.

—Psalm 43:4

You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

—Psalm 16:11 NKJV

Though you have not seen him [Jesus], you love him;
and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him
and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

—1 Peter 1:8



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am thankful to work with such a gifted, dedicated team. Laura Minchew and Michael Aulisio shepherd my publishing so creatively and effectively. Kris Bearss, my faithful editor, knows my work wonderfully well and edits my writing with just the right touch. Finally, I want to thank Joey Paul, my first publisher, who came up with the idea for *Jesus Listens*, and Jennifer Gott, who worked to pull everything together. I'm blessed to have the help of all these talented friends!


INTRODUCTION

Writing *Jesus Always* has been a marathon for me. I began working on it in September 2012, while I was still living in Perth, Western Australia. In 2013 my husband and I moved back to the US—a complicated international move from one side of the planet to the other. I lived out of suitcases for half a year, staying in seven different homes, moving back and forth between some of them multiple times. Needless to say, I didn't get much writing done during that six-month period.

When we finally settled into our permanent home in Tennessee, I was delighted to be able to start writing again. Working on *Jesus Always* became my top priority: I chose to postpone many worthwhile activities in order to complete the book. It was a pleasure and a privilege to be able to set aside large blocks of time for focusing on Jesus and His Word.

Jesus Always is designed to increase your Joy and strengthen your relationship with Jesus. If you belong to Him, your story has an indescribably happy ending—no matter what is happening in your life right now. And just knowing that your story finishes so wondrously well can fill your present earth-journey with Joy. If you do not yet know Christ as your Savior, be assured that I'm praying for you every day—that you will ask Him to forgive all your sins and give you the glorious gift of eternal life. Then you too can experience the amazing Joy of being Jesus' beloved friend.

I have been contending with impaired health for many years—since August 2001. In my quest to find healing, I've gone to a number of doctors and



tried a variety of medical treatments. I continue to have significant limitations in my life, yet I have found Joy in my journey.

My inability to be “out and about” very much has given me more time to focus on Jesus and enjoy His Presence. It has also provided opportunities to spend time with precious friends and acquaintances. I no longer drive because of the chronic vertigo I’ve had since 2008. As a result, caring friends have driven me to various places, often staying with me during long waits for doctors. Spending time with these wonderful people has been a source of much pleasure for me.

Leading a quiet life helps me look for and find little treasures that brighten my day: a cardinal or blue jay in flight, a “coincidence” reminding me that God is at work in the details of my life. I try to take time every day to jot down in a notebook a few of the recent blessings I’ve received. I call it my “Thanks Book,” but it could just as easily be called my “Joy Book.” Looking for good things and thanking God for them cheers me up and changes my perspective, helping me see my life through a grid of gratitude.

I love the story of a weak, old coal miner whose body had been ravaged by his many years of hard labor in the mines. In his humble home there was a table with a small bowl of thin porridge on it. Holding a piece of bread in his coal-stained hand, he was ready to eat his meager meal. But first he knelt beside the table, joyfully exclaiming over and over again: “All this, and Jesus too! All this, and Jesus too!”

This story inspires me and helps me grasp the beautiful truth that having Jesus in my life means I am blessed beyond belief! I’m convinced that thankfulness is one of the most important ingredients in a joyful heart.

I enjoy singing this short, simple song in the morning: “This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.” It helps me approach

the day as a precious gift from God—remembering that every breath I breathe is from Him.

The subtitle of *Jesus Always* is *Embracing Joy in His Presence*. We embrace Joy by embracing Jesus—loving Him, trusting Him, staying in communication with Him. We can choose to live this way even during our most challenging times. In fact, the more difficult our circumstances, the brighter our gladness will shine—in vivid contrast to the dark backdrop of adversity. Thus we make the Light of Jesus’ Presence visible to people around us.

I consider the Bible a priceless treasure; it is the only inspired, inerrant, unchanging Word of God. I enjoy reading it—pondering *the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God*. During the last five years, memorizing Scripture has become increasingly precious to me. It’s so comforting to have God’s Word in my heart all the time—guiding and encouraging me day and night.

As in all my devotional writing, *Jesus Always* is written from the perspective of Jesus speaking to you, the reader. Because I revere the Bible, I always endeavor to make my writing consistent with biblical truth. I include Scripture in the devotions (indicated with italics), and each entry is followed by three or four Bible references. I encourage you to look up and read these scriptures carefully; they are words of Life! A few of the devotions in this book reflect ideas found in *Dear Jesus* or *Jesus Lives*. These have been included in *Jesus Always* to increase the “Joy-quotient” in the book.

Ever since the publication of *Jesus Calling*, I have prayed daily for people who are reading my books. Over the years, these prayers have become longer, covering a wide range of topics. Even when I’ve been hospitalized, I have not missed a day of praying for readers. I consider this a God-given responsibility and a rewarding privilege. I am delighted to add *Jesus Always* readers to this

precious community. One of my most heartfelt daily prayers is that the Lord will bring many readers into His kingdom of *inexpressible and glorious Joy!*

Dear reader, as you make your way through the pages of this book, I long for you to embrace the Joy of a close relationship with Jesus. He is with you at all times, and in His Presence there is *fullness of Joy.*

BOUNTIFUL BLESSINGS!

Sarah Young

January



*Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.*

PSALM 119:105 NLT

DO NOT DWELL ON THE PAST. See, I am doing a new thing! As you begin a fresh year, rejoice that I am continually working newness into your life. Don't let recent disappointments and failures define you or dampen your expectations. This is the time to make a fresh start! I am a God of unlimited creativity; expect Me to do surprising things in this year that stretches out before you.

Today is a precious gift. The present moment is where I meet with you, beloved. So seek My Face throughout *this day that I have made*. I have carefully prepared it for you—with tender attention to every detail. I want you to *rejoice and be glad in it*.

Search for signs of My loving Presence as you journey along *the path of Life*. Look for the little pleasures I have strewn alongside your pathway—sometimes in surprising places—and thank Me for each one. Your thankfulness will keep you close to Me and help you find Joy in your journey.

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”
—ISAIAH 43:18–19

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.—PSALM 118:24 ESV

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.—PSALM 16:11 NKJV

I AM YOUR JOY! These four words can light up your life. Since I am always with you, *the Joy of My Presence* is continually accessible to you. You can open up to My Presence through your trust in Me, your love for Me. Try saying, “Jesus, You are my Joy.” My Light will shine upon you and within you as you *rejoice in Me*, your Savior. Ponder all I have done for you and all that I am to you. This will lift you up above your circumstances.

When you became My follower, I empowered you to rise above the conditions in your life. I filled you with My Spirit, and this Holy Helper has limitless Power. I promised that *I will come back and take you to be with Me* in heaven—that you may be where I am forever. Whenever your world is looking dark, brighten your perspective by focusing on Me. Relax in My Presence, and hear Me saying, “Beloved, I am your Joy!”

Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.—PSALM 21:6

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!
—PHILIPPIANS 4:4 NKJV

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”—JOHN 14:3

BE STILL, AND KNOW that I am God. Most Christians are familiar with this command, but not so many take it seriously. Yet for those who *do*, blessings flow like *streams of living water*. As these believers sit in stillness—focusing on Me and My Word—their perception of Me expands and their troubles shrink in importance.

I want *you* to share in these blessings, beloved. Take time, take time with Me. While you rest in My Presence, I untangle your thoughts and help you view things more biblically. Remember: *My Word is a lamp to guide your feet and a light for your path*. Biblical thinking illuminates the path before you so you can find your way.

It's crucial to know not only that *I am God* but that *I made you and you are Mine*. You are a *sheep of My pasture*. Sheep have very limited understanding of what their shepherd is doing for them, but they follow him anyway. Similarly, as My “sheep,” your job is to trust Me and follow wherever I lead.

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”—PSALM 46:10 NKJV

“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”—JOHN 7:38

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.
—PSALM 119:105 NLT

Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.—PSALM 100:3

FIND JOY IN ME, for I am your Strength. It is vital to keep your Joy alive, especially when you're in the throes of adversity. Whenever you are struggling with difficulties, you need to guard your thoughts and spoken words carefully. If you focus too much on all the things that are wrong, you will become increasingly discouraged—and your strength will be sapped. As soon as you realize what is happening, stop this hurtful process immediately. Turn to Me, asking Me to help you with all your struggles.

Take time to praise Me: Speak or sing words of worship. Read scriptures that help you rejoice in Me.

Remember that your problems are temporary but *I* am eternal—and so is your relationship with Me. As you find Joy in Me, delighting in *My unfailing Love* for you, your strength will increase. This is *the Joy of the Lord*, which is yours for all time and throughout eternity!

Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”—NEHEMIAH 8:10

Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.”—PSALM 66:1–3

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.—PSALM 143:8

LET MY CONSOLATION—My comfort—bring Joy to your soul. When anxiety is welling up within you, come to Me and *pour out your heart*. Then sit quietly in My Presence while I comfort you, helping you see things from My perspective. I remind you of your heavenly destination, for you are indeed on your way to Glory! I infuse My Joy and Peace into your heart, mind, and soul.

When you are joyful, this changes the way you view the world around you. Even though you see much darkness, you can also see the Light of My Presence continuing to shine. Moreover, the Joy in your soul gives you buoyancy, enabling you to rise above the countless problems in your life. Once you have gained this perspective, you will discover that you can comfort others in the midst of their troubles. They will find in you the consolation that you have found in Me. Thus your Joy becomes contagious, “infecting” those around you with Joy in *their* souls!

When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.—PSALM 94:19

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.—PSALM 62:8

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 have received from God.—2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4

JANUARY 6

IT IS POSSIBLE for My followers to be joyful and afraid at the same time. When an angel told the women who came to My tomb that I had risen from the dead, they were “*afraid yet filled with joy.*” So do not let fear keep you from experiencing the Joy of My Presence. It is not a luxury reserved for times when your problems—and the crises in the world—seem under control. My loving Presence is yours to enjoy today, tomorrow, and forever!

Do not give in to joyless living by letting worries about the present or the future weigh you down. Instead, remember that *neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate you from My Love.*

Talk with Me about your fears, expressing your thoughts and feelings freely. Relax in My Presence and entrust all your concerns to Me. Then ask Me to bless you with My Joy, which *no one can take from you.*

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.—MATTHEW 28:8

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—ROMANS 8:38–39

*“So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”
—JOHN 16:22 ESV*

THE MORE OFTEN YOU TURN your thoughts to Me, the more you will enjoy My *perfect Peace*. This is a challenging goal, but it is also a glorious gift. I, *the Shepherd of your soul*, am always accessible to you.

You can train your mind to turn from other things and focus on Me. When you experience something beautiful, thank Me for it. When a loved one brings you joy, remember that I am the Source of this pleasure. Post reminders of My Presence in your home or car or office. It's also wise to memorize Scripture since it is ultimately about Me.

Turning your thoughts to Me demonstrates your trust in Me. Even undesired things such as pain and problems can be reminders to communicate with Me. Focusing on My Presence protects you from getting stuck on problems—going over and over them in your mind without making any progress.

Be creative in finding new ways to turn your thoughts toward Me. Thus you can enjoy the wondrous gift of My Peace.

He will keep in perfect peace all those who trust in him, whose thoughts turn often to the Lord!—ISAIAH 26:3 TLB

For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.—1 PETER 2:25 NASB

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.—PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

IN ME YOU CAN DISCOVER JOY *inexpressible and full of Glory!* You will not find this kind of pleasure anywhere else; it is available only in your relationship with Me. So trust Me, beloved, and walk confidently along your life-path. As we journey together, you will encounter many obstacles—some of which are quite painful. Expect these difficulties each day, and don't let them throw you off course. Refuse to let adversity keep you from enjoying Me. In My Presence deep sorrow can coexist with even deeper Joy.

Your life with Me is an adventure, and there are always some dangers involved in adventurous journeys. Ask Me to give you courage so that you can face your troubles boldly. Keep your hope fully fastened on Me and on the heavenly reward that awaits you. Your Joy will expand astronomically—beyond anything you could possibly imagine—when you reach your eternal home. There you will see Me *face to Face*, and your Joy will know no bounds!

. . . Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.—1 PETER 1:8 NKJV

. . . Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.—2 CORINTHIANS 6:10

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.—1 CORINTHIANS 13:12

I AM YOUR TREASURE! Sometimes you feel frazzled—pulled this way and that by people and circumstances around you. Your yearning for meaning and deep connection drives you into more and more activity. Even when your body is still, your mind tends to race—anticipating future problems and searching for solutions. You need to remember that *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Me*. Remind yourself of this glorious truth frequently, whispering: “Jesus, You are my Treasure. In You I am complete.”

When you prize Me above all else, making Me your *First Love*, you are protected from feeling fragmented. Whenever you find your thoughts straying, you can train your mind to return to the One who completes you. This gives focus to your life and helps you stay close to Me. Living near Me, enjoying My Presence, involves seeking to *obey My commands*. I am telling you this *so that My Joy may be in you and that your Joy may be complete*.

My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.—COLOSSIANS 2:2–3

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”—REVELATION 2:4 NKJV

“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”—JOHN 15:10–11

BEWARE OF OVERTHINKING THINGS—obsessing about unimportant matters. When your mind is idle, you tend to go into planning mode: attempting to figure things out and make various decisions before you really need to do so. This is an unproductive way of trying to grasp control, and it's a waste of your precious time. Often, you end up changing your mind or forgetting what you decided. There is a time for planning, but it's definitely not *all* the time—or even most of it.

Seek to live in the present moment, where My Presence awaits you continually. Refresh yourself in My nearness, letting My Love soak into your innermost being. Relax with Me, putting aside problems so you can be attentive to Me and receive more of My Love. *Your soul thirsts for Me*, but often you don't realize what you're really longing for: awareness of My Presence. Let Me *lead you beside quiet waters and restore your soul*. Just as lovers don't need to say much to communicate deeply, so it is in your relationship with Me—the Lover of your soul.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.—EPHESIANS 3:17–19

O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.—PSALM 63:1 NKJV

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.—PSALM 23:2–3

THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING, and a season for every activity under heaven. When you seek My Face and My will—searching for guidance—I may show you the next step on your journey without revealing the appointed time for you to take that step. Instead of going full speed ahead as soon as you know what is next, you must wait until I show you *when* I want you to go forward.

There is a season for everything. This means that even the most fulfilling times in life must eventually give way to something new. Whereas some of My followers “champ at the bit” to forge ahead into new territory, others hold back even when I am clearly directing them to go forward. Moving from a comfortable season of life into a new situation can feel scary—especially to those who dislike change. However, I want you to trust Me enough to cling to Me and follow wherever I lead, *whenever* I choose. *Your times are in My hands.*

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.—ECCLESIASTES 3:1

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”
—ISAIAH 43:19

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.
—2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 NKJV

My times are in your hands.—PSALM 31:15

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE WITH ME!

Let these powerful words light up your mind and encourage your heart. Refuse to be intimidated by the way things look at the moment. I am training you to *live by faith, not by sight*.

The sense of sight is a spectacular gift from Me, to be used joyfully and gratefully. However, it's easy to be mesmerized by all the visual stimulation surrounding you—and forget about Me. Faith is a type of vision that connects you to Me. Instead of being so focused on the visible world, *dare* to trust in Me and My promises.

Live close to Me, your Savior and Friend, but remember: I am also infinite God. When I lived on your planet, *My miraculous signs revealed My Glory, and My disciples put their faith in Me*. I continue to do miracles in your world, according to My will and purposes. Seek to align your will with Mine and to see things from My perspective. Exert your faith to ask for big things, and *watch in hope for Me* to work.

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."—MARK 10:27 ESV

We live by faith, not by sight.—2 CORINTHIANS 5:7

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.—JOHN 2:11

As for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.—MICAH 7:7

YOU ARE FULLY KNOWN. I know absolutely everything about you, and I love you with perfect, *unfailing Love*. Many people are searching for greater self-understanding and self-acceptance. Underlying their search is a desire to find someone who truly understands them and accepts them as they are. I am the Someone who can fully satisfy this deep-seated longing. It is in your relationship with Me that you discover who you really are.

I encourage you to be real with Me—dropping all pretenses and opening yourself fully to Me. As you draw near, utter these inspired words: “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*” In the Light of My holy gaze, you will see things you need to change. But don’t despair; I will help you. Continue resting in My Presence, receiving My Love that flows freely into you through your openness to Me. Take time to let this powerful Love soak in deeply—filling up your empty spaces and overflowing into joyous worship. Rejoice greatly, for you are fully known and forever loved!

For now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known.—1 CORINTHIANS 13:12 HCSB

The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.—PSALM 147:11

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.—PSALM 139:23–24

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE is all about trusting Me: in good times *and* in hard times. I am Lord over all your circumstances, so I want to be involved in every aspect of your life. You can quickly connect with Me by affirming your confidence in Me here and now. When your world seems dark and you trust Me anyway, My Light shines brightly through you. Your display of transcendent faith weakens spiritual forces of evil. And My supernatural Light showing through you blesses and strengthens people around you.

Clinging to Me in the dark requires you to persistently exert your willpower. But while you're grasping onto Me, remember: My hand has an eternal grip on yours—I will never let go of you! Moreover, My Spirit helps you keep hanging on. When you feel on the verge of giving up, cry out for His assistance: "Help me, Holy Spirit!" This brief prayer enables you to tap into His limitless resources. Even when your circumstances look dark and threatening, My Light is still *shining on* in surpassing splendor!

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.—1 JOHN 1:7

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.—PSALM 62:8

Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.
—PSALM 139:10 NKJV

And the Light shines on in the darkness, for the darkness has never overpowered it [put it out or absorbed it or appropriated it, and is unreceptive to it].—JOHN 1:5 AMP

WHEN THINGS ARE NOT GOING YOUR way, refuse to get flustered. Stop what you're doing and take some deep breaths. *Seek My Face*—spend a few moments enjoying My Presence. Tell Me about the matters that are frustrating you. I will help you see things from My perspective and sort out what is really important. Moreover, I will open up the way before you as you press on in trusting dependence, remaining in communication with Me.

Your desire to feel in control is often the culprit behind your frustration. You plan your day and expect others to behave in ways that expedite your plans. When that doesn't happen, you face a choice: to resent the situation or to trust Me. Remember that *I am in control and My ways are higher than yours—as the heavens are higher than the earth*. Instead of getting agitated about setbacks to your schedule, use them as reminders: I am your Savior-God, and you are My beloved follower. Relax in My sovereign control, *trusting in My unfailing Love*.

When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."—PSALM 27:8 NKJV

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."—ISAIAH 55:9 NKJV

Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.—PSALM 43:5

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.—PSALM 13:5

I BROUGHT YOU OUT into a spacious place. *I rescued you because I delighted in you.* You are in a spacious place of salvation—saved from being a slave to sin. Your salvation is the greatest, most lavish gift you could ever receive. Never stop thanking Me for this infinitely precious gift! In the morning when you awaken, rejoice that I have adopted you into My royal family. Before you go to sleep at night, praise Me for My glorious grace. Live in ways that help others see Me as the fountainhead of abundant, never-ending Life.

I delighted in you, not because of worthiness in you. Rather, I *chose* to delight in you and lavish My Love on you. Since your best efforts could never be sufficient to save you, I clothed you in My own perfect righteousness. Wear this *clothing of salvation* gratefully—with overflowing Joy. Remember that you are royalty in My kingdom, where Glory-Light shines eternally. *Live as a child of Light,* securely robed in radiant righteousness.

He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.—PSALM 18:19

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”—JOHN 8:34

I am overwhelmed with joy in the LORD my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom dressed for his wedding or a bride with her jewels.—ISAIAH 61:10 NLT

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.—EPHESIANS 5:8

I AM ALWAYS DOING SOMETHING NEW in your life. So try to keep an open mind when you encounter things you have not seen before—or even imagined.

Do not recoil from the unfamiliar without even taking time to determine whether it might be from Me. Consider the trapeze artist: She must leave the safety of the swing she is on in order to move toward her goal. As she abandons the security of where she was, she will be briefly in flight—until she connects to the next trapeze.

At times *you* may feel as if you're “in flight” when you experience newness that feels uncomfortable. The temptation is to just criticize the changes and cling to the familiar. Instead of this knee-jerk response, come to Me in prayer. Tell Me your concerns, and ask Me to help you see the situation from My viewpoint. *I am always with you, and I hold you by your right hand. I guide you with My counsel—*helping you discern the best way to respond and go forward.

“Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled. . . . But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”—MATTHEW 9:17 ESV

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.—PROVERBS 18:10 NKJV

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”—MATTHEW 11:28

Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.—PSALM 73:23–24

I CALL YOU BY NAME and lead you. I know you—I know every detail about you. You are never a number or statistic to Me; My involvement in your life is far more personal and intimate than you can comprehend. So follow Me with a glad heart.

After My resurrection, when Mary Magdalene mistook Me for the gardener, I spoke one word: “*Mary.*” Hearing Me say her name, she recognized Me and *cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).*

Beloved, I also speak *your* name in the depths of your spirit. When you read your Bible, try inserting your name into appropriate passages. Remember: *I called you out of darkness into My marvelous Light.* I chose to set My *everlasting Love* upon you. Take time to “hear” Me speaking to you personally in Scripture, reassuring you of My Love. The unshakable knowledge that I love you forever provides a firm foundation for your life. It strengthens you so that you can follow Me faithfully and joyfully—*proclaiming My praises* as you journey through your life.

“The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. . . . My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”
—JOHN 10:3, 27

Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).—JOHN 20:16

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.—1 PETER 2:9 NKJV

The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”—JEREMIAH 31:3 NKJV

TO ENJOY MY PRESENCE MORE FULLY, you need to think less and less about yourself. This is not an arbitrary demand; it's the secret to living *more abundantly*. Self-forgetfulness is a delightful way to live!

Try to become aware of how much time you spend thinking about yourself. Take a look at your mind's contents. Though your thoughts are not visible to other people unless you choose to share them, I see each and every one. When you realize your thinking is unworthy of Me, make every effort to change the subject. If you're struggling with a self-centered idea that recurs again and again, try connecting it to a favorite scripture or a brief prayer. This forms a bridge for your attention—away from yourself and toward Me. For example, praying “I love You, Lord” can quickly direct your focus to Me.

If you have to repeat this process many times, don't be discouraged. You are training your mind to *seek My Face*, and this endeavor is pleasing to Me. *Seek Me*, beloved, *and live* abundantly.

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”—JOHN 10:10 NKJV

When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.”—PSALM 27:8 NKJV

This is what the LORD says to the house of Israel: “Seek me and live.”—AMOS 5:4

I AM THE JOY THAT NO ONE CAN TAKE away from you. Savor the wonders of this gift, spending ample time in My Presence. Rejoice that this blessing is yours—I am yours—for all eternity!

Many things in this world can bring you pleasure for a while, but they are all passing away because of death and decay. In Me you have a matchless Treasure—Joy in the One who is *the same yesterday, today, and forever*. No one can take this pleasure away from you, for I am faithful and I never change.

Whenever you feel joyless, the problem is not in the Source (Me) but in the receiver. You may be so focused on other things—either pleasures or difficulties in your life—that you’re neglecting your relationship with Me. The remedy is twofold: Remember that I am your *First Love*, and seek to put Me first in your life. Also, ask Me to increase your receptivity to My Presence. *Delight yourself in Me*, beloved, and receive Joy in full measure.

“So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.”—JOHN 16:22

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
—HEBREWS 13:8 NKJV

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”—REVELATION 2:4 NKJV

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.—PSALM 37:4

THOUGH THE MOUNTAINS BE SHAKEN and the hills be removed, yet My unfailing Love for you will not be shaken nor My covenant of Peace be removed. Nothing on earth seems as enduring or immovable as soaring, majestic mountains. When you stand on their heights, breathing in that rarified air, you can almost smell eternity. Yet My Love and My Peace are even *more* enduring than the greatest mountain on earth!

Think deeply about *My unfailing Love*. One of the meanings of “unfailing” is *inexhaustible*. No matter how needy you are or how many times you fail Me, My supply of Love for you will never run low. Another meaning of “unfailing” is *constant*. I do not love you more on days when you perform well, nor do I love you less when you fail badly.

I Myself am your Peace. Live close to Me so you can enjoy this supernatural Peace. Come freely into My Presence, beloved, even when you’re feeling bad about yourself. Remember who I am: *the Lord who has compassion on you.*

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.
—ISAIAH 54:10

“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.”—ISAIAH 51:6

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.—EPHESIANS 2:14 NKJV

WALK WITH ME in close, trusting Love-bonds of joyful dependence. “Joyful dependence” may sound like an oxymoron, but it is the most fulfilling way to live. When you delight in relying on Me, you are living according to My perfect design for you.

The relationship I offer you is full of *glorious riches*: I am totally trustworthy, and I reach out to you with *unfailing Love*. I am closer than the very air you are breathing. I rejoice when you seek to live in trusting reliance on Me. This strengthens our relationship—building more and more bonds of affection between us.

A happily married man and woman are connected by much more than law and morality. Their warm memories of shared experiences create ties that draw them close and keep them committed to each other. Dear one, I want you to know that I am totally committed to *you*! I can fill your heart with loving memories as you *walk in the Light of My Presence*, joyfully depending on Me.

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.—PHILIPPIANS 4:19

But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever.—PSALM 52:8

Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD. They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness.—PSALM 89:15–16

YOU WILL SEEK ME AND FIND ME when you seek Me with all your heart. I don't expect perfection in this pursuit; it's not about that at all. It is the effort itself that pleases Me—when you keep on seeking Me even though it's so difficult. Actually, the intensity of this challenging search blesses you. As you strive to find Me in your moments, your focus is on Me. While you trudge toward Me through countless distractions, your awareness of Me increases. Even if you don't feel close to Me, you find yourself communicating with Me. So there is a sense in which your efforts to find Me are self-fulfilling: I am richly present in your striving. As a result, you feel more alive—more awake and real—when you are actively pursuing Me.

Your willingness to pour yourself into this glorious quest delights My heart. This joyful journey is all about *perseverance*. As long as you continue seeking Me, you are on the right path. Moreover, your success is certain: *I will be found by you!*

"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD.—JEREMIAH 29:13–14

Therefore, 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

We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.—ROMANS 5:3 NKJV

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness.—2 PETER 1:5–6

STRENGTH AND JOY are in My dwelling place.
So the closer to Me you live, the stronger and more joyful you will be.

Invite Me to permeate your moments with My Presence. This helps you view people from a positive perspective. Whenever you're around someone who irritates you, don't focus on that person's flaws. Instead, gaze at *Me* through the eyes of your heart, and those irritants will wash over you without harming you—or hurting others. Judging other people is a sinful snare that draws you away from Me. How much better it is to *be joyful in Me, your Savior!*

The more you focus on Me, the more I can strengthen you. In fact, *I am your Strength*. You can train your mind to stay aware of Me even when other things are demanding your attention. I created you with an amazing brain that is able to be conscious of several things at once. Create a permanent place for Me in your mind, and My Light will shine on all your moments.

Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy in his dwelling place.—1 CHRONICLES 16:27

“Judge not, that you be not judged.”—MATTHEW 7:1 NKJV

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.—HABAKKUK 3:18–19