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15 MINUTE
DEVOTIONS
for COUPLES



Bob & Emilie Barnes

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This book is dedicated to all the couples who commit their 15-minute blocks of time each day to read these thoughts. Over the years we have come to realize that our bonding and mutual love for each other have grown when we do things together. You will find that this daily block of time will give you a better feeling of direction and joint commitment to your life purposes.

If time permits, do the "Taking Action" section together. Discuss the questions and delve into your mate's innermost thoughts about these activities. This block of time will help satisfy your common concern, "We never talk about anything!" These activities will help you bridge the communication gap if you have one. Through these devotions you will begin to see God doing a marvelous work in your lives. Each of your hearts will be opened to the other, and you will become more transparent in your lives.

You will begin talking about things you never thought possible. These discussions will have heavenly purpose and will open the door of your heart to let the Holy Spirit talk to both of you in new ways.

Even if you aren't a couple, but a single person, a single parent, or a single grandparent, you will find great challenges and insights in these pages.

May the Lord bless you as you read this book!

15 Minute Devotions for Couples

As we enter the last part of the '90s, God is at work among couples in America in a mighty way. More and more couples are hearing and responding to His call. Many are naming Jesus as their Lord and Savior for the first time, and others are rededicating themselves to the Lord. If these commitments are to make a significant impact on our families, our nation, and our world, they need to be nourished daily, and that, we pray, is where this book comes in.

One way we sustain our commitment to the Lord is to read His Word daily. The material in this devotional is designed to challenge and encourage couples in their spiritual journey by getting them into God's Word. In each of the following 15-minute entries you'll read a passage in Scripture and a short devotion based on that selection, pray about what you've read, and then be challenged to act on what you've learned.

Don't worry about reading the book from front to back. Skip around if you like. In the upper right-hand corner on the first page of each entry you'll find three boxes. Put a checkmark in one of the boxes each time you read it. In this way you can keep track of those devotions which you have read previously. But keep in mind that if you consistently spend 15 minutes a day for several weeks, you'll be on the way toward a lifelong habit of spending a few moments alone with God every day.

May the Lord richly bless you as you listen for and respond to His call, living on a higher plain than those around you. One of the cements that holds couples together is a joint commitment to common values and activities. Let this book be a part of that shared interest!

—Bob and Emilie Barnes



We are in too big a hurry, and we run by far more than we catch up with. The Bible tells us to “be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10 KJV). Beauty doesn’t shout. Loveliness is quiet. Our finest moods are not clamorous. The familiar appeals of the Divine are always in calm tones—a still, small voice.

—*Charles L. Allen*





The Stability of Your Life

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 33:1-12

Key Verse: Isaiah 33:6

*He will be the sure foundation for your times,
a rich store of salvation and wisdom and
knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to
this treasure.*



This week we received a letter from a dear friend whom we financially support in her ministry. She has expressed over the months that God has been guiding her in new ways but the light to the path isn't clear yet. She expresses changes on the horizons and isn't sure of what lies ahead, but her letter is a continuation of her search for new direction. She shares in her letter:

At this point in my life I am facing changes in many respects, and if I did not know the Lord and if I did not know that He establishes and directs my steps, I could be shaken by some of what I see happening around me (Psalm 37:23; Proverbs 16:9).



As I was thanking Him just a few days ago for the fact that I know He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8) and that although circumstances and relationships may change, He never changes nor forsakes me (Hebrews 13:5). He brought a verse to my mind that I have known over the years. Through this verse He has also brought comfort to me for these changing times I am in. The verse is Isaiah 33:6: “He shall be the stability of your times” (NASB).

Isn't it a comfort to know truths that confirm His faithfulness to us, and then in addition to realize that He is our stability!

The word *stability* means the strength to stand or endure; firmness; the property of a body that causes it, when disturbed from a condition of equilibrium, to develop forces that restore the original condition.

What a promise! When we may feel shaken, He is firm and stands and endures for us! He is that which will always restore us to a condition of equilibrium, no matter what!

If you are not now in a situation in which changing circumstances are a factor, then you may not appreciate fully what this promise has meant to me in these last days, but you know a time will come when changes will be a factor, and, as I said earlier, then you will want to embrace this truth. It will hold you with hope and confidence in a state of changes!

Thank you again for your faithfulness!



Here is one person who can recall and claim God's mighty Scriptures to see us through difficult times. Even though our stability is shaken in the present, He promises that He will always be the same—never wavering.

Changes become a factor in all of our lives. If not today, then surely tomorrow or the next day. Isn't it wonderful to know that when changes come we can go to God's Word to find the strength to see us through another situation! Let's not wait for the storm to seek verses that comfort and direct, but let's be prepared when these days appear on the horizon (and they surely will) and have these fantastic truths in our memory bank.

Prayer

Father God, we do not know when changes will appear, but we know they will. Prepare in our hearts those Scriptures that will give us everlasting promises. Make us aware as we read these Scriptures to pick out those that will strengthen our faith in You. We don't want to wait before we seek. We want to have hidden in our hearts those verses which give us assurance that You will be there in time of need. Thank You, God, for taking care of all the needs of the past, the present, and most assuredly the future. Amen.

Taking Action

- Memorize Isaiah 33:6.
- List in your journal five events in your life in which God has provided.
- Trust that He can be trusted for your future situations.



- Do you see any future changes for you and your family? What are they? What verses will help you through these changes?

Reading On

Psalm 37:23
Hebrews 13:8

Proverbs 16:9
Psalm 42:11



What Is Success?

Scripture Reading: Obadiah 1:2-7

Key Verse: Obadiah 1:3

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, "Who can bring me down on the ground?"



Last summer our family rented a modest cabin at Lake Arrowhead in the San Bernardino mountains about one hour from our home. It was going to be a quiet getaway to read, rest, and relax. We don't get to do these three R's enough.

During the course of the three days up there, my attention was drawn to a dusty old framed verse that skipped my attention until day two. It hung in one of the bathrooms, and as I took time to read it my eyes came across this collection of thoughts on success:

Great people are just ordinary people with an extra-ordinary amount of determination. . . . There is no gain without pain. When you fail to plan, you plan to fail. . . . Change your



thoughts and you can change your world. There are infinite possibilities in little beginnings if God is in them. Build a dream and the dream will build you. Inch by inch, anything is a cinch. I am God's project and God never fails. Don't let impossibilities intimidate you, do let possibilities motivate you. Make your decisions on "God's ability," not your ability. What you are is God's gift to you; what you make of yourself is your gift to God. It's possible to face the music with God's song in your heart. God's delays are not God's denials. I'd rather attempt to do something great and fail than attempt to do nothing and succeed. . . . Look at what you have left, not at what you have lost. Find a hurt and heal it. You are God's project and God never fails.

As I finished reading these collections of clever thoughts I began to think upon this concept of success. Today our media tries to bombard us with all the materialism of the universe to make us compare our adventure with all that the world has to offer. My first thoughts were that if material success brought happiness then all the wealthy people of the world would be very happy and all the poor people would be very sad, but that's really the opposite of what I've observed in life.

Then I said to myself, "Then what is success?" A quote from the past flashed through my brain: "Success is progressive realization of worthwhile goals!" Yes, that's the whole idea of success.

That must mean my wife and I have to sit down and think through some worthwhile goals and we must attain

them over a period of time. They aren't instantly attainable; they are progressively realized—postponed gratifications, if you will.

Two common barriers that prevent most people from reaching their goals is 1) we have made a habit of past failures and mistakes, and 2) we fear failure. Because of these two negatives, many of us never reach our potential.

As you and your spouse think through today's thoughts you may want to do some homework on your definition of success.

Prayer

Father God, may You put a protective hedge around our home so we won't be dragged down by the fears of the past. As Christians we can be confident that our past has been forgiven. Those mistakes need not hold us back. Since You are sovereign, You know the beginning from the end—You are in complete control of our lives. We can believe your promise found in Romans 8:28.

Permit our energies to focus on the present and the future and not to be hung up over the failures of the past.

*Free us to think positively on worthwhile goals.
Amen.*

Taking Action

- You and your spouse write a short statement regarding your purpose for life.
- You and your spouse sit down and write out two goals for each of the following areas of your life:



- Spiritual
- Professional
- Financial
- Family
- Home
- Leisure
- Health

- After each goal write down the quantity of each and a date when you want it to be accomplished (e.g., we want to save 500 dollars by the first of December). These two qualities of a goal are very important because with them you can measure how you did by the first of December.
- List two or three activities that you will do to accomplish these goals.
- Check back each month to see how you are doing in these areas.

Reading On

Romans 8:28
Romans 10:1-13
Isaiah 55:1-7



What to Count

Don't count how many years
you've spent,
Just count the good
you've done;
The times you've lent
a helping hand,
The friends that you have won.
Count your deeds of kindness,
The smiles, not the tears;
Count all the pleasures
that you've had,
But never count the years.





Just Keep On Pedaling

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3:1-8

Key Verses: Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.



At first I saw God as my observer, my judge, keeping the things I did wrong, so as to know whether I merited heaven or hell when I die. He was out there sort of like the President. I knew He was out there, but I didn't really know Him.

But later on when I recognized God, it seemed as though life was rather like a bike ride, but it was a tandem bike, and I noticed that God was in the back helping me pedal.

I don't know just when it was that He suggested we change places, but life has not been the same since. Life without my God, that is. God makes life exciting!

When I had control, I knew the way. It was rather boring, but predictable. It was the shortest distance between two points. But when He took the lead, He knew delightful long cuts, up mountains,

through rocky places, and at breakneck speeds! It was all I could do to hang on! Even though it looked like madness, He said, “Pedal!”

I worried and was anxious and asked, “Where are you taking me?” He laughed and didn’t answer. I started to learn to trust. I forgot my boring life and entered into the adventure. And when I’d say “I’m scared,” He’d lean back and touch my hand.

He took me to people with gifts that I needed—the gifts of healing, acceptance, and joy. They gave me their gifts to take on my journey—our journey, God’s and mine. And we were off again. He said, “Give the gifts away. They’re extra baggage, too much weight.” So I did, to the people we met, and I found that in giving I received, and still our burden was light.

I did not trust Him in control of my life at first. I thought He’d wreck it. But He knows bike secrets. He knows how to make it bend to take sharp corners, jump to clear high rocks, fly to shorten scary passages.

And I am learning to shut up and pedal in the strangest places, and I’m beginning to enjoy the view and the cool breeze on my face with my delightful constant companion, my God.

And when I’m sure I just can’t do any more, He smiles and says, “Pedal.”¹

When some people say, “Oh, life is so boring I don’t even want to get up in the morning,” we can’t comprehend that kind of travel. We find life so exciting that our feet bound out of bed each day anticipating what God has in store for us.

Each day is a real adventure. Many days God just says, “Come along and trust me.” It would be nice to know every detail, what lies beyond each ridge and what’s around each of the corners of life, but God very patiently says, “Just trust me. You do the pedaling and I’ll do the leading.” Our reply is often, “Are you sure You know the way? What if You make a mistake with my life? But, God, I’ve never been this way before. What if . . .” The dialogue can go on for hours, days, and months, but eventually we arrive to the point where we say, “God, You lead and I’ll keep on pedaling.”

As our key verse says today, we are to trust in the Lord with all our heart and not on our own understanding. That’s so hard to do if we’re not used to turning over our lives to Someone who is bigger than us. Just relax and let God be all that He says He is—TRUSTWORTHY.

Prayer

Father God, you know how hard it is for us to let go and let God. We human beings are so used to being in control. We have a very difficult time in trusting anyone else; especially someone we can’t even see and touch. Please stay close to us when we doubt. It’s not that we don’t want to trust, it’s just that this is so new to us. Please be patient with our little steps, for one day we will be able to run and not stumble, but today we feel like a young child who is just beginning to crawl. Amen.

Taking Action

- List in your journal four things that have been bothering you and your spouse and that you want to give to God.



- Read the additional verses that are given in the next section. See how you can apply them to your four situations.
- Share with your mate what these four situations are—be transparent enough to risk being small in the sight of your spouse.

Reading On

Psalm 46:1,2

1 Peter 5:7

Matthew 6:31,32

Psalm 40:4



My Gift of Love

My loving you can never be an abdication of my own self. I could possibly give my life for you out of love, but I could never deny my identity as a person. I will try to be what you need me to be, to do what you need done, to say whatever you need to hear. At the same time I am committed to an honest and open relationship. As a part of my gift of love, I will always offer my thoughts, preferences, and all my feelings, even when I think they may be unpleasant or even hurtful to your feelings.

—*John Powell*



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