

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS AT GLENKIRK



# The DEVO



DEC 31 – JAN 5, 2018

*Many of you have asked who our devotional writers are. We purposely have not identified them each week, but we thought we would take this opportunity to let you know who some of them are and tell you a little about them. Next week we will again be publishing our normal devotional that leads up to the sermon each week. This week enjoy the testimonies from our Devo writers.*

## Cailyn Brennan

I believe God has had His hand on my life since before I was born. Jesus has always been more than a name to me. I accepted Christ at a very young age; in fact, I have always said I became a Christian when I was two years old. I don't know how that is possible, but I do know that there has never been a time when I did not know Him, and that is something I simply can't explain.

While I was growing up, my mom taught me: "You are never alone when you are alone with Jesus." I went to Christian schools and attended Glenkirk all my life, and that simple phrase from my mother has always been a part of me. When I struggled with insecurity and was shy and quiet, I learned to rely on His presence that was always with me. When I faced some painful times where fear crept in and tried to rob me of my joy, that phrase became my pillar, holding me steady.

My life of faith has been a constant growing experience. It has developed from simple but steady belief in Jesus as my Savior to reliance on Him

as my best friend. In my life the verses that have been the most important to me are 2 Corinthians 12:9-10: *“But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’”* (v. 9). God’s power is not seen **despite** my weakness, but it is made perfect **through** my weakness! What a wonderful truth that has truly set me free. It is through the very things that I struggle with, the things I am most ashamed of, that God’s power can be complete and shine through to others as He still uses me, the broken vessel that I am. For that, I am eternally grateful.

Jesus is more than a name to me. He has proven Himself time and time again to have a better plan for my life than I could ever have had on my own. He has used me, changed me, and molded me; and I know He will continue to do so as I walk with Him—one step at a time in hopeful trust. None of this, however, is because of my own efforts—it is all a gift of God, who has had His hand on my life for as long as I can remember.

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## Tom Q. Matic III

For this “testimony devotional,” the inspiration hit me as I received a chat group message from my youngest brother, Daniel. He reminded us siblings that it’s the 48th death anniversary of our Mom. I responded:

“Thanks ... I remember; I was about 5 years old; Mommy took me to the school where she was teaching. Proudly she told her pupils about me, “He is going to be a priest when he grows up.” Mommy was a strong believer in God, a Catholic devotee of the Holy Nazarene. She was the spiritual and religious pillar of our family. I owe her the grounding of my own faith.”

The distractions of my teenage years pushed religion to the back seat. I was in high school when the Beatles broke into the pop music scene, and I became an avid fan, taking to guitar-playing and singing. Nevertheless, my soul was on a continual spiritual quest about the ultimate issues of life. Does God really exist? I found the book *The Story of Philosophy* by Will Durant and took to reading philosophy. Deep down, I was searching for a thinker who would “prove” the existence of God!

Subsequently, I was caught up in the nationwide wave of student activism that became so popular among the youth—to the dismay of our parents. In my own mind, I thought that God—if He exists—would approve of this movement since His heart is for the uplifting of the poor and the advancement of social justice.

Widespread political unrest led to the declaration of martial law in the Philippines in September 1972, and my life turned upside down! What sustained me spiritually was the faith in God that my Mom inculcated in me.

When the schools reopened, I was able to pursue my studies at the University of the Philippines. I shifted my major from A.B. Political Science to Economics. That’s when members of the Campus Crusade for Christ shared “The Four Spiritual Laws” with me, and I received Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I then started reading the Bible voraciously, excited about the truth of justification by faith alone. I was relieved to know that my SALVATION did not depend on how I tried—but failed—to be good and holy. It is based on my faith in Jesus and what He had done for me—living the perfect holy life on my behalf and paying the penalty for my sin on the cross. Any good I do now is due to the work of the Holy Spirit who now dwells in me.

From an activist for outward superficial change, I became an activist for true inward change, for the Kingdom of God, and for the new immortal bodies that God promised to give us as citizens of heaven through our faith in Jesus our Savior (Philippians 3:21-22).

# Amy Minick

A long time ago in a Land of Enchantment far away, God started preparing the way for me to have a personal encounter with His Son, Jesus Christ.

I was raised in a Lutheran church. Most of what I knew about Jesus was head knowledge and memorized Bible verses. I remember praying to God and asking Him for very selfish things. I wanted to be a writer; I wanted to earn a softball scholarship to college; I wanted to get away from my family and re-invent myself.

His plans are perfect. I was offered a softball scholarship to two different California universities that I turned down before I accepted the final offer to attend the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. At this college I became involved with a non-denominational Christian organization called the Navigators. A staff leader, Julie, shared the Gospel with me, and I accepted Christ that May of my freshman year. I stayed involved in this organization, and I was a member of the core team of students for the next four years.

I was discipled by Julie and another great staffer, Linda, throughout my time there. I learned how to study the Bible and how to share the Gospel in a tangible way. I literally knocked on doors in my dorms, asking if I could talk to my fellow students about God. I had the privilege of leading a few girls to make decisions for Christ and even discipling them. Evangelism and disciple-making are huge for me. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) became branded on my heart. I began to look at people differently—in terms of eternity—wondering if they knew Jesus. I still do.

And I still knock on proverbial doors. But as a public high school teacher, I must share the Gospel in how I live rather than outwardly

witnessing. I look for ways to share Christ through the choices I make and the words I speak to help my students see their need for a Savior. It is a challenge, but I love showing them a better way—showing them His love.

I also knock on “heart-doors” of the Christians around me. I want to know if they want to grow deeper in Christ. I want to challenge complacency. I want to tell them to drop their nets and follow Jesus with their **whole** heart. I want them to fall deeply in love with Jesus and answer “yes” when He asks them to feed His sheep.

And I have been incessantly knocking on God’s door because He promises to **open** it for me! I want transformation! (See Romans 12:1-2)

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## Leann Seale

At age 21, I was seeking God. Newly engaged to my high school sweetheart, Jeff, I was about to leave my family and start this new life together. We both wanted to build our marriage on a strong foundation, and I believe that is what prompted our questions about faith.

One afternoon we drilled a Christian friend with whom Jeff worked with all kinds of difficult faith questions. He patiently answered the best he could, and seeds were planted that day.

As we planned our wedding, I wanted to get married at Glenkirk Church because it was the only church that felt like home. My mom had taken me to this church during my junior high years (when Glenkirk Church

was located between Leadora and Laurel Avenues). I remember raising my hand when they asked if anyone would like to accept Jesus, but I didn't really understand what I was doing at the time.

Glenkirk was now at the current property, and we learned we had to go to the "engaged couples" classes before we could get married. At the end of the six weeks, all the class members went to church together as a group. It was the first time Jeff and I had ever attended church together, and the first time Jeff ever remembers being in church. We both loved it!

We continued to go to church on Sundays, and we were married in June. Even though we were on a Caribbean cruise on our honeymoon, we were so bummed that we had to miss church! We attended church on Sundays that summer, and in the fall we attended the New Members Class. We were hungry to learn more about the church and faith.

During one of the sessions, when Pastor Walter Ray taught about who Jesus is and what He did for us on the cross, we both finally understood. The Spirit moved us. It was like a veil had been ripped away and it was crystal clear. On that day, we both accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Overwhelmed with joy, I remember crying and smiling at the same time!

In Jeremiah 29:13-14a it says: *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord.*"

Jeff and I became members of Glenkirk and were baptized together at age 22. We immediately joined a young married couples small group that remained strong for almost nine years. We didn't know how to pray, what the difference is between the Old and New Testaments, or how to look up a verse in the Bible. My face would get hot and my heart felt like it would pound out of my chest if I had to pray out loud in a group. We learned a lot over the years.

# Steve Sharp

**Scripture: Psalm 139:13-18, 23-24; Revelation 3:15-18**

I grew up a “good kid,” generally trouble-free and successful academically. During my youth, my family and I were churchgoers. Dad ushered periodically at the church we attended. I said the Lord’s Prayer ritually at bedtime. We didn’t pray over meals or do anything “overboard”—we were a “good family”; but actually we were just cultural Christians.

Julie and I met at work after I had finished my schooling and were married about a year later. Things progressed very well, generally—we were happily married, had our third and last child after six years and I advanced professionally. Julie has always wanted to be a stay-at-home mom, and she is excellently suited to this. We had good friends and family ties and moved into a larger home in Glendora after about 9 years.

However, during my 30s I started feeling increasingly discontented, but I couldn’t pinpoint why. It wasn’t my marriage, my career or other life circumstances. Somehow, I couldn’t “be happy” sustainably, despite loving fatherhood and Julie and the rest of my life being good. As my 30s advanced, a nagging question started surfacing: Was my discontentment because I didn’t have a meaningful relationship with God and never really had?

My best friend had accepted Christ while in college, and I later played in a softball league with him and others from Calvary Chapel. I’d even attended Calvary a few times before meeting Julie. Another friend, a preacher’s son who’d been a “prodigal” during high school, recommitted his life to Christ. A couple of close work friends had become more active at church and told me that they wished I’d seriously consider Christianity. God placed numerous good influences around me, gently wooing me. But I was fearful and stubborn—I didn’t want to change, didn’t want to become a “Bible-thumping whacko.” My issues weren’t head-related, but heart-related.



I didn't have a dramatic, "road-to-Damascus" (Acts 9) type of conversion experience. Our kids had gone to Glenkirk's VBS and had good experiences there. Julie and I decided it was time to find a church, as it "would be good for the family." When we attended Glenkirk, I knew it was "home." Shortly thereafter, about 23 years ago, I accepted Christ and joined a Bible study in which I remain active.

A postscript on my original, culturally Christian family: Mom and one of two sisters are now believers; my brother began following Christ at the 2003 Harvest Crusade; and Dad had a literal deathbed conversion about six years ago, three days before dying. I was blessed to be intimately involved in both my brother's and father's coming to Christ—God is good, all the time!

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# David Woo

**Scripture: Psalm 139:13-18, 23-24; Revelation 3:15-18**

I had been a Christian for many years and familiar with Scriptures about God's love. I knew much about God's love. However, it was information in my head that had not touched intensely in my heart. I wanted to feel God's love on a deeper level. Therefore I prayed, "Lord, I have head knowledge about your love, but I want to feel it in the very depths of my bones." I prayed this prayer over a period of time.

I used to drive thirty minutes to work, during which time I would sing worship songs. One time while I was worshipping, the Lord gave me a vision. In it I was in heaven with the Lord. He took me inside a large warehouse filled with boxes stacked to the ceiling. He said that those boxes represent the good works I did while I was on earth. Since the Scriptures say that our works will be tested by fire, an angel came and set

fire to the boxes. All the boxes were consumed with only ashes remaining. I had nothing to show for my good works. I felt very sad. Then the Lord put His arm around my shoulder and said, “But I still love you.”

His voice and loving touch reminded me of His unconditional love. He did not say, “If you do good works for me, then I will love you.” Instead, He said that while I was in a state of disobedience and rebellion against Him, He died for me (Romans 5:8). I was so moved by this vision of God’s unconditional love for me that tears began to flood my eyes while I was driving. I could hardly see where I was going.

This vision was an answer to my prayers. I had been praying that I might feel at a more intense level the love of the Lord. This vision touched me to the core. For the first time I was able to feel God’s love on a very deep level. This experience has become the driving force of my life, moving me to love the Lord more and to serve Him more fervently (2 Corinthians 5:14,15).

Philippians 4:19 tells us that there is so much more about God’s love that we have yet to experience. We need to yearn for this “love that surpasses knowledge.” Paul prayed that the believers might come to know it more fully. Is this what you want? Want more?

Lord, you have so much more in store for us than what we have already experienced. We want to know this love that surpasses knowledge on a much deeper level. More, Lord! We want it all! Help us. Amen.

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# Carole Mathews

I grew up in the late sixties and seventies believing my life would be fulfilled someday (maybe) if I married and had a family, or if I worked hard at school and began a career. That was my hope in life. I did not grow up believing in God or the presence of the deep, rich hope that

Christ offers. My parents had grown up in the Great Depression experiencing the financial and familial brokenness that poverty breeds. For my mom and dad, church was a cold and uncaring place you attended on Easter (maybe).

After working hard in school, I began working at a nursing career. I met and married the most wonderful man and we started a family. We moved into our dream home. On the outside, the life I believed would bring fulfillment was complete. But inside, I felt incomplete. I felt inadequate and had a growing sense of fear and anxiety. To be honest, I feared: my husband leaving me for a better woman, my children getting hurt or sick, that I was a terrible mother, that I would repeat the same pattern of brokenness that my parents experienced.

What was missing in me? What or who could help me with my anxieties? God began to speak to my heart through the faithful witness of my sister. She had become a Christian while we were in high school, but our family life was fairly broken by then, so we did not talk to each other. But now her faith made sense. She suggested taking the family and going to church. She is so practical. My husband and I decided to attend Glenkirk Church as it had a pretty good reputation in the community for young families.

That first service at Glenkirk, 30 years ago, began the new journey for me and my family. I do not remember a single word Pastor Ray said. But the music! The music moved me so deeply I cried. God has been so faithful to me and my family as weekly we pursued what it meant to know God, to love Him, and to glorify Him. The reality of hope and wholeness as a Christian brought my fears and anxieties into proper perspective. Trials and sufferings happen to God's children, but God is there to be our wisdom, comforter, helper, restorer and more.

My faith in Christ has been further shaped by participating in Bible Study Fellowship for just about as many years. God has blessed me with a place to serve and teach His Word. Life is not perfect, but my God is.

In Christ alone my hope is found He is my light, my strength, my song,



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