

SENSATIONAL

“QUOTATIONAL”

Devotional



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June 2018

DEDICATION

To my father, who loved Jesus and who read from
the devotional book at our family breakfast table.
To my wife, Lori, who contributed some of the real
gems among these daily readings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my family, my friends, my acquaintances, and even strangers for sharing their stories with me. All of the tales in this devotional really happened, but as you might guess, some names have been changed.

JANUARY 1

I don't know what the future may hold,
but I know who holds the future.

—Ralph Abernathy

The trouble with being a human is that you can't predict the future. I mean, we all knew you were going to be late to breakfast. But beyond that, we just can't see what's coming next on this big planet.

Nobody tries harder to figure it out than science fiction writers; but their ideas never make it to reality. Laser guns. I haven't seen one of those lately. Rocket trips to a base on the moon. Nope. Flying cars. Ha! Talking robots that help with the chores. I wish!

Even when people are looking right at an object from the future, they can't recognize it. Darryl Zanuck, former head of Twentieth Century Fox, was not impressed when he saw the first television set. "It won't be able to hold on to any market," he declared. "People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night."

Back in 1977, when only universities and businesses could afford computers, the president of the Digital Equipment Corporation declared, "There is no reason for any individuals to have a computer in their home." Boy, was he wrong. Not only do we have computers in our homes today—we have them in our pockets!

So what will this New Year hold for you? You'll go to school, eat snacks, and probably lose a sock from your favorite pair. But beyond that, you have no idea. Will good things come your way? Or will one of those bad things that your mother is always worrying about finally happen? Well, I hope not.

The best way to face the future is not to guess at what will happen but to trust God to guide you through it. He can see what is coming next in your life, and He already has a plan for making it awesome. Of course, it would be more awesome with robots that can wash the dishes, but I'm not holding my breath.

—Kim

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

JANUARY 2

Once bitten, twice shy.

—Traditional

Johnny would have been a wonderful computer geek, except that he was born before computers. So when his geekish tendencies needed an outlet, he focused on telephones. They had telephones in cities back then, but they hadn't come out to the little Arkansas community where he lived. I don't know how the teenager got his hands on a telephone, but he did, and it didn't take long for him to figure it out.

Then he thought, *Why not set up my own telephone company?* He ran wires down fence rows and through trees to homes in the little farming community of Bonnerdale, Arkansas. He charged fifty cents a month for his service. It was a party line, which meant everyone could hear everyone else. The number of rings told which home was being called.

But telephone company president wasn't Johnny's only job. He also had to help with the family garden. It was a big garden, and Johnny hitched up the mule to the plow and followed it from one end of the garden to the other. Like I said, it was a big garden, and the mule was slow. Terribly slow. Johnny couldn't stand it.

Then he got an idea. The old phones he used in his network had a crank generator to make the electrical voltage necessary to ring the receiving phone. He got a generator and attached it to the plow. Then he took two wires and wrapped them around the mule's tail.

He lined up the plow and shouted "Go, Nellie," giving the generator a good crank. Shocked by a jolt of electricity, the mule took off at a gallop. Chunks of earth flew up in the air from the plow. *This is great*, thought Johnny. But after that one quick trip across the garden, that mule would never pull for Johnny again.

Sometimes when we're not getting what we want, we might be tempted to say stinging words to friends or family. Pray that you never do. Because once bitten by our sharp remarks, people may be twice shy about trusting us ever again.

—Kim

"The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing"
(Proverbs 12:18, NIV).

JANUARY 3

Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

—Benjamin Franklin

An object at rest tends to stay at rest. This law of physics was discovered by Sir Isaac Newton while trying to get a teenager out of bed and off to school.

I sympathize more with the teenager than with Sir Isaac. I don't greet the morning with any great eagerness myself. The struggle to get up turns into kind of a hostage situation.

Brain: "Throw down the covers and come out with your eyelids up."

Body: "Ha! No one is going anywhere until you meet my demands."

Brain: "Be reasonable. It's time for work."

Body: "Here's my first demand: An alarm clock with a forty-minute snooze button."

Brain: "If you don't get moving soon, you'll be in for a career change that involves holding a cardboard sign at busy intersections."

Body: "You don't scare me! I'm staying with the Posturepedic."

I feel guilty about sleeping late, because my ancestors would be appalled by the very idea. They operated under the firm conviction that the best time to milk cows was at four in the morning—an opinion that probably didn't receive any input from the cows.

If your mom or dad helps you get up in the morning, you should be grateful. Did you know that getting people up used to be a paid job? That's right. Back in the days before cheap alarm clocks, people would pay "knockers up" to help awaken them in time to go to work. For a few cents a week, the knocker up would come by every morning and rap on the door with a stick. They also used long poles so that they could tap on the bedroom window of their client without disturbing others in the house. They would keep scratching on the window until they saw signs of life.

Jesus liked to wake up early to spend time in prayer. He didn't need someone to drag Him out of bed because He *wanted* to talk with His heavenly Father. It's like Christmas morning—it's easy to get out of bed when there's something to look forward to.

—Kim

"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35).

JANUARY 4

He who has overcome his fears will truly be free.

—Aristotle

Does your mom worry a lot? You might find yourself reassuring her with words such as: “Don’t worry, Mom. It doesn’t *look* like a poisonous snake.” Or “Don’t worry, Mom. It’s been several weeks since anyone fell out of this roller coaster.”

We want to urge mothers to relax, because when they’re nervous, we’re nervous. Especially when they make a certain noise called “the gasp.”

My wife often chooses to use the gasp when we’re driving peacefully down the road. There is something about that sound that shoots a quart of adrenaline into my bloodstream and causes me to veer into the oncoming traffic, figuring that death from collision is preferable to whatever terror brought forth that sound.

“What is it?” I shriek in panic. “What is it?”

She will turn to me, eyes wide with horror. “I forgot to send a birthday card to Aunt Elsie.”

This brings me to a problem with both the gasp and the scream. They convey no useful information. For example, the same scream can mean either “A strange man is coming at me with a butcher knife!” or “The cat is eating my breakfast cereal!”

Men don’t scream. Which is why I prefer a male captain when I’m on an airliner. No one wants to be on a transcontinental flight and hear, “This is your captain speaking . . . Aaeceeee!”

Men will give you the facts with cool composure. “This is your captain speaking. Due to mechanical problems, we will be crashing south of Omaha. This means you will be awarded only half the frequent flyer miles that you expected for this flight.”

Actually, both men and moms probably worry too much. Men worry about their job, politics, and getting a ding on their new car. Women worry about child kidnappers, germs, serial murderers, germs, children running with sharp sticks, and germs.

While it’s completely natural to worry, I think God takes it as a compliment when we don’t—when we trust Him so completely that our worries drain away and we’re left with perfect peace.

Consider the lilies—how they never fret. Nor gasp.

—Kim

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34).

Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm.
—Publius Syrus

One of my friends is a pro at sending intriguing texts that leave me hanging. They hint at great personal drama, but give me no details. Here are some actual ones he's sent me:

"This is so wrong."

"Avoid town at all costs today."

"I'm in urgent care. The boss sent me."

"Got an update n it's not good."

"Guess what."

"Not a happy camper."

"I'm at the doctor's office. I really did it this time."

Almost always, I beg for more information. And usually the answer is . . . well, disappointing.

For instance, when I asked "What's wrong?" after reading his text "This is so wrong," he explained, "Got called in to work on my day off."

After his "Guess what" and my "What?" he responded, "I'm switching phones n numbers tonight just heads up."

"Wow, he really overreacts," I've mumbled to myself numerous times. Even the trip to urgent care turned out to be for a sliced finger that didn't even need stitches.

But on a recent vacation, all of us in my family found ourselves panicking over minor things that went wrong: a delayed plane, a "vegetarian" soup that contained hunks of meat, a break in cell phone service. Once we recognized what we were doing, we began to joke about it, saying, "Almost lost my cool!"

Talk about cool . . . Jesus had that down. Even while hanging on the cross, He forgave His killers, arranged for the care of His mother, promised eternal life to a repentant sinner, and submitted His own life to God. Only one time did He show panic: when He felt separation from His heavenly Father and cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34).

And that's the only condition that should cause us to lose our cool. Separation from God is indeed a reason to text "This is so wrong."

—Lori

"He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still" (Psalm 107:28, 29).

JANUARY 6

It's not the size of the dog in the fight;
it's the size of the fight in the dog.

—Mark Twain

When a woman called 911 in Greenfield, Wisconsin, the conversation went like this:
Dispatch: “Greenfield Police Department. How may I help you?”

Caller: “Hi. This is going to sound like a strange question, but we have a cat, and it's going crazy, and it's attacked my husband, and we're kind of hostage in our house. And we're just wondering who we can call to do something, get rid of the cat or help us.”

Dispatch: “This is your cat?”

Caller: “It's our own cat, yes.”

Dispatch: “So, it's your own pet?”

Caller: “Yes.”

Dispatch: “Give me one second.”

Must have been a big cat, right? Like a mountain lion or a tiger? Nope. It was just a little, fluffy cat in a bad mood. And this isn't the first time a cat has fought a whole family and won.

The Palmer family in Oregon got in trouble when their young son pulled on the tail of their black-and-white Himalayan mix. They had to barricade themselves in their bedroom to find refuge from the claws of their angry cat.

Apparently, what Mark Twain said about dogs also applies to cats. And maybe it applies to people as well.

There's a story in the Old Testament about how three hundred men took on an army of 135,000 with no other weapons than some pottery and band instruments. In the story of Gideon, we read how great fear came on the Midianite soldiers. The Bible says “the whole army ran and cried out and fled” (Judges 7:21). If there was a 911 to call at that time, the Midianites would have called it.

Obviously, it wasn't the size of Gideon's army that won the battle. And in this case, it wasn't the size of the fight in the Gideon's men. It was the size of the God who fought for them. Whatever battles you find yourself in today, be glad that you are on the side of a big, big God.

—Kim

“The LORD said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself.’” (Judges 7:2).

Curiosity killed the cat.

—Proverb

Amber slid off her backpack and hung it on the back of her classroom chair before settling behind her desk.
 “Amber!” Kyle said as he dropped into the desk behind her. “What’s going on?”

“Not much,” replied Amber, who didn’t welcome her new neighbor too warmly.

“You have anything to eat in there?” Kyle asked as he reached for her backpack and unzipped the top.

“Leave it alone, Kyle,” Amber said as she pushed his hand away.

But Kyle reached into the backpack again. “Oh, lip gloss! At least it smells delicious.” Kyle had opened up the bottle for a sniff.

“Put it back, Kyle.”

“Quiet. Let’s get started,” the Spanish teacher said.

Kyle continued to root around in the backpack on an adventure of discovery.

“Get out of my stuff,” hissed Amber, trying not to draw attention to herself.

But suddenly, every eye was looking their direction. Kyle had made an agonized scream and had fallen out of his chair. The teacher ran over as Kyle twisted around on the floor with loud groans. “What happened?” the teacher demanded.

Amber guessed what Kyle had done and was afraid he might die. Kyle’s face was turning bright-red. She started to cry. The teacher called for help before Amber could speak.

Between sobs Amber finally explained that she had a small canister of pepper spray that she kept on a key chain for self-defense. Kyle must have thought it was breath spray. His attempt to freshen his breath had taken an unexpected turn. The teacher who told me the story said Kyle recovered completely.

Maybe Kyle has learned to respect the privacy of others. He certainly knows that when you stick your nose where it doesn’t belong, you can end up red-faced.

—Kim

“We hear that some of you are living idle lives, refusing to work and meddling in other people’s business” (2 Thessalonians 3:11, NLT).