

DEVOTIONS FOR TEENS

WARR BEEN THERE, DONE THAT.

Bradley Booth



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January 1

Midnight Messenger

*He said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness:
Make straight the way of the Lord," as the prophet Isaiah said.
John 1:23, NKJV.*

A short but urgent whistle pokes through the blanket of darkness covering north Boston. A window slides open and a woman leans out, releasing a portion of her petticoat to the silent night air. It floats down to the waiting man outside. Grabbing it, he races back to the riverbank where he and his two friends rip it in shreds and wrap it around the oars. No longer afraid of being heard, they row silently, slicing across the river.

One of the men sprints to a nearby house where he is given the best horse in town, along with warnings that the enemy has been spotted along the dark roads. Slipping his foot into the stirrup, he swings onto the horse and immediately digs his spurs into its sides. The rhythmic pounding of hoofbeats shatters the silence of the country road.

"Halt!" Enemy soldiers. The rider lowers himself even more. Feeling the horse's mane flapping in his windblown face, he spurs the speeding beast again. On a fresh horse, the enemy gains on him. Seeing his only chance to escape, he steers off the road, feeling the slap of tree branches in his face. His pursuer's horse slips into a pond, and with a whinny and a snort, gives up the chase.

Back on the road, he gallops into the town of Medford and pounds on the door of a colonial captain. Between his short, exhausted breaths, he sputters, "The Regulars are out!" He mounts his steed once again, and galloping through several towns, he begins shouting his warning: "The British are coming! The British are coming!"

The midnight messenger begins the final leg of his desperate mission—to reach Concord and warn of the impending British attack. Suddenly, four mounted British soldiers race up and surround him. A British major shoves a pistol to his head, demanding to know who he is and what he's doing. Looking him in the eye, Paul Revere boldly tells him.

This fearless midnight messenger was born on this day in 1735. It's midnight and there are enemy troops along the dark roads. But you've been given the finest horse and the most urgent message. Are you willing to do whatever it takes to complete your mission?

Dead Men Can Tell Tales

*For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again,
that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.
Romans 14:9, NKJV.*

Darkness embraces you. But not just any darkness—a rich, black, inky darkness that encircles you. A waft of cool, damp air joins hands with the darkness to wrap you in an icy hug. You consider turning back, but you feel you must go on, farther, deeper, colder, darker.

A small circle of yellow light illumines the cold, gray walls as you switch on your lamp. As you inch along, constantly searching for solid footing, your light sweeping around the cold, craggy indentions, you are startled by the presence of a grinning skeleton! Your hand instinctively covers your mouth, muffling your scream. Way too close for comfort, you step back, trip on a loose rock, lose your balance, and your lamp puts on a random light show as you fall to the ground.

On January 2, 1971, a team of Israeli archaeologists in Jerusalem announced that they had found something unusual in an ancient cave—a skeleton of a man crucified some 2,000 years ago. The skeleton was unique because it was the first of its kind to be found with a metal spike still lodged in one of its feet. The spike was bent as though it had hit a knot while being pounded into the wood, possibly the reason the soldiers left it right where it was.

Just outside the gates of the same city, Jesus Christ died in the same manner—crucified on a cross, spikes through His wrists and feet, left to bleed and die, and buried in a dark cave after He had finally breathed His last. Was the skeleton found by the archaeologists the remnants of Jesus? No way. Why not? Because Jesus, though His wrists and feet were scarred, stepped out of that cold, dark, damp cave into the blossoming morning under a sky streaked with purple and pink, just as the Bible says. Far from being the remains of Jesus, the rare discovery of the man with the spike in his foot serves only to convince us of the Bible's accurate portrayal of His victory over death.

You will never find the body of Jesus in a cold, dark cave. He shrugged off the cold, dark embrace of darkness. He broke free from the icy hug of death. And because He lives, you don't ever have to spend eternity in a cold, dark, cave.

January 3

Seward's Folly

*The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.
1 Samuel 16:7, NIV.*

Did you know that Alaska once had the nickname, “Seward’s Folly?” William Seward was the United States Secretary of State who arranged to buy Alaska as a territory from Russia in 1867. The details of how the United States acquired the territory are truly amazing. In those days most people thought Alaska wasn’t worth the money we paid for it, even though Seward dished out only about two cents an acre. Journalists of the day called the territory, “Icebergia,” “Polaria,” and “Seward’s Icebox.” And for decades that’s the way most people felt about it.

On January 3, 1959, Alaska entered the Union as the 49th state, and now we know how incredibly lucky we were to get it. With nearly 600,000 total square miles and over 100,000 acres of wilderness set aside as federal and state parks, Alaska is our largest state and has given us billions and billions of dollars worth of gold, oil, fishing, and lumber. Turns out Seward knew what he was doing!

The prophet Samuel faced a big decision. Follow him down the dusty road to Bethlehem to select a new king of Israel. God had told him that a man named Jesse had a son who would be the next to enjoy the plush cushion of the nation’s throne. Sounds easy enough, right? As Samuel approached Jesse’s country property to invite his family to the selection ceremony, he must have snickered at God’s sense of humor as Jesse presented not one son, but a whole line of them! *Very funny, Lord*, I can imagine Samuel thinking.

Inspecting the line of young men, Samuel thought for sure each one was the one. They were tall, strong, and looked extremely intelligent. But the Lord kept telling Samuel, No, this isn’t the one I want. Finally, Samuel asked if there were any others. Jesse cleared his throat and mumbled, There’s David—to a chorus of laughter from the brothers. When Samuel chose this awkward teenager, I wouldn’t be surprised if people referred to him as “Samuel’s Folly.”

As we know now, David became Israel’s most popular and productive king. Turns out God knew what He was doing.

Nice Wheels!

*As I looked at these beings, I saw four wheels touching the ground beside them, one wheel belonging to each, (and) the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.
Ezekiel 1:15, 21, NLT.*

It's 1743. The Revolutionary War is more than 30 years in the future, and you're sitting at a theater play in London. Just as you are dozing off and that trickle of drool starts down your lower lip, your head snaps upright from the thundering sound of an actor rolling across the stage on wooden wheels! What was *that*? It was a pair of roller skates—well . . . kind of. We don't know who came up with these primitive wheels, but the idea sure caught on.

A few years later, Joseph Merlin had the bright idea of using square metal wheels. Great job, Joseph—except for the fact that the only direction you could go was straight ahead!

On January 4, 1863, the first roller skates resembling the ones we use today were invented. James Plimpton of New York patented these beauties with a double set of wheels, front and back, calling them quad skates. Now it was easier and safer for people to actually turn.

The skates were a huge success and led to the opening of the first skating rink three years later in Newport, Rhode Island. Plimpton's quad skate went on to dominate the skating industry for the next 100 years and led to other, more exciting inventions like skateboards, inline skates, and wheeled shoes. So the next time that kid zips in front of you on his wheeled shoes at the department store, tell him to thank James Plimpton—and to please stop running over your toes.

The prophet Ezekiel saw something that made his eyes even wider than those of the folks watching the actor wobble across that London stage on roller skates. The Bible says, "The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1). In this vision of God, he saw four living creatures, with a wheel beside each one. "The appearance of their workings [was], as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel" (verse 16). The wheels were part of a glorious machine that moved with four magnificent heavenly beings around the throne of God. The beings glowed like coals of fire, and the wheels spun so fast that streams of lightning streaked back and forth between them around the throne of God! Wow! What an awesome sight that must have been!

Whatever humans can invent, God can blow it away with something far superior!

January 5

One Trillion Dollar Budget

*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's,
and to God the things that are God's.
Matthew 22:21, NKJV.*

How much is a trillion dollars?
Let's say a relative gave you a trillion one-dollar bills for your birthday. (Better than socks, huh?) To store it, you'd need a warehouse 125 feet high and covering nine square city blocks. If you sat down to count it all, you'd be counting 24/7 for 15,000 years! Hope you don't have anything else planned for a while.

Another way to imagine a trillion dollars is to think of a stack of \$100 bills on its side lying next to the freeway. You'd have to drive 631 miles to reach the end of it!

On January 5, 1987, the United States annual federal budget reached one trillion dollars—money it gets from its citizens in taxes each year. What does our government pay for with 631 miles of \$100 bills every year? It pays the salaries of presidents, congressmen and women, and senators. It pays Supreme Court justices in Washington, federal marshals, FBI agents, and ambassadors to foreign embassies. And, of course, that trillion dollars also pays for the people who work for them: accountants, secretaries, secret service men, speech writers, chauffeurs, and pilots. There's also the military that protects us worldwide, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, meaning we need to pay for military bases, tanks, battleships, fighter jets, missiles, and spy satellites orbiting our planet. But we need to pay for things here at home, too, such as our national parks, bioengineering labs to grow better crops, AIDS relief, and schools. And that's just the beginning of the ways our government serves us. Although sometimes greed and corruption ripples through the ranks of our national leaders, our government serves us in many ways.

Just think of all the ways God has blessed you today. If you place your finger on your wrist or throat, you will feel your pulse—evidence of your beating heart. With every breath, every ray of sunshine, every nourishing bite of food, God keeps you alive. The federal government needs a trillion dollars (more now) every year to serve you. God, on the other hand, doesn't need any of your money to serve you. He serves you because He wants to, because He loves you. And one way to return that love is to return some of His own money to Him.