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THE POWER OF FAITH

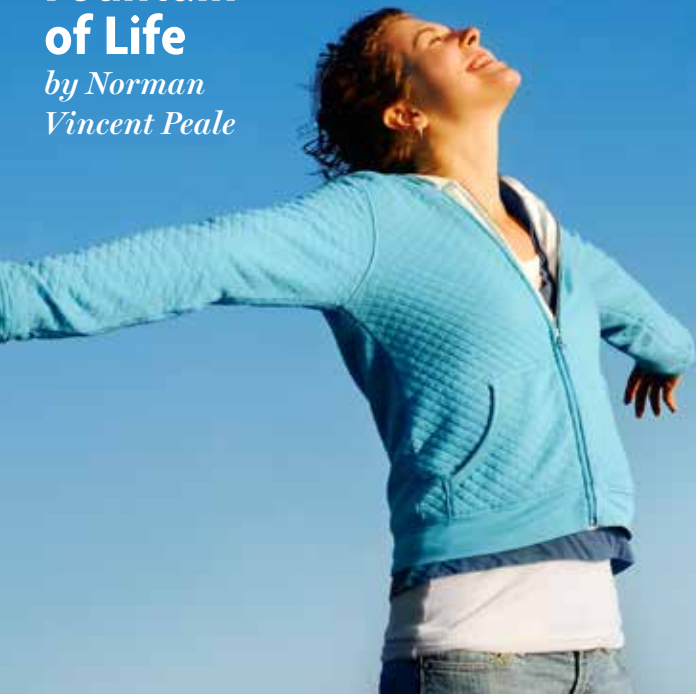
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Enthusiasm: The Fountain of Life

*by Norman
Vincent Peale*



Enthusiasm:

The

Fountain

of Life

By Norman Vincent Peale

One of the greatest words in the English language is *enthusiasm*. It describes a spirit that adds zest to life. In fact, enthusiasm makes life good. It is a gift of God. The very word enthusiasm relates to God. It is derived from two Greek words, *en* and *theos*; “en” meaning *in* and “theos” being the Greek word for God. So enthusiasm means *in God* or *God in you*; it means *full of God*.

How is *your* enthusiasm? Life with its buffetings may have knocked enthusiasm out of you. Or you may have become so sophisticated that you think enthusiasm is something that belongs to the young and naive. Don’t delude yourself. Get enthusiasm back. Without it life is poor; with it life is good. It makes you feel strong. It gives you a sense of mastery. It gives you a consciousness of your own value and worth. You take hold of the world when enthusiasm takes hold of you.

In the Psalm 36:9 are these words: “For with You is the fountain of life...” What a picture — the fountain of life! It brings to mind one glorious Sunday when I was at the Palace of Versailles and all of a sudden they turned on the fountains. The water burst forth with a gush and a roar and an upthrust as though reaching for the sun, dancing and singing. “For with You (God) is the fountain

of life” When you get God in your life, you get so excited that you can hardly endure it. It makes life good.

“I am come that they might have life,” says that marvelous passage in John 10:10, “and that they might have it more abundantly.” Or, as *The Message* translates it: “I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.” You see, Christianity is designed to produce happy people, victorious people, enthusiastic people. All this takes into account the pain and problems in the world. Despite problems, and even out of them, God brings to people a consciousness and plan of victory.

Enthusiasm makes life good. The enthusiast has enormous resources, so great that they will be equal to any problems he ever has to face. This doesn’t mean that the enthusiast won’t fail. He will fail — everybody will fail at times. Failure is a common experience of all mankind. You’re going to fail sometimes, and so am I. Many times. But

the critical thing is *how* you fail. The enthusiast fails, but he “fails forward,” and that is a great way to fail. In fact, if you fail forward it’s a good thing to fail. That phrase “fail forward” isn’t my own. I got it from a man whom I used to know, whom I consider one of the wisest philosophers this country ever had — Charles F. Kettering. He was for many years chief research scientist of General Motors Corporation. He developed the self-starter, the Duco paint process, high-octane gasoline and

*Enthusiasm makes life good.
It is a gift of God.*

many other refinements in the automotive field. Next to Edison, he was perhaps the finest inventive mind we’ve had in modern times. He thought great thoughts. And one of his thoughts was this idea of “failing forward.”

He used to say that as a research scientist he had failed many times, but from each failure he had learned something — always “failing forward” toward the day when some later experiment would be successful. It may take many failures to prepare you for a success, so you should never fail and stop.

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Always fail forward.

It's easy to find people who say that the times are against them, that this is no time to imagine you can live a satisfying life, with conditions in the world as they are today. Well, the enthusiast rises above all such miserable thinking. There have always been some people who took the time they lived in — just the way it was — and with enthusiasm made something of it. The best time is really right this minute.

When you get God in your life, you get so excited that you can hardly endure it.

How do you know how many more minutes you are going to have, anyway? This is it. Emerson said, “Everyone is criticizing and belittling the times. Yet I think that our times, like all times, are very good times, if only we know what to do with them.”

A few years ago in San Francisco a sour-looking intellectual whom I had never met walked up and spoke to me on the street. How did I know that he was an intellectual? He told me he was. He challenged me about positive thinking. “Don't you know

that the world is full of problems?”

“You don't say?” I said. “You think I was born yesterday? Of course the world is full of problems.” But then I thought of a comeback, and I've been proud of myself ever since. Most of my comebacks come back about six hours after I actually need them! I said, “Certainly the world is full of problems but, thanks be to God, it is also full of the *overcoming* of problems.”

That really got him. He went off down the street mumbling and shaking his head.

Of course the world is full of problems! It always has been; it always will be; it is now. But those who know God, who know the Lord Jesus Christ, can affirm, “For with You (despite these problems) is the fountain of life...” And they are the kind of people who get the problems solved.

Now a lot of people think of enthusiasm as something volatile and hot. The enthusiast, according to caricature, is a noisy, superficial individual. Well, there *is* fire in the enthusiast, all right, but in the true enthusiast it is fire under control. The English writer William McFee said, “The world belongs to the enthusiast who keeps cool.” Keep your enthusiasms, but keep them under control. Then there isn't any knot that you can't disentangle with controlled enthusiasm.

Life is full of storms. You may be living in care-free and tranquil days right now, but don't let that fool you. It can't always be that way. It was never designed to be that way. "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward," says Job 5:7. You *will* encounter storms. Do you feel equipped? Can you handle them, or will they beat you down? Storms of life come when least expected. Sunshine, rain, fog, mist, storms; sunshine, rain, fog, mist, storms — so it goes. Well, the enthusiast knows that he has, by the gift of God and through the Lord Jesus Christ, the power to ride out the storms.

Some years ago my wife and I were traveling in the Far East, on a plane to Tokyo. The attendant came and asked my name. When I told her she said, "The pilot says he knows you and he wants you to come up to the cockpit and have a visit with him." This was an interesting invitation, so I went up to the cockpit. The pilot told the co-pilot he could go out for a while, and I sat in the co-pilot's seat. There weren't as many regulations governing planes in those days.

This pilot was a long, lanky Texan. He said, "I heard you were aboard, and I want to talk with you about religion." That was his beginning. I was surprised, but pleased and interested. "I want to thank you," he continued. "You helped me find Jesus

Christ and ever since then my life has been altogether different." And we talked of spiritual things.

Then I got interested in the plane and in all the gadgets he had there. I asked, "Are these planes hard to run?"

"No," he said, "any fool can do it. Want to try?"

"Well," I responded, "what do I do?"

"You take hold of this stick," he said, "and keep your eye on that level. You must keep the plane

*The best time is really right
this minute. How do you know
how many more minutes you
are going to have, anyway?*

on that level." And he showed me how. And I sat there flying this plane through the big expansive sky. However, I saw out of the corner of my eye that the pilot had his hand on the other stick.

Presently I saw two great big cumulus clouds sitting out there ahead, with a path of blue between them. I asked, "Do you want me to go around those clouds or through them?"

"Go through," he replied.

So we went straight through, with the clouds reaching for us on either side. It was so thrilling that I exclaimed, “Boy, that was great! Let’s go around and come through again, what do you say?”

“Better just keep on going,” he said, smiling. “We’ll be on the Tokyo radar in a minute, and they’d be wondering what’s going on out here.”

Then he took it away from me. I had read in the paper that the typhoon season was approaching and I asked, “What would you do if we suddenly ran into a typhoon?”

He answered, “I wouldn’t run into one if I had my wits about me. You don’t want to fool around with a typhoon. What I try to do when there’s a typhoon around is get on the edge of it, the way it’s traveling. Usually it measures from three to five hundred miles across. The thing to do is find out which way it is moving and get on the edge of it so that it blows you ahead.” Then he cast off a phrase that I thought was a classic. “You turn typhoons into tailwinds.”

A person who lives with the Lord Jesus Christ — and consequently has enthusiasm and calm control — does the same with the storms of life. He lets them take him to higher ground. He “turns typhoons into tailwinds” and sails swiftly and smoothly to his destiny.

A TIME FOR PRAYER

PRAYER FOR A BUSY AGE

by Peter Marshall

As summer comes to an end, fall’s busy routine of school and work resumes. Our many technological devices tempt us to multi-task and intensify even more the pace of our lives. Left unchecked, this tendency can distance us from one another and from the wonders of God’s creation. The late minister Peter Marshall composed this prayer to remind us of the need for slowness and patient discovery:

In the name of Jesus Christ, who was never in a hurry, we pray, O God, that You will slow us down, for we know that we live too fast.

With all of eternity before us, make us take time to live — time to get acquainted with You, time to enjoy Your blessings and time to know each other. Amen.

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A Special Touch

by Maggie Baxter





A Special Touch



By Maggie Baxter

I lay in bed and watched the sun creep up over the eastern horizon. And even before I was fully awake, depression began to settle over me like a suffocating gray blanket.

My marriage of 25 years was ending in divorce. My two sons were grown and out on their own, so I had taken my two daughters back to the part of the country where I'd been raised. I'd hoped going home would make everything better, but it hadn't. I couldn't find a job or a place to live, and for two months we had been living with my cousin and her family. I hadn't had time to make friends. And today was my 14-year-old daughter's birthday, and I hadn't planned anything special to celebrate it.

Overwhelmed, I watched daybreak's orange streaks spread across the sky. "Please, Lord," I said, "let me have a special touch from You this day. Help me to give Katy a present that will mean something to her."

I spent the morning looking for an apartment, and it was mid-afternoon before I began the long drive back to my cousin's home in the country. A weather bulletin on the car radio warned of an approaching thunderstorm with lightning, hail and high winds. Still, I figured I'd have time to get in my daily run before the storm hit. My two-mile jog each day had become an important weapon in my

battle against depression. When I pulled up to my cousin's house, I went inside and hurriedly changed into my jogging clothes and sneakers.

As I began my run, the sky to the west started to darken, and I could see faint jags of lightning in the distance. But the storm seemed far away, so I ran my usual mile along a paved country road past fields and farms to the place where the road passed between two large groves of trees. There I turned around and started back.

But when I left the shelter of the leafy tunnel to head home, I saw black clouds boiling in the west, their edges hanging in shreds. Lightning snaked down from them.

The air became impossibly still. No birds sang. The sun cast a strange, greenish light over the landscape. The trees, even the meadow grasses, stopped their swaying. It was as if the breath had been sucked from everything, leaving me to run in a vacuum.

Only one long, steep hill lay between me and the safety of home. As I neared the crest of the hill, the hair on my body lifted in a strange, crawling way. Feeling confused and disoriented, I stopped running.

The whole world exploded. A sudden impact, like a large hand across my back, shoved me to my

knees. The ground shook underneath me and a terrible roaring filled my ears.

The lightning hit the field again, its impact knocking me flat to the ground. I lay there, my hands ground into the gravel, my face pressed hard into the pavement, and prayed. Gradually my blurred vision began to clear. I could breathe again. My only thought was to get home.

I tried to stand. Every muscle in my body cramped. I tried to crawl, moving crablike to the top of the hill. The wind whipped dirt in my face, and as I turned my head to try and clear my vision, I saw a bolt of lightning strike a tall metal fence-post at the edge of the field. A ball of fire rolled across a ditch, almost blinding me with its brightness. I fell to the ground again, not even caring where the ball of fire had gone.

I heard my own voice over the noise of the storm: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me..." A calmness came over me. God's presence was there with me, in the middle of the tempest. I lay quietly as the storm continued to rage and repeated the words of the psalm over and over.

The winds finally started to die down. I heard the sound of a car and staggered to my feet. My cousin, working in her yard when the first lightning

bolt hit, had dropped her work, grabbed the car keys and driven frantically along my usual jogging route to find me. She was nearly as thrilled to see me get up and open her car door as I was to climb into the car to safety.

That night, when I looked in the mirror at my red and swollen neck and face, and my eyes beginning to turn black, I laughed, really laughed, for the first time in months. I had never looked so beautiful to myself. I was alive. I had come through the valley of death. Now that I'd found God as my refuge in the lightning storm, I knew I could trust Him with all the other storms in my life. As peace and hope filled me, my fear and anxiety lifted.

That night Katy put her arms around me. "Mom," she said, "the best birthday present I could ever have is for God to keep you safe."

A broken, heartfelt prayer for a special touch from God had started my day. And I had received an answer I would never forget.



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a Weekend *to* Remember

By Madge Harrah

It was a beautiful day, sparkling and crisp, not a cloud in the deep blue Colorado sky as we pulled up to our simple getaway cabin on the Conejos River. "Weather looks good," Larry said as he lowered the tailgate and started unloading our luggage and supplies.

“Perfect!” I said. I was determined to make this a Labor Day weekend to remember. Our son, Eric, and his wife, Beth, were coming with their four children. So were our daughter, Meghan, and her husband, Pete. It had been a while since we were all together, and I had everything figured out, all bases covered — menus, daily activities, sleeping arrangements. I’d made sure to pray that it wouldn’t rain.

Larry went around back to start the pump for the well. I carried the food coolers inside and was putting things away when Larry clumped into the kitchen. “No water,” he said. “Guess your prayers for no rain worked. It’s so dry that the water level has fallen below the level of the pump. Nothing’s coming out of the well.”

“Ten people in a cabin for three whole days with no water?” I said weakly.

“Twelve people,” Larry responded.

“Twelve?”

“Remember Chuck and Andrea.” I’d never met them, but I’d heard a lot about them. They worked with Larry in an Albuquerque lab. “Larry, you never told me,” I said, my voice squeaking.

“Sure I did,” Larry said.

I fumed. I was sure Andrea, a research scientist, would be a stickler for details. She was probably expecting a Martha Stewart retreat. And now we had no drinking water, no cooking water, no shower ... I jumped to my feet. “No water for the toilet!” I cried.

“Don’t worry. We’ll manage.”

Manage? How were we going to manage? I sank onto the sofa. My perfect weekend was in shambles before it had even started.

I heard Eric’s van, then Pete’s truck pull up right outside the house. As the family trooped into the living room, I curled up under an old afghan. “Where’s Grandma?” one of the children asked. Meghan lifted the afghan and peeked in at me. “Mom? Are you okay?”

“No!” I said. “The pump isn’t working, we have no water and your dad invited two more people. And I wanted this weekend to be perfect. And now it’s ruined.”

“Mom, sit up,” Meghan said, pulling the afghan away. She spoke to me the way I’d spoken to her when she little. “It’s only ruined if you let it be ruined.”

A car pulled up. Larry came in, followed by a man and a woman who looked annoyingly good-

natured. It was clear they hadn't heard the bad news. "This is Chuck and Andrea," Larry said, and I feebly put out my hand, trying to be civil — but all I saw was 11 thirsty, hungry, unwashed people who would soon have to go to the bathroom.

"Here's what we'll do," Larry said. "We'll get all the buckets, wastepaper baskets and coolers and fill them with water from the river. It won't be drinkable, but we can use it to flush the toilet."

"And we can fill all the pitchers, jars and jugs with drinking water from the hunting lodge on the other side of town," Meghan said. "The owners know us. I'm sure they'll be glad to help."

"Wranglers and hunters pay to use the showers at the lodge," Eric added. "I'm sure we can do the same."

The others sprang into action, gathering anything that could hold water and heading for the river and the lodge. Soon people were carrying in basins and buckets, sloshing water on the floor and on the walls of the bathroom when they emptied the water into the tub. Before long muddy footprints covered the floor.

"What a mess!" Andrea said, laughing. "Makes me feel right at home!"

I stared at her. *Does she mean that?* Her smile

seemed true enough. Everyone else was smiling too.

This was not the Labor Day weekend I had planned. But what was that verse from Proverbs? "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth." Well, I hadn't meant to boast, but I had been expecting things to be perfect. It was my expectations that got me in trouble. After all, everybody seemed to be having fun.

For the rest of the weekend, I went along moment to moment. The men kept the water coming and the women cooked and did dishes. We hiked, fished and picnicked under cloudless skies.

On the last day, everyone pitched in to clean the cabin. As we locked up the place before heading home, Andrea said, "We had such a good time! I hope you'll ask us back."

This time I didn't question her sincerity. I'd learned that Labor Day — or any day — doesn't have to be in perfect order to be great. I don't mean to boast...but we'd had a perfect imperfect weekend.

Positive Thoughts



Each of us may be sure that if God sends us on stony paths He will provide us with strong shoes.

—*Alexander McClaren*

Resolve to keep happy and your joy and you shall be an invincible host against difficulties.

—*Helen Keller*

Wherever a man turns he can find someone who needs him.

—*Albert Schweitzer*

All God's angels come to us disguised.

—*James Russell Lowell*

Everyone is the age of their heart.

—*Guatemalan Proverb*

Caring for the Caregiver

by *Mary Lou Carney*





Caring for the Caregiver

By Mary Lou Carney

I sat with my sister in the hospital chapel, absorbing the doctor's news. Her son's legs were paralyzed, after multiple surgeries for an aortic dissection and a blood clot. At 34, Lew would live life from a wheelchair.

"I'm so sorry," I said, sliding my arm around Libby. I felt so helpless. *How much more can she take?*

Already she cared for her husband, Denny, who suffers from a degenerative muscle disease along with a host of other ailments. She helped him go to the bathroom, eat, sit up in bed. It was a stressful, tedious responsibility, one my sister did with incredible love. Day after day.

I liked helping out in crises, and usually knew what to do. But this was different. Overwhelming. How could I ease her burden? I lived 250 miles away; I couldn't take over my brother-in-law's care. And I couldn't give her back the two men she loved most in the world, whole and healed. *Please, God, I prayed, show me what to do. Help me so I can help Libby.*

"You'd better get going," Libby said. "You've got

a long drive.”

In the lobby we hugged. “Do you remember where you parked?” Libby asked, a small smile breaking through the sadness.

“Somewhere in that huge parking garage,” I said. Then I remembered something I’d overheard: A nurse telling a couple that there wasn’t much difference in the price of a monthly parking pass and the cost of a few days. “When I leave, I’ll buy a monthly pass,” I said. “You can share it, so no one will have to worry about parking fees.” It was a small thing, but it felt good knowing I was helping meet a need.

In the months that followed I discovered other ways that I and others could minister to my sister. If *you* know a caregiver, consider these ways to help:

1. Take them food. When friends came to visit my nephew in the hospital, they brought a bag of healthy snacks — nuts, apples, bottled juices — for the family sitting vigil in the intensive care waiting room. “It’s good to have something nutritious to eat when you’re awake in the middle of the night,” Libby said.

2. Give the caregiver a gas card or prepaid credit card. Expenses mount up for family

members driving to the hospital or doctor’s appointments.

My friend Rachel was sensitive to my sister’s need; she had lost her husband to lung disease several years ago. She remembered the many trips she had made with him to Chicago for treatment. So she sent Libby a “thinking of you card” with a prepaid gas card tucked inside. “It was just one less expense I had to think about,” Libby said. “And the thought meant as much as the money.”

3. Don’t ask; just do. Caregivers are often too overwhelmed to think of what they need or, as Libby told me, don’t want to admit they need help.

I went to visit Libby shortly after Lew went into rehab. Denny’s condition had worsened, and nearly all her time and energy was devoted to caring for her husband. She slept in a chair near his bed. One morning I sat in the living room, unsure of what to do, not wanting to bother my sister. I noticed a bit of dirt on the floor and without thinking grabbed a vacuum.

Soon I found myself sweeping rugs and dusting furniture. It felt good to be busy. I did a few loads of laundry. *What next?* Before I knew it I was taking down the curtains in the living room and washing

the windows, something I never even did in my own house. The day I left, Libby stood in the clean room, smiling for the first time in days. “I would never have asked you to do this, but thank you. Thank you!”

4. Take on yard or repair work — mowing or, in winter, shoveling walks and driveways. My sister called one morning: Her son was being released from rehab. He would be coming home in his new wheelchair. “We’ll have to have a ramp built into Lew’s house,” Libby said. “And try to make the bathroom handicapped accessible.”

I asked my husband, Gary, if he might be able to help. He’s been in construction for more than 25 years. And my son, Brett, buys and rehabs houses for a living. “Don’t give it another thought,” he said. “We’re on it!”

The next weekend, Gary and Brett — each pulling a tool trailer with his pickup truck — showed up ready to work. They yanked out walls, installed a handicapped shower, laid new flooring. Soon other relatives and family friends appeared. The yard was full of power saws and lumber scraps. A wide, sturdy ramp was built in the garage with a new steel entry door opening into the dining room.

“It was wonderful to be able to focus on my husband, who needed me so much, and still know my son’s needs were being taken care of — in a grand way!” Libby said.

5. Give the gift of laughter. One thing my sister and I never had trouble doing was gabbing, but now I wasn’t always sure what to say. I knew she was weighed down by worries, and I wanted to say the right words of comfort. But nothing came. The silence built. I thought of all the good times we’d spent together, happier moments, growing up on the farm. “Remember how we had to shell all those ears of corn by hand before we went to bed, so we’d have it for the morning feeding?” I heard myself ask.

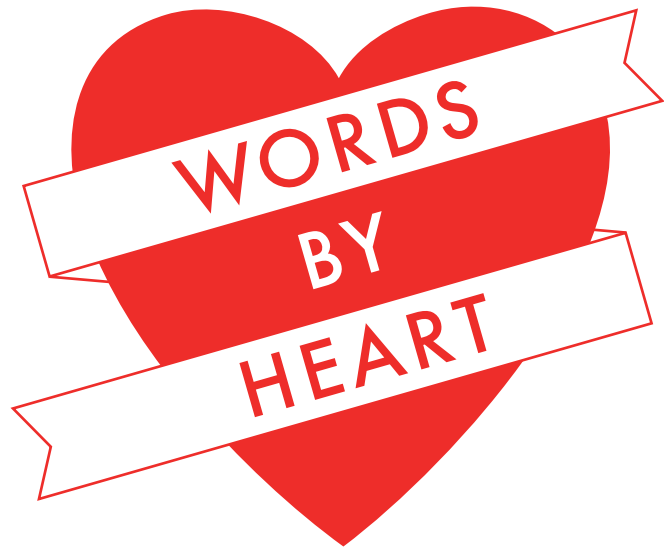
She laughed. “I was sure I’d have no thumbprints left.”

Soon we were talking about playing hide-and-seek, baking cookies, our annual 4-H projects. We laughed like young girls again. For just a few minutes Libby forgot her worries. I learned, when visiting a caregiver, to relax and be yourself. Talk about a special memory. Give him or her a reason to smile. Laughter, recent clinical studies have shown, is good medicine.

6. Pray. Even as a friend or relative of the caregiver, don't shoulder the emotional burden alone. Ask others to pray for both the patient and the caregiver. Let caregivers know people are praying for them. I told the sewing circle at my church, the Kneedle Knuts, about my sister. A few weeks later Libby called. Her husband Denny was in the hospital with a high fever, his heartbeat unsteady.

I told a woman from the sewing circle I was going to see Libby. "I have something for you," she said. It was a beautiful brown prayer shawl. When I got to the hospital Libby was sitting in the window seat of her husband's room, reading. "It's lovely," she said when I gave her the shawl and told her the Knuts had made it for her. She pulled it around her shoulders. "I can feel the prayers." I spent the night with her in Denny's room. I woke several times. Each time Libby was still wrapped in that shawl.

Challenging days lie ahead for my sister, but I know God will help me find ways to be there for her. If not physically, then in my prayers. And in dozens of other little ways that will let her know she is not alone.



By Evelyn Bence

Seeing the neighborhood children walk toward the bus stop on this first day of school prompted me to pull out a notebook page on which I keep an A to Z list culled from my Bible. As a child I memorized many of the

short sentences. The rest I intend to learn this fall. They're reminders of how I want to live out the Word by what I do, what I know and what I pray.

- A** *Awake, awake! Put on your strength... (Isaiah 52:1)*
- B** *Be kind... (Ephesians 4:32)*
- C** *Create in me a clean heart, O God... (Psalm 51:10)*
- D** *Do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)*
- E** *Every perfect gift is from above... (James 1:17)*
- F** *Fear not, for I am with you... (Isaiah 43:5)*
- G** *Give us this day our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11)*
- H** *Hear my prayer, O God... (Psalm 54:2)*
- I** *In the beginning God created... (Genesis 1:1)*
- J** *Jesus himself drew near... (Luke 24:15)*
- K** *Keep your tongue from evil... (Psalm 34:13)*
- L** *Let us love one another... (1 John 4:7)*

- M** *Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life... (Psalm 23:6)*
- N** *Now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2)*
- O** *Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song! (Psalm 98:1)*
- P** *Pray without ceasing... (1 Thessalonians 5:17)*
- Q** *Quicken me, O Lord... (Psalm 143:11)*
- R** *Rejoice in the Lord your God... (Joel 2:23)*
- S** *Seek first the kingdom of God... (Matthew 6:33)*
- T** *Trust in the Lord... (Proverbs 3:5)*
- U** *Unto You, O God, do we give thanks... (Psalm 75:1)*
- V** *The very hairs of your head are all numbered. (Matthew 10:30)*
- W** *We are God's fellow workers... (1 Corinthians 3:9)*
- X** *Exercise yourself toward godliness. (1 Timothy 4:7)*
- Y** *Yield yourselves to the Lord... (2 Chronicles 30:8)*
- Z** *Zion heard, and was glad... (Psalm 97:8)*

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**It is a happy talent
to know how to play.**
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

