

# Daily Devotionals ...along the way of the widow's walk

(by Howie Soucek, rev 4-26-23)



We might think of a “daily devotional” as a book, often written with each, single page dedicated to one day of the year, and written for the purpose of providing some daily comfort and inspiration for the reader. And the fact that only one page is involved each day makes it easy to remember and easy to fit into a regular, busy, daily schedule.

Such books normally have a basis of faith, or they may be entirely secular, but the best ones tend to be holistic, in the sense that if a person is in need of daily comfort and inspiration (and aren't we all?), then support is most helpful when it addresses the needs of the mind and the body and the spirit also, for we are made of these *inseparable* components.

Daily devotionals make an importantly useful gift that we can give to someone who is suffering from any of a number of serious traumas, only to include the loss of a loved one. My and Linda's first devotional was a gift from dear friends during the time that Linda's terminal illness was underway.

Other devotionals came along, especially after she died, that helped me greatly—every day. I wound up reading from nine of them each day for the first three or four years after she died—and years after that, I am still referring to them occasionally, just to “stay in touch” with something true, awesome, constant, connecting, nourishing, grounding,...

The testimonials below are not like little book reviews — They are just simple accounts written by someone who has lost (or is caring for a terminally ill) loved one. And they are presented here in no order of importance, as each one is important in its own way for the many of us who are each in need of healing help in our own, unique ways.

Please feel free to offer your own, additional devotional suggestions—and/or testimonials about any already listed, ...because *our experiences are often richly divergent and therefore helpful for one another to learn from*. And when we eventually realize that *what matters most is what we all happen to have in common, then the truth of what Com-fort is becomes clear as crystal ...and freeing*. Truly, *we are meant to share*.

# Testimonials:

## God Calling ...the Two Listeners

At the time of Linda's second of three brain surgeries, dear friends visited us with this book, our first "devotional," as a gift. Starting on the page of the day it was presented, this book provided us comfort, together. And after Lin died, it continued to show me the closing way to *relationship* with God as found directly, but also in every element of our Creation-gift (an easy process) and in our relationships with one another (which is often challenging, due to our "defensive" behaviors in a world of suffering). ...This book helps me to realize how to Live.

## Nature — a Day at a Time ...Cathie Katz

As Linda had completed her brain surgeries and was settling in to her therapies, dear friends in the Sandhills of Nebraska gave this book to us. With one page set aside for each day of the year, Nature offers fascinating information about many of the plants and creatures available for us to enjoy in our amazing Creation-gift. My sense of wonder and appreciation for this beautiful, immense diversity helps me to keep the nourishing, inspiring, bigger picture (the Truth—see Romans 1:19-20) in mind, even as I walk my grief-journey.

## Listening to Your Life ...Frederick Buechner

On my birthday about four years after Lin died, a very close friend of mine (since 1970) gave this book to me, knowing that I was continuing on a difficult journey. He also knew that, suffering in my entirety, I was navigating this journey in a multifaceted way, one element of which was the intellectual/philosophical. It is through this lens, as he knew it would, that my understanding and appreciation of the Truth further developed in the reading of this book, ...a little each day.

## Streams in the Desert ...L. B. Cowman

Years ago, I lost a close friend to her anorexia—a close friend for whom I had become a primary caregiver. When she died, a good friend of hers—one who understood the nature of our relationship—gave this book to me, especially because, as its title suggests, my anorexic friend and I shared in our belief that there is great, overwhelming Good that comes of our worst traumas in the world, if we will but choose to see and accept it. Thus, as is Listening, this devotional is "intellectual," ...but consider that some of the best hikes take place in terrain that is difficult to navigate in one way or another, "For to be without is the ultimate way to find within." —(my anorexic friend).

## Jesus Calling ...Sarah Young

Speaking of my anorexic friend, this devotional was given to her by her loving sister, who was well aware of her strong relationship with God. After her sister died, she gave it to me, knowing how resonant we were in this. In this book, specific Bible verses are named, with corresponding interpretations and reflections presented.

## Healing After Loss ...Martha Whitmore Hickman

Not long after Lin died, I was experiencing a really difficult day, when a friend happened to call to see how I was doing. About ten minutes later, she appeared at my door, and a long, comforting discussion ensued. (Some years earlier, her oldest daughter, who was pregnant with the first family grandchild, had died suddenly along with her unborn child.) One of the most memorable (and enduringly important) things she said to me was that she had realized that her pain of loss would never go away, but that “I am accepting it better.” (Think: “The Serenity Prayer.”) And she presented me with a copy of this devotional, saying that it had been giving her wonderful help along the way—as it has with me.

## My Mended Heart ...Micah Dillon

About six years after Lin died, I became aware of a devotional written by a friend who had lost her husband a couple years earlier. Each page of My Mended Heart includes a writing of Scripture, accompanied by her associated “good thoughts” as originally recorded in her own journal following the loss of her husband. Her expressed hope in doing so is to encourage others by sharing the joy of the Lord. And in my own experience reading this book, her purpose is fully accomplished. I have marked up and made my own notations of resonance on every page, one of which points out the sublime truth that “In the sending comes the mending.” This book exemplifies—as do all the others—the many different ways that we experience (and share) our grief, all of which are to be honored as broadening our own perspective, while realizing that we are all the same, both in our suffering and in our **victory** over that undeniable suffering by our consciousness of the ultimate Truth.

## Twenty-Four Hours a Day ...Alcoholics Anonymous

I think of this book as a daily devotional for alcoholics. My own is the actual copy used by my Mom, as she became and then maintained her sobriety for many years, and it is one of the first resources I turned to during Linda’s terminal illness. This book made it clear to me that, while we all suffer in many different ways and for different reasons, there is substantive help to be obtained from a diverse variety of sources—all of which have in common the shared Love of God. Each page (day of the year) includes 1) a paragraph of encouragement for fellow alcoholics—encouragement which is often applicable for any number of traumas and troubles, not just alcoholism, 2) a meditation, which is largely based on the passages of God Calling, and 3) a “Prayer for the Day.”

## God Calling 2 — God at Eventide ...the Two Listeners

This volume, considered a “Companion” to God Calling, includes new, similarly inspired but unique entries that may best be described in the introduction: “Consequently again and again has come the question: ‘Though I have been reading them for years, why do the Messages seem always new?’ The answer is: They contain the story that is old and ever new, but they are not new; only the reader is NEW; year by passing year he or she is becoming the New Creature in Christ Jesus commanded by the New Testament.” This points to the fact that our grief is a *developmental* journey—provided we choose and also discipline ourselves for it to be—a journey that brings us ever-closer, in Graceful Healing, to God.