

A serene winter landscape featuring a snow-covered path that winds through a dense forest of evergreen trees. The sky is a clear, pale blue, and the ground is covered in a thick layer of snow. The overall scene is peaceful and quiet.

# Lay it Down

*The Binder Co. Devotionals January 2019*

[www.emilyfurda.com/thebinderco](http://www.emilyfurda.com/thebinderco)



## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

Welcome to The Binder Co.: a do-it-yourself devotional and journaling experience for women who desire to grow deeper in God's Word on a daily basis. All you need is a 3-ring binder and a printer to get started — for free!

### ABOUT THE BINDER CO.

The Binder Co exists to help women dive deeper into their faith and connect with others through free monthly eBooks of devotionals written by women for women. Every aspect of The Binder Co. is run by volunteers. Once a month, we release a free ebook with daily devotionals, corresponding scriptures, and daily challenges to help put what we learn into action. These daily devotionals are free to read, download, and print anytime. You can use them for yourself, your small group, friend group, or church group!

### GET INVOLVED

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Write for us. To learn how you can be a featured guest writer, visit our facebook page. We'd love to have you.  
Access the free archives of every calendar at [emilyfurda.com/thebinderco](https://emilyfurda.com/thebinderco)

### A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Binder Co. (originally called Her Binder Project) was started in 2014 by Morgan Harper Nichols as a way to challenge herself to dig deeper into God's Word and put her faith into action on a daily basis. She made a calendar one month that included weekly themes, Bible verses, and daily challenges. Even though she originally started writing and designing these for herself, she felt the Lord leading her to share it with others. So, she put it on Pinterest, and was unbelievable with more women studying along each month. You can learn more about Morgan at [themhn.co](https://themhn.co)

When I was 11 years old, my worship dance teacher gave all of the dancers a small hot pink booklet of devotionals for Christmas. That was my first devotional, and I fell in love with studying God's word and learning how to apply it to my life. I've rarely been without a daily devotional since then. When Morgan asked me to help with The Binder Co. in 2016, it was a dream come true to be able to write devotionals. This ministry and the women who read every day captured my heart. The more I became involved as a writer, editor, and project manager, the more it became a part of me.

In 2018, Morgan asked me if she could give me The Binder Co. I was speechless, which rarely happens. It was not an easy decision for her or one made lightly by myself. My joy comes when I see women come alive as they study each month. I'm studying and learning along with you. Today, thousands of women are joining this project each month, and I am so grateful for each one of you!

*-Emily Furda Director, Editor In Chief [emilyfurda.com](https://emilyfurda.com) [instagram.com/emilyfurda](https://instagram.com/emilyfurda)*

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## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p><i><b>If God doesn't build the house, the builders only build shacks. If God doesn't guard the city, the night watchman might as well nap. It's useless to rise early and go to bed late, and work your worried fingers to the bone. Don't you know he enjoys giving rest to those he loves?</b></i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i><b>Psalm 127:1-2 MSG</b></i></p>		<p>1 <i><b>Psalm 127:1-2</b></i> Write out today's scripture, and place it where you'll see it often.</p>	<p>2 <i><b>Isaiah 9:6-7</b></i> Listen to "I Have This Hope" by Tenth Ave. North. <a href="https://youtu.be/eBg9HQeF44">youtu.be/eBg9HQeF44</a></p>	<p>3 <i><b>Joshua 1:7-9</b></i> What does success mean to you in light of today's scripture? Write it down and place it where you'll see it often when you're thinking about your future or past.</p>	<p>4 <i><b>Proverbs 3:6</b></i> Are there any areas of your life where you wonder if you're on the right path or are considering a change? Journal your thoughts and pray over these areas.</p>	<p>5 <i><b>Psalm 31:23</b></i> Listen to "Hopes and Dreams" by 7eventh Time Down. <a href="https://youtu.be/4tgUv9yNC0">youtu.be/4tgUv9yNC0</a></p>
<p>6 <i><b>1 Chronicles 16:34</b></i> Write today's scripture in your own words making it personal by including your name.</p>	<p>7 <i><b>Psalm 23:2-3</b></i> Listen to "Rest" by Matt Maher. <a href="https://youtu.be/uMurT34YwWf">youtu.be/uMurT34YwWf</a></p>	<p>8 <i><b>Matthew 6:33</b></i> What does it mean to seek God first, and how does that relate to the dreams and plans you have? Journal your thoughts.</p>	<p>9 <i><b>Psalm 37:4</b></i> What does it mean to "take delight in the Lord"? Journal your thoughts and memorize today's Scripture.</p>	<p>10 <i><b>Proverbs 16:3</b></i> Listen to "In Your Hands" by Christy Nockels. <a href="https://youtu.be/y01DjrGPTmU">youtu.be/y01DjrGPTmU</a></p>	<p>11 <i><b>Psalm 73:26</b></i> Write today's Scripture in your own words.</p>	<p>12 <i><b>James 1:27</b></i> Listen to "Be the Change" by Britt Nicole. <a href="https://youtu.be/wLkOq_ESr8">youtu.be/wLkOq_ESr8</a></p>
<p>13 <i><b>Hebrews 4:10</b></i> Why is rest so important? What is restful for you? Journal your thoughts and set aside time to rest this week.</p>	<p>14 <i><b>Romans 15:13</b></i> How do peace and joy lead to hope? Does that change what you pray for? Journal your thoughts and listen to "I Will Trust" by Molly Williams. <a href="https://youtu.be/USQJ44tqTB8">youtu.be/USQJ44tqTB8</a></p>	<p>15 <i><b>2 Corinthians 12:9-10</b></i> How does today's scripture impact how you see your weaknesses? Journal your thoughts.</p>	<p>16 <i><b>Romans 14:8</b></i> Listen to "Lord of My Life" by Greg and Rebecca Sparks. <a href="https://youtu.be/cjlbAEcClfc">youtu.be/cjlbAEcClfc</a></p>	<p>17 <i><b>Proverbs 11:25</b></i> Make a list of what takes up your time and energy. Is there something draining the life from you? Journal and pray, asking God to show you His will for you life and how to follow it.</p>	<p>18 <i><b>Jeremiah 29:11</b></i> Write Jeremiah 29:11 in your own words. Also, write it in your planner or have it set to come up as a reminder on your phone for one month from today.</p>	<p>19 <i><b>Psalm 29:10-11</b></i> Listen to "Hurricane" by Natalie Grant. <a href="https://youtu.be/ttKnLwwHlig">youtu.be/ttKnLwwHlig</a></p>
<p>20 <i><b>1 Thessalonians 5:11</b></i> Listen to "Storyteller" by Morgan Harper Nichols <a href="https://youtu.be/_ZAvxsDOUU">youtu.be/_ZAvxsDOUU</a>, and pray and journal, asking God to show you the value of your story.</p>	<p>21 <i><b>Matthew 5:14-16</b></i> Make a list of 10 small things you can do to shine the love of Jesus.</p>	<p>22 <i><b>Philippians 4:12-13</b></i> How do you see contentment in light of today's scripture? How does it impact how you approach your daily life no matter what you're going through? Journal your thoughts.</p>	<p>23 <i><b>Psalm 94:17-19</b></i> Listen to "I Will" by Citizen Way. <a href="https://youtu.be/k_bHd2-QhuQ">youtu.be/k_bHd2-QhuQ</a></p>	<p>24 <i><b>Ephesians 2:10</b></i> What does doing great things for God mean to you? How does today's scripture and devo impact your perception what you're doing in your own life? Journal your thoughts.</p>	<p>25 <i><b>Isaiah 30:21</b></i> Listen to "Backseat Driver" by TobyMac. <a href="https://youtu.be/kME_Q5V82Us">youtu.be/kME_Q5V82Us</a></p>	<p>26 <i><b>Matthew 11:28-30</b></i> Do you have any areas in your life that feel like a raging sea about to pull you under? Pray over them, asking God to show you where His unforced rhythms of grace are for you.</p>
<p>27 <i><b>John 10:10</b></i> Set aside time to rest this week, and listen to "Lay 'Em Down" by NEEDTOBREATHE. <a href="https://youtu.be/3PN-BMHj5L8">youtu.be/3PN-BMHj5L8</a></p>	<p>28 <i><b>Lamentations 3:22</b></i> Write a prayer to God. Tell Him how you're feeling right now. Let out every emotion and let Him comfort you.</p>	<p>29 <i><b>Micah 6:8</b></i> What does it mean to live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God? How can you do that in your everyday life? Journal your thoughts.</p>	<p>30 <i><b>Philippians 1:6</b></i> Listen to "Unfinished" by Mandisa, <a href="https://youtu.be/Ejyclx5iwA">youtu.be/Ejyclx5iwA</a> and journal about what it means to be "unfinished."</p>	<p>31 <i><b>Colossians 3:23-24</b></i> Write down a list of things where you think you're falling short. Then, ask yourself if any of those things are a "piano." Journal about how it changes your perspective.</p>	<p>#THEBINDERCO Join the community: Use #TheBinderCo on Instagram and Twitter, and join our Facebook group: <a href="https://facebook.com/groups/thebinderco">facebook.com/groups/thebinderco</a> For more downloads visit: <a href="https://emilyfurda.com/thebinderco">emilyfurda.com/thebinderco</a></p>	

*If God doesn't build the house, the builders only build shacks. If God doesn't guard the city, the night watchman might as well nap. It's useless to rise early and go to bed late, and work your worried fingers to the bone. Don't you know he enjoys giving rest to those he loves?  
Psalm 127:1-2 MSG*

***Tuesday, January 1***

*Devotional written by Emily Furda*

*Read Psalm 127:1-2*

A new day, a new month, a new year, can you feel the excitement? There are planners to fill, goals to accomplish, and untold stories to written! We can start new and make this the best year ever. All those plans we have made, it's time they finally come true. Everyone seems to be making resolutions to lose weight, save money, finally get the house cleaned, get up earlier, spend more time perfecting a hobby, or spend more time studying the Bible. The list goes on, and on, and on.

Are you overwhelmed yet? If you're not, you likely will be soon. It's okay to have plans and goals for the future. It's good to want to grow as a person. Sometimes, especially at the beginning of the year, those goals and dreams become forced. Instead of having the joy of enjoying the process, we become focused on meeting a standard we came up with because we feel pressured by hearing others trying to change. We think we must accomplish something simply because the earth finished yet another orbit around the sun. Why? Why do we put pressure on ourselves to change just because the calendar says January first?

God didn't design us to reach our own self-imposed standard of perfection. He created us to need Him. He wants to take the impossible standards we set and show us His plans instead. He enjoys giving us rest.

This month, instead of focusing on one more thing to do, let's focus on letting God guide us and the rest He enjoys giving to us. The pressure you're feeling, it's time to Lay it Down.

***Daily Challenge***

Write out today's scripture, and place it where you'll see it often.

*Written by Emily Furda*

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## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### **Wednesday, January 2**

*Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read Isaiah 9:6-7*

After the Christmas trees are taken down and the last of the cookies are eaten, we realize Christmastime is over. Sometimes, that can leave us feeling empty. The holiday cheer and sparkle fades, or maybe it was never as bright as we hoped it would be.

Then, we start the new year exhausted from the hectic holiday activity. We return to our regular routines, and sometimes try to start a new routine when our energy and hope is running low. All the promises of hope we had at Christmastime seems to be gone. It's easy to forget all about who Jesus is when the nativity scene is put away and the last carol is sung. The nights are darker and feel heavier when the last of the Christmas lights are put away. Our hope can begin to flicker and eventually fade, but we do have hope, real hope, because Jesus chose to enter our world filled with pain because He loves us.

Isaiah 9:6-7 describes one of the amazing qualities of Jesus. It's just as true now as it was in December.

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." NIV

If you're living in what feel like a dark place, know His light is shining on you. He sees your darkness and knows your pain. You don't have to hide how you feel. You have permission to feel whatever you feel. You have permission to start something new, and you have permission to rest.

You never have to hide how you feel from the God who loves you so much that He sent His own Son to live in and bring light to a world filled with darkness. Instead, let God's gentle, loving light shine on you wherever you are. Let His light ignite your hope.

#### **Daily Challenge**

Listen to "I Have This Hope" by Tenth Ave. North.  
[youtu.be/eBg9jHQtf44](https://youtu.be/eBg9jHQtf44)

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### **Thursday, January 3**

*Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read Joshua 1:7-9*

Whether you find yourself in a place where all of your dreams are coming true or all of them are falling apart, remember God's definition of success is often much different than what you may think of as success. Maybe you're headed to your dream college, dream job, or just got engaged. Maybe you had an amazing plan, but instead you're faced with unemployment after graduating, a difficult breakup, or a devastating illness at a young age.

None of those things, good or bad, define your success.

It's easy to think you're successful if things go well. It's also easy to feel like a failure when they don't. When the Israelites were about to enter the promised land, God told them their success and prosperity would come from never letting go of His word and walking in His ways. That is still true for you today.

God wants you to seek after His heart and dive head first into His word no matter what your current situation is like. We all desire to be successful and have an impact on the world around us, but you don't need a special platform to do that. True success comes from how you live each moment. Do you reflect Him in your college dorm, at your job, or how you handle a breakup? Do you reflect Him when the bills come and you don't know how to pay them, your heart is broken, or you're sitting in a doctor's office? Don't try to do it alone. Ask Him to help you live out His Word wherever you find yourself right now.

Your success story is not a play on a stage for all the world to see. Your success story is written in your heart.

#### **Daily Challenge**

What does success mean to you in light of today's scripture? Write it down and place it where you'll see it often when you're thinking about your future or past.

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### **Friday, January 4**

*Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read Proverbs 3:6*

Sometimes it can be so hard to know if we're walking in God's will. We want to, but we know our own desires get in the way. Sometimes when things go well, we wonder if it's too easy and think we're not where He wants us. Then, when it's hard, lonely, and scary, we wonder if we've missed His plan all together.

Proverbs 3:6 tells us "In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." NIV

That makes it sound so simple, so why do we find it so hard? Perhaps we give ourselves too much credit when it comes to how much we can mess up God's plans? That doesn't mean we should deliberately sin or walk around without seeking Him. On the contrary, we need to always be asking Him to guide our hearts and our steps and show us when we're on the right or wrong path.

God hears our prayers and heart attitude is more important than actions. So, if we're praying with every step we take and asking Him to guide us, maybe we should trust He will show us to change our paths when we're not walking where He wants us. Maybe we should also trust He will guide us no matter how far off the path we find ourselves. Maybe we should trust He'll show us when we are in the right path. When we're surrendered to God, we can relax. He's in charge, not us. He won't mess it up when it comes to our lives.

#### **Daily Challenge**

Are there any areas of your life where you wonder if you're on the right path or are considering a change? Journal your thoughts and pray over these areas.

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## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### ***Saturday, January 5***

*Devotional written by Morgan Harper Nichols*

*Read Psalm 31:23*

Love the Lord, all his faithful people! The Lord preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full. Psalm 31:23 NIV

God looks after those who are faithful to Him. He sees those who are loyal to Him in the work they do. He preserves and protects those who give their all and give it all for Him.

Any motivation you need to keep going in this season of your life has to be found in the Lord. Even when you have great people in your life to look up to and be inspired by, it will only be your loving Heavenly Father who keeps your heart and mind strong and steady for the tasks at hand and whatever lies ahead. Whether your workload is intensifying, you're battling issues of not feeling worthy or good enough, you don't feel like you're doing your best work, or you're unmotivated, remember that while Pinterest and Instagram may provide some inspiration, and while a friend or a mentor might have the encouragement you need, it is the Lord who keeps you going. It is the Lord who preserves you and keeps you strong as you prepare for things ahead.

Knowing this, don't be so hard on yourself trying to be successful on man's terms. Let your passion to do your best be rooted in the Lord, for He is The One who knows what you need in order for you to get where you need to be!

### ***Daily Challenge***

Listen to "Hopes and Dreams" by 7eventh Time Down. [youtu.be/\\_4tgUv9yNC0](https://youtu.be/_4tgUv9yNC0)

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What stood out to you the most this week?

Journal, draw, write a poem, or write a prayer about it below.

## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### **Sunday, January 6**

*Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read 1 Chronicles 16:34*

Somedays it seems hard to hold on to hope for our futures. We look around and we wonder if maybe we've blown it too much. Maybe this time is the time God won't forgive us. Maybe we won't forgive ourselves. We wonder if God still loves us. We might even stop loving ourselves.

1 Chronicles 16:34 tells us "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."

Forever! He doesn't stop loving you just because you've messed up, again. He doesn't stop loving you because you "know better." He doesn't stop loving you if you love yourself. He loves you forever.

We all fail. We all make mistakes, and we all have days where it feels like maybe God is too far away. He's not. He's right here, and He loves you, forever!

#### **Daily Challenge**

Write today's scripture in your own words making it personal by including your name.

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### **Monday, January 7**

*Devotional written by Heather Golden Horton  
Read Psalm 23:2-3*

There is a beauty to the blank canvas of a new year. There is a certain stillness as we gaze at empty calendar pages waiting to be filled. Yet, there can also be a frightening element of the unknown as we look ahead, questioning what the future holds. As we enter a fresh year full of possibility, we may find ourselves tempted to rush into the newness without slowing to ponder our steps. Whether we eagerly schedule the coming weeks or feel anxiously paralyzed as we glance forward, we can be certain that there is One who holds our days and hours in His hands. Pressures may plague our thoughts until we find ourselves dreading the year to come, yet we can choose God's path and His righteous ways.

God is a trustworthy guide for our journey, regardless of the terrain. He is aware of the spots we will need to rest. He is mindful of the moments when we will thirst or long for a soft spot to be still. God is cognizant of our basic needs and our inner workings. The year before us is known to Him and the paths He will choose are right.

We will never find a pathway for our feet better than following the way God has prepared. Racing ahead will never provide the restoration we will find in the calm of His presence, waiting for Him to lead us to the next step. We can breathe in the excitement of a coming year, if we will commit to being led by our God of wisdom and peace.

#### **Daily Challenge**

Listen to "Rest" by Matt Maher. [youtu.be/uMurT34YWwE](https://youtu.be/uMurT34YWwE)

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### **Tuesday, January 8**

*Devotional written by Danielle Nicole  
Read Matthew 6:33*

With the New Year, comes many hopes and dreams for a lot of us. We get to try to accomplish all the things we didn't get to do the year before, attempt to start new things, and we have a whole year to do it. While it can be easy to dream up all these ideas, doing them isn't always as simple. We will run into dead ends, see doors close, and become low on strength. This is why we need to seek God's kingdom first, so we may ask Him for help on this journey.

Whether we are trying to start a new goal, work towards a new dream, or change something in our lives, when we make God first, we will see more growth and more answered prayers than we would without Him. In today's scripture we are told that if we seek His kingdom first, we will be given the things we need. In every situation and season we walk through, this truth will not fail us. Putting God first in everything will surely change the outcome in whatever we are doing.

Not only will we see dreams become reality, and goals reached, but having God a part of our plans will help us see how our plans can be a part of His glory. Our eyes will be opened to how we can use these dreams to change our world.

#### **Daily Challenge**

What does it mean to seek God first, and how does that relate to the dreams and plans you have? Journal your thoughts.

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## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### *Wednesday, January 9*

*Devotional written by Diane Marie*  
*Read Psalm 37:4*

January is a time when so many of us dream of all the things we want to do in the upcoming year. There are common goals like wanting to lose weight, exercise, or get more organized, and there are more unique goals like finally taking that trip to Italy, writing a mystery novel, or getting that dream job teaching Japanese. We're convinced at the beginning of the year that since we desire it, God will make it happen. Until it doesn't.

Suddenly we are questioning everything. After all, God gives us the desires of our heart, right? When we don't get everything on our wish list, we might think God doesn't care about us, or we might even start to question our faith.

This year take a minute to stop and rethink the verse. The whole verse. Notice it says to delight in the Lord before it says anything about our desires. The truth is, once we delight in the Lord, our whole outlook will change. While our desires may be perfectly legitimate, the Lord may have other things He desires for us. He knows what we truly desire long before we do. Take some time to really seek God and to delight in Him! He knows not just what you want, but what you need. He can truly give you the desires of your heart.

#### **Daily Challenge**

What does it mean to "take delight in the Lord"? Journal your thoughts and memorize today's Scripture.

*Written by Diane Marie*

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### *Thursday, January 10*

*Devotional written by Danielle Nicole*  
*Read Proverbs 16:3*

Entering the new year can put a lot of pressure on you to change things and set new goals. The fear of not being able to become a better person might begin to weigh heavy on your heart, and it can be easy lose sight of your worth. You might become overwhelmed by all the goals you feel you need to set, and when you aren't able to meet them, you put yourself down.

Desiring to become a better version of yourself and establishing new goals is a wonderful thing, but you can't let the pressure of accomplishing these things break you down. You can give this to God, you can lay it all down at His feet, and find freedom from all this stress.

Another thing to remember, just because others are starting all these new goals, it doesn't mean you have to as well. You know what is best for yourself, and maybe January isn't the best month for this. Pray about it, if you really do feel led to try something new, God will help you.

Though it can be hard to lay these things down, especially when you're so surrounded by the doubt of failing, it's the best way to find success in this situation. God knows what you need to be able to do all the thing this new year will have to offer, you just need to surrender it to Him.

#### **Daily Challenge**

Listen to "In Your Hands" by Christy Nockels.

[youtu.be/y01DjrGPTmU](https://youtu.be/y01DjrGPTmU)

*Written by Danielle Nicole*

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### *Friday, January 11*

*Devotional written by Heather Golden Horton*  
*Read Psalm 73:26*

There is a deep desire within many of us to greet the new year strong, full of hope, and camera ready. We praise the new leaves that are turned over each January. We celebrate grand visions for success and productivity. These new plans filled with earnest resolve bring us some hope that things will be different in the coming year, as we attempt to fix the broken things in our lives.

Preparation can be an intense task, adding pressure to lives that are already overflowing with activity. We can soon feel we are sinking beneath these grand goals we set for our lives just a few days before. Large looming plans that were intended to make us feel powerful often leave us feeling more powerless.

It is often helpful to step away from the challenges we have set for ourselves and focus on the truths of God. We can be encouraged as we contrast our own frailty and imperfection with God's vast strength and capability. Assurance can be found in the simple truth that success through God's lens is embodied in a heart totally dependent on Him for power and provision.

We may feel weak and without hope, yet only His mighty hand brings us any victory and sustains us through any defeat. No amount of wins or losses will define the might placed within us by our Maker.

Success cannot be measured on a scale or tally marks on a calendar, but by the strength in our hearts. It is God who gives us energy to face and reface the challenges of each day of the new year with courage.

#### **Daily Challenge**

Write today's Scripture in your own words.

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## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### ***Saturday, January 12***

*Devotional written by Emily Furda*

*Read James 1:27*

Many of us want to bring change to this world and a new year often has us thinking about how to create a bigger impact. We want to make a difference but wonder how. We're saved by faith, and because of the love of Jesus in our hearts, we naturally want to show Him to the world. How do we do that?

James 1:27 says: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. NIV

In biblical times to be a widow meant you were completely dependent on someone else. It was rare to find a woman who could financially support herself. After her husband died, it was the job of her son to care for her. If she had no adult children, she could be left at the mercy of others. Orphans were in the same situation, silenced, helpless, voiceless, and unloved.

No one person can help everyone in every way, but you can make a difference. Start where you are. Is there someone who needs something you could provide? It could be as simple as sending an extra sandwich with your child's lunch to share with a classmate who forgot their lunch. It may be giving someone a ride to work. It may be as simple as listening without judgment to someone else's thoughts, hurts, and ideas.

This verse makes it clear what God asks. Opportunities to bring change are all around us. We can change the world by helping one person at a time.

### ***Daily Challenge***

Listen to "Be the Change" by Britt Nicole. [youtu.be/wLkOq\\_ESr8](https://youtu.be/wLkOq_ESr8)

*Written by Emily Furda*

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What stood out to you the most this week?

Journal, draw, write a poem, or write a prayer about it below.

## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### *Sunday, January 13*

*Devotional written by Christine Perry*  
*Read Hebrews 4:10*

According to Oxford Dictionary, rest is defined as:

1. Cease work or movement in order to relax, sleep, or recover strength.
2. Allow to be inactive in order to regain strength or health. \*

Life is busy and short at the same time. Because of this, people often say, "I'll sleep (or rest) when I'm dead." But God asks His children to rest now. In fact, He thought rest was so important that He even set an example for us during creation.

... so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Genesis 2:2 NIV

Rested doesn't always look the way we think it will look. For Moses, it was time in the desert. For John the Baptist it was the Wilderness. For Jesus, it was time alone away from people. For Mary, it was sitting at Jesus' feet.

It can be so easy to fall into the trap of the rat race. But, in rushing, we may delay the healing or preparation God wants to do in our lives. One firm NO can be more pleasing to God than ten YEESES.

Take time to rest this year. Resting might look like reading a book, drawing, or spending time journaling. It might look like a walk in the morning or saying no to things that are pulling you away from the quiet you need to hear God. Whatever it may be take the time to rest. You won't regret it.

### **Daily Challenge**

Why is rest so important? What is restful for you? Journal your thoughts and set aside time to rest this week.

*Written by: Christine Perry*  
[learningtobefearless.org](http://learningtobefearless.org)

\*Oxford Dictionary: [en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rest](http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rest)

### *Monday, January 14*

*Devotional written by Emily Furda*  
*Read Romans 15:13*

Sometimes, it can be hard to hold onto hope, especially when we're looking at our future or remembering our past mistakes. The future holds promise, but we wonder if the promise of good or bad. It can feel especially daunting at the beginning of a new year.

Today's Scripture says something interesting about hope and how we find it.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 NIV

Look closely at the first line: "The God of Hope." When we look at this, we see hope isn't just something God gives us. It's who He is. Hope is one of His characteristics.

It's interesting how this prayer from Paul, the author of Romans, was written. He didn't pray for the readers to be filled with hope. He prayed for God to fill them with peace and joy. Praying for peace and joy, instead of hoping what we desire will come to pass, will naturally lead to unshakable hope from God. Read that verse again. Paul didn't just say we would be given hope, he said we would be overflowing with hope. That sounds amazing doesn't it?

There is one thing we are responsible for. God cannot give us peace, joy, or hope if we don't let Him. We have to trust Him. Trust can be hard sometimes. When we're scared, we often take matters into our own hands, but God knows that. He doesn't expect us to have it all together.

If it's hard to trust Him, tell Him. Ask Him to help you trust Him and He will. Hope is an unchanging part of who God is. He will never let you down. Just give Him a chance.

### **Daily Challenge**

How do peace and joy lead to hope? Does that change what you pray for? Journal your thoughts and listen to "I Will Trust" by Molly Williams. [youtu.be/USQJ44tqTB8](https://youtu.be/USQJ44tqTB8)

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### *Tuesday, January 15*

*Devotional written by Morgan Harper Nichols*  
*Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10*

Your weaknesses do not prevent you from fulfilling the purpose God has for you. In fact, it's the opposite:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV

Christ came to die for the imperfect and He is not asking you to get it all right before you come to Him. So, instead of being your harshest critic when it comes to your weaknesses, let your weaknesses remind you of just how much you need Jesus in order to fulfill your purpose!

There is nothing wrong with wanting to improve. There is nothing wrong with wanting to do better in life. Even though we might want to improve, we can't let that desire cause us to forget that we do have weaknesses, and without Christ, we will not be able to overcome them. At times it might be difficult to embrace your weaknesses because we live in a world where weakness is frowned upon. Not only that, people prey on one another's weaknesses by taking advantage of them when they are vulnerable or at their lowest points. As a result, it can become difficult to feel comfortable opening up and admitting that yes, you do have weaknesses.

Remember, because of Christ, you don't have to carry around shame because of them.

But as the Apostle Paul demonstrates to the Corinthian church in this passage, we have to take delight in "weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties." 2 Corinthians 12:10 NIV

We can't let ourselves be driven by fear that we won't be able to fulfill our purpose because of where we are weak or where things went wrong in our lives. The strength that we need to press on and do what we've been called to do as followers of Christ will come from Him. So, don't get so distracted by your own weaknesses. The Lord is the one who makes you stronger.

### **Daily Challenge**

How does today's scripture impact how you see your weaknesses? Journal your thoughts.

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## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### Wednesday, January 16

Devotional written by Morgan Harper Nichols  
Read Romans 14:8

When you think about your life and all that you have accomplished, be careful not to only think of earthly accomplishments such as graduating from school, working in a certain line of work, or even getting married and having kids. Instead think about the life you live for the Lord. Think about the opportunities you've had to serve Him. Think about the places you've gone, the things you've done, the people you've met, and the experiences you've gathered along the way that have drawn you closer to Him.

Even if you're not where you thought you would be, God has still brought you a long way, and even if this were your last day on earth, no matter what, you belong to your Heavenly Father who loves and cares for you so much. He has and is still blessing you every single day. So, don't let the way you think about your life be determined by if there's a certain ring on your finger or a certain set of accomplishment hanging on the wall.

Don't compare yourself to the people you graduated high school or college with. Instead, focus on living for Him. It doesn't matter how tired you are of running into people who are doing great things and your life doesn't seem to be progressing. It doesn't matter how much it seems like the whole world is moving on without you. What matters is who you are in Christ and the opportunity you have every single day to live for Him.

Let this beautiful truth be your motivation to get out of bed in the morning. Let this be your motivation to change your perspective, open up your heart, and focus on desiring more of Him. There's so much more to life than hoping for more things and striving just to make it. Instead, remember that no matter what happens you belong to Him. Stay obedient and loyal to Him, knowing that that is where your worth is found. He will continue to provide for you!

#### Daily Challenge

Listen to "Lord of My Life" by Greg and Rebecca Sparks.  
[youtu.be/cjlbAEcCfic](https://youtu.be/cjlbAEcCfic)

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### Thursday, January 17

Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read Proverbs 11:25

When it comes to evaluating what has our time and attention, it can be hard to know when to keep going or when it's time to let go. When trying to decide, consider today's Scripture:

A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. Proverbs 11:25 NIV

When we give of ourselves, we too will be refreshed. Not every moment will feel like party, but there will be a deep knowing in our hearts that the sacrifice of our time and energy is worth it. When the things we do for others that we once loved no longer offer refreshment in the depths of our souls, we can be sure it's time for a change. Maybe it's a change of attitude or a change in what we do.

What would happen if you stepped away from the thing pulling you down? If you stopped leading the women's ministry, volunteering as the mom who gives everyone else's kids a ride, or stopped posting encouraging messages every day on your blog, what would happen to you? Would you feel lighter and able to devote time to something else you desperately long to do, more time with your family, a new project, or a time to rest and enjoy life?

You may worry what will happen to others if you no longer filled that role. Maybe there is someone else meant to fulfill that role who doesn't even know it because there hasn't been an opportunity. It may become a joy to someone else. Maybe it is time for something to end. Your job isn't to fulfill that role because you can't see how it will work out. Your job is to follow God's plan for your life. Let God be the one to orchestrate how something will continue without you.

You have permission to serve with all your heart, and you have permission to step aside for a new season in your life.

#### Daily Challenge

Make a list of what takes up your time and energy. Is there something draining the life from you? Journal and pray, asking God to show you His will for your life and how to follow it.

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### Friday, January 18

Devotional written by Morgan Harper Nichols  
Read Jeremiah 29:11

If you're looking for something to be excited about and something to look forward to, look no further... your heavenly Father provides the hope that your heart longs for. Tomorrow is not just another day. Tomorrow is a day that you can walk in confidence knowing that if you're wrapped in God's arms, you're wrapped in hope.

When the children of Israel were in Babylonian captivity, they didn't feel like there was any hope for them. However, God declared this over their lives:

For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

This is what God says about you, too. No matter who or what has tried to harm you, you are not forgotten by your Heavenly Father. He is still holding you tightly, lovingly, with a future in store that is worth being excited about.

So, look forward to tomorrow. Look forward to it knowing that no matter what does or doesn't happen, God has a plan. You're not just some wanderer searching for hope in a dark and lonely world. You're a daughter of the King who has hope waiting for in His arms. So run into His arms tonight...excited, joyful, anticipatory, and absolutely ready for whatever He has in store.

#### Daily Challenge

Write Jeremiah 29:11 in your own words. Also, write it in your planner or have it set to come up as a reminder on your phone for one month from today.

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## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

***Saturday, January 19***

*Devotional written by Emily Furda*

*Read Psalm 29:10-11*

Do you ever feel as if life is too much, as if a flood of problems and responsibilities are coming at you? It can be overwhelming and it's easy to feel as if you'll be swept away.

Psalm 29:10 tells us: "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever."  
NIV

When we're in the middle of a raging storm, sometimes all we can see is problems and God feels distant. It feels like hurricane force winds are swirling around us and as if the overwhelming flood of problems will never end. Even then, even when we feel as if we're overtaken, God sees us and knows us. Even though the flood waters may try to engulf us, God is greater than whatever situations we find ourselves in. His powerful peace is no match for any storm, no matter how strong and big it is.

Now is not the time to quit. Reach out to Him and let Him calm the storm inside you. He will find you, even in the hurricane of your soul.

Daily Challenge

Listen to "Hurricane" by Natalie Grant. [youtu.be/ttKnLwwHlig](https://youtu.be/ttKnLwwHlig)

What stood out to you the most this week?

Journal, draw, write a poem, or write a prayer about it below.



## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### *Sunday, January 20*

*Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Do you believe your story matters? From social media to TV, you see stories highlighting people who've done something seemingly impossible. Sometimes it's encouraging. Other times it can make you feel as if you don't have anything to offer this world until you accomplish something else, until you are someone else. If you wait to share your story until something changes, you're devaluing our life. What you have been through is important, no matter how small it seems to you. Your story matters. Your story has power.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us "Because of this, encourage the hearts of your fellow believers and support one another, just as you have already been doing." TPT

Encouragement is something we're all capable of. It knows no bounds. No matter your age or where you come from, you have a story to tell.

Often, the parts of our stories or the things we've gone through that we think will be boring or unimportant to others, are vital. We often think we're alone in what we feel or experience. The truth is, we only feel that way because no one else will talk about it.

What if you were the one person who breaks the silence and encourages the weary heart of someone else who feels alone?

Your story has that kind of power.

You don't need a public platform to share your story. You don't have to be a gifted writer or speaker. You don't have to lose weight, be older, or have more education. You have unique talents and gifts you can use to encourage others and share your story.

Sharing your story means using being vulnerable and asking God to help you share your feelings. You don't have to share everything. Your vulnerability is what lets others know they're not alone. You have the power to change lives. The question is, will you use it?

### **Daily Challenge**

Listen to "Storyteller" by Morgan Harper Nichols [youtu.be/\\_ZAvyxsDOUU](https://youtu.be/_ZAvyxsDOUU), and pray and journal, asking God to show you the value of your story.

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### *Monday, January 21*

*Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read Matthew 5:14-16*

There's no denying we live in a world where change is needed. We want to leave a mark and bring positive change, but sometimes it seems as if we're powerless to do anything that will leave a lasting impact.

What if we're not as powerless as we think? As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way."

Simple things like holding a door, saying "thank you," or even a kind smile don't seem like much, but they mean something. They illuminate God's love in an often dark and lonely world.

Instead of thinking about what you can't do, find one small way you can shine your light and do it well. If we each one of us shined our lights one small act at a time, we could light up the world.

### **Daily Challenge**

Make a list of 10 small things you can do to shine the love of Jesus.

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### *Tuesday, January 22*

*Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read Philippians 4:12-13*

Contentment is something we long for but often don't have. When things are going all wrong, contentment seems impossible. Even when things are going well, it can be hard to feel contented. Often, we wonder if the good things we're experiencing will last. It's not that we don't enjoy the good things or that we're not thankful for God's blessings. It's because we've experienced heartbreak before and know it can happen again. The lack of contentment can often lead us to set unrealistic goals or put unnecessary pressure on ourselves.

So, how can we be content in both the difficult times and even in the good ones. Today's scripture tells us how the apostle Paul did it. He knew both a life of abundance and a life living chained in prison. His secret was knowing Jesus would be the one who would give him strength no matter what happened. He didn't have to do it on his own.

Whatever you're facing today, whatever fears you have, you can bring them to Jesus. While we can pray asking God to change our circumstances, it's even more powerful to also ask Him to give us strength and peace no matter what happens. It doesn't matter what we do or don't accomplish. When our strength comes from Jesus, we will have contentment. That's a promise!

### **Daily Challenge**

How do you see contentment in light of today's scripture? How does it impact how you approach your daily life no matter what you're going through? Journal your thoughts.

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## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### Wednesday, January 23

Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read Psalm 94:17-19

When anxiety grips us and we feel as if we're losing our footing, that's not a sign to work harder or stay up later. It's usually a sign we're trying to make things happen in our own way and in our own timing. Often, the pressure we feel is because we think we have to accomplish something. We forget we can't accomplish anything without God. We forget God created us to need rest and sleep.

When it comes to anxiety, never be afraid to seek out a licensed Christian counselor or consider medication as you learn new ways of doing things. Sometimes, learning a new way of doing things takes some little help.

There will be late nights, early mornings, and things we need to do that we'd rather not, but there is a difference between doing them on our own and walking step by step with God. His love enables us to stand and makes us sure footed so we don't slip on the narrow, uphill path we're climbing. He is our loving, faithful guide.

When you feel overwhelmed, especially when even the good things feel overwhelming, remember you have permission to lay down the pressure that says you must accomplish something. Let God console your anxious heart with His loving kindness and joy.

#### **Daily Challenge**

Listen to "I Will" by Citizen Way. [youtu.be/k\\_bHd2-QhuQ](https://youtu.be/k_bHd2-QhuQ)

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### Thursday, January 24

Devotional written by Diane Marie  
Read Ephesians 2:10

Most of us want to do life in a big way. As Christians, we are always being told we are destined to do great things for God. Have you ever stopped and wondered what that means? What if we are just living what seems like a mundane, routine life? Have we failed God?

Perhaps we are looking at it wrong. God, after all, doesn't need us to do great things for Him. He is perfectly capable of doing anything and everything alone; however, He does want to do great things through us. That's actually a huge difference. He's the one with the plan today's reading says

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 NIV

Does that take the pressure off? You don't have to spend your whole life trying to come up with some great thing to do for God. He already has it all figured out! What you need to do is seek the Lord in prayer and ask Him what He wants you to do. (Don't forget to listen!) Of course, you should consider your gifts, talents, family situation, finances, etc., but ultimately, it's the Holy Spirit who should guide you through your life.

God has so much He wants to do through you, and you can be sure when you serve Him, you will be doing great things. Why? Because a life spent serving the Lord, is the greatest life of all!

#### **Daily Challenge**

What does doing great things for God mean to you? How does today's scripture and devo impact your perception what you're doing in your own life? Journal your thoughts.

Written by Diane Marie  
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### Friday, January 25

Devotional written by Christine Perry  
Read Isaiah 30:21

According to Eva M. Krockow Ph.D., the average adult makes approximately 35,000 conscious decisions a day. \* Some decisions are when to turn right at a stoplight and take a quick look of the eyes. Other decisions take more than a quick look, but an attentive ear.

Decisions about which one of your passions to pursue, or which friendships to cut back on, or what job to take or to stay at, these decision take quietness and an attitude of submission. God is faithful. If you make room for the silence and take time to rest in Him, He will guide you with a still, small voice saying:

"This is the way; walk in it." Isaiah 30:21 NIV

This year don't rush to make decisions. God is in control of your future.

"God is never unprepared. Your past does not surprise Him. Your present does not worry Him. Your future is not a mystery to Him."  
Diana Chandler

He's got you and this year covered!

#### **Daily Challenge**

Listen to "Backseat Driver" by TobyMac.  
[youtu.be/kME\\_Q5V82Us](https://youtu.be/kME_Q5V82Us)

Written by: Christine Perry  
[learningtobefearless.org](https://www.learningtobefearless.org)

\*[psychologytoday.com/us/blog/stretching-theory/201809/how-many-decisions-do-we-make-each-day%3famp](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/stretching-theory/201809/how-many-decisions-do-we-make-each-day%3famp)

## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

**Saturday, January 26**

*Devotional written by Written by Emily Furda*

*Read Matthew 11:28-30*

We put rules on ourselves. We promise to never be late, always be prepared, and be ready to go above and beyond what is asked of us. If we're doing something to honor the Lord, we put even extra pressure on ourselves to be perfect. Missing one day of our Bible study feels like condemnation. Being sick and missing a church service feels like weakness and letting Satan win. That is the exact opposite of how Jesus wants us to live.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.” Matthew 11:28-30 MSG

Jesus said to learn the “unforced rhythms of grace.” What exactly is an unforced rhythm of grace? Some of us are so used to placing hard expectations on ourselves that we don't have any idea.

Think about the rhythms of waves of water. On a nice sunny day, it can be relaxing to float on a raft in a pool. Once in a while a breeze creates small ripples, just enough to gently move the raft. It's calm, peaceful, and floating is unforced.

Now, try to take that same raft out in the ocean during a hurricane. The waves forcefully and fiercely quickly overcome the raft and you. There's nothing even remotely calm about it. It's terrifying, and you're exhausted from fighting just as soon as you begin.

That raft is a good thing, when it's used where it's supposed to be used. It's the same way with your gifts, talents, and time. You may be a gifted worship leader, but if you're sick and can barely speak, maybe it's okay to stay home one day so you can rest instead of making the rest of the worship team sick. You may love volunteering with children but are exhausted. Maybe it's a good time to find a replacement for a few weeks or cut back on your volunteer hours overall. You may be the friend everyone goes to with their worries, but you're overloaded and crying when no one can see you. It may be time to turn off the phone or tell your friends you'll get back to them later and have coffee with someone who you know will listen and encourage you.

You were created to serve, but you were also created to rest. It's possible to do both. Sometimes, you need to take a step back and look at your surroundings. You may have started off floating in a pool and somehow ended up in a raging sea. You weren't made to fight against a current stronger than you just to prove your worth. Don't be afraid to enjoy the unforced rhythms of God's grace.

### **Daily Challenge**

Do you have any areas in your life that feel like a raging sea about to pull you under? Pray over them, asking God to show you where His unforced rhythms of grace are for you.

*Written by Emily Furda*

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What stood out to you the most this week?

Journal, draw, write a poem, or write a prayer about it below.

## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

### Sunday, January 27

Devotional written by Morgan Harper Nichols  
Read John 10:10

If you find yourself worrying about anything at all, take a moment to remember this: you are loved, you are cared for, and your life is in the Father's hands. Knowing this, you can rest. There is no need to worry about what everyone else is doing right now. Return your attention to the present moment, right here, right now, with Him. Let His Holy Spirit be your guide and comfort you right here because it is available in Jesus' name.

Focus now on the life you've been given and the One who has given it to you. There are so many gifts, big and small, in this very moment to be grateful for: the breath you breathe, to your ability to read and be reminded of what truly matter, the opportunity to pray, to worship, and even to look out the window and admire the nearest tree, or the current color of the sky. Life may not be perfect. Through all of the life you are living and everything you are going through, you are wrapped in perfect love. When the worry is heavy, pay attention to what God is providing in that very moment, also knowing this: there is still more to come. God is still not finished. Through Jesus Christ, Eternal Life still awaits you. A life that is far fuller than anything you could ever imagine is what waits on the other side of this chaotic, confusing life.

Knowing this, you can rest. You can close out of your phone, turn off the TV, or shut out the noise in mind knowing the life God wants to give you in this very moment, from here all the way to eternity, is far greater than the life of worry that seems to always find you in these moments.

So, rest now, in the presence of God. Realize that now you know He provides a life for you that is far greater than your greatest worries, you can surrender every single one of those worries, and find true rest in Him.

#### Daily Challenge

Set aside time to rest this week, and listen to "Lay 'Em Down" by NEEDTOBREATHE. [youtu.be/3PN-BMHt5L8](https://youtu.be/3PN-BMHt5L8)

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### Monday, January 28

Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read Lamentations 3:22

Do you ever feel as if life and all of its pressures are going to consume you? Forget about adding new plans, the current ones are more than you can bear.

It's during those time we have to hold onto the truth in Lamentations 3:22

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail." NIV

God sees you. He has great compassion for you! He knows the heartache you're dealing with today. He knows what is weighing on your mind. He wants to hold you close and love you. His word promises because of His love, you will not be consumed by whatever is weighing on you.

In the middle of the hectic schedule or the daily mundane, the overwhelming pain, and racing thoughts, take some time to let Him comfort you. Don't ignore your feelings. Pour them out Him and listen. Pause and hear what He has to say. He loves you, and His compassion will never fail you.

#### Daily Challenge

Write a prayer to God. Tell Him how you're feeling right now. Let out every emotion and let Him comfort you.

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### Tuesday, January 29

Devotional written by Emily Furda  
Read Micah 6:8

Failure. Stupid. Fat. Worthless. A disappointment. Never good enough. Hopeless. Do any of those sound familiar to you? Do you tear yourself down for all the things you think you're not? Maybe you do it so often you don't even realize it.

Expectations from family, friends, coworkers, and teachers can feel crushing. Then, we add our own expectations we place on ourselves. We want to be thinner, curvier, better hair, work harder, more successful, serve more, eat better, drink less, stop smoking, exercise more, finish the 837 Pinterest projects we've started. The list goes on. With all of those expectations we place on ourselves, it's no wonder we feel bad about ourselves. Then we add what we think is the hardest of all: the expectations we think God places on us.

What exactly are those expectations? Can you name them? In the moment you feel pressure to do or not do certain things, but right now, pause and think. Ask yourself what does God want from you? Do you feel overwhelmed? Are you having a hard time putting it into words?

This is what God asks of you:

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8 NIV

Live justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly with God

Three things. How does that compare to the list of things you play over and over in your mind? It simplifies them doesn't it? You didn't even have to make a fancy Pinterest worthy bulletin board to sort it out. It's an attitude of your heart, not a list of impossible rules. Those expectations you've laid on yourself, it's time to lay them down at the feet of Jesus. Stand up tall without their crushing weight. Remember you are a child of the King of Kings. You are enough.

#### Daily Challenge

What does it mean to live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God? How can you do that in your everyday life? Journal your thoughts.

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## The Binder Co Devotionals January 2019 Lay it Down

*Wednesday, January 30*

*Devotional written by Morgan Harper Nichols*

*Read Philippians 1:6*

How wonderful it is to know that through all the things you have been through, in this very moment, God is still doing a glorious work within you!

There have been so many things in your life you had to learn to let go of. So many things you had to leave behind not knowing where it would leave your heart. There have been days where you have wondered how things would have been different, if you had only done that one thing differently, or if that one person had stayed around... but none of those things could hinder God from doing a glorious work within you. None of those things could stop Him from leading you where you were meant to be.

Even though you have learned to live with so much uncertainty, you have also learned to live with the grace of God that has never let you go.

You may not be seeing what you want to see when you look at your list of accomplishments, your relationships, or the progress you made in the past year, but never let that distract you from looking within. Never let that keep you from remembering all the ways you have grown in peace and love, and how you gained a strength in Christ that you never imagined you would have.

You may have a long way to go, and things you need to change, and you may wonder if you are doing enough to move forward in the way you should. Whenever you start to doubt, remember all the work God has already done in you and the work that He will continue to do.

Remember the things that used to keep you up at night years ago? Remember the worries that seemed to hang over every waking moment? There may be things that are still on your mind and heart right now, but there are also burdens that you have already learned to lay down. Remember those things. Thank God for them. Remember how far you have come and all He has brought you through.

There are a lot of things that may have left you uncertain, but you can still be certain of this: God is still doing a work with you and He is far from finished yet.

### **Daily Challenge**

Listen to “Unfinished” by Mandisa, [youtu.be/Ejyclx5iwA](https://youtu.be/Ejyclx5iwA) and journal about what it means to be “unfinished.”

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*Thursday, January 31*

*Devotional written by Emily Furda*

*Read Colossians 3:23-24*

This month we've learned about the importance of giving ourselves rest, giving ourselves grace, and the importance of not striving for perfection. Sometimes it can still be hard to know the difference between doing our best and struggling to hit an out of reach high note of perfection. It's easy to feel defeated when something, even something small, doesn't turn out exactly how we envisioned, especially when we're giving our best.

There is a question to ask yourself when you're trying to combat perfection. Ask yourself “Is this a piano?” That seems odd but give it a chance.

A piano has 88 keys, and each one must be tuned to perfection for it to sound the way it is intended. This is one time something must be fine tuned to perfection in order for it to fulfill its purpose.

Can you think of some things in your life that must be 100% perfect like a piano, not something you'd like to be perfect, but something that must be perfect? It would be great if this eBook had zero typos. It would be good if dinner was cooked to perfection. It would be wonderful if you were always on time for everything, but what is the consequence if perfection doesn't happen? Does it mean you're incapable of fulfilling your purpose, or is it just one fleeting bad note in a beautiful symphony?

Every single day we fall on our faces, sometimes literally tripping over nothing but air. In those moments, we need to remember who we are serving and who we worship. Is it our perfection or God?

This doesn't mean we shouldn't try to do our best. Today's scripture puts it into perspective. We give our best because our lives are lived for God. He doesn't ask for perfection. It's about our motives, not a perfect performance.

Ask God for help, especially when trying to combat perfection. Maybe even ask Him to help us have a giggle and see the levity in a situation. Sometimes, the Facebook post you wish you could blame on autocorrect end up funnier than if it had been written properly. Maybe your daughter is going to get a good laugh when she realizes your shirt is inside out. Perhaps you can say your mismatched shoes were because you were indecisive and wanted both colors. Your family may be thrilled with pizza instead of the “charred” chicken for dinner.

Go easy on yourself. Take the desire to live up to impossible standards and lay it down. One flat note won't ruin the beautiful melody of your life.

### **Daily Challenge**

Write down a list of things where you think you're falling short. Then, ask yourself if any of those things are a “piano.” Journal about how it changes your perspective.

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