



*Devotions
to bring
Peace
to Your Day*

Lynne Modranski

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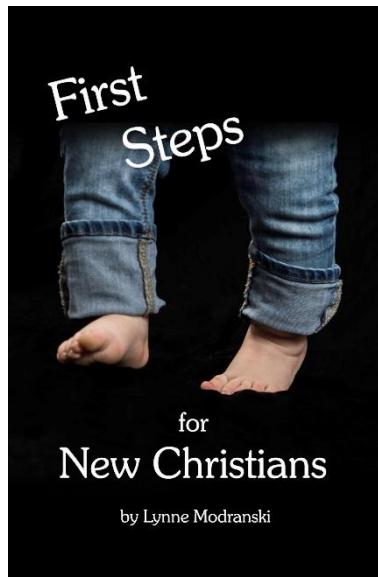
Lynne Modranski

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Introduction

Hi! Thanks so much for downloading this short devotional. Each of the twenty quick messages in this book holds a little glimpse into Lynne Modranski. Every word brought me closer to Christ before it touched anyone else, and through them, I think you'll know me a bit better, but let me give you the short biography in case you're curious.

I grew up in the church, and you'd think that would have given me a head start, but sometimes I feel like it held me back a bit. A lot of crazy notions made it into my brain before I started reading scripture for myself. Fortunately, I had a grandma who prayed, and I think those prayers lasted long after she passed. After I got to know Jesus a bit better and abandoned the religious ideas of my youth, I realized something my grandmother had known all along. She lived differently than the others, and her beautiful spirit should have been my clue. But I was just a teen when she died; and it took years to become reality in my life.

My passion is helping others find a real relationship with Jesus. I'm a pastor's wife and a worship leader, so I'm very pro-corporate worship, but I don't want to get so hung up on the institution we miss the family reunion. I lead Bible Study and Sunday School at the small country church we pastor, and I'm doubly blessed because all three of my daughters, their husbands and my four grandkids worship with us each week!

Everything I write I've lived. From the songs I once performed with a little group called "Crossroads to Glory" to the studies I share, each one contains a little part of me. So, I pray you enjoy each one, and even more, I hope you find yourself a bit closer to Jesus by the time you're finished.

Thanks for reading!

Lynne

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**Selections from
“Devotions for
Church Leaders
and Small Groups”**

How Much Do I Trust God?

¹ The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, ² When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land must observe a sabbath to the Lord.

³ For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. ⁴ But in the seventh year

the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord....

⁸ “Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years....

¹¹ The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines....

²⁰ You may ask, “What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?”

²¹ I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years.

²² While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

Leviticus 25:1-12 & 18-22

I grew up on a small farm. Daddy worked in the local steel mill, but the farm provided most of our meat and vegetables. Our monthly trip to the grocery store yielded two buggies full of paper products, cleaners, snacks and other necessities. Milk and eggs came from a full time farmer about a mile away, and we took the evening milking from the cow next door. During those years we even made our own butter!

I don't live on a farm anymore. However, Leviticus makes me wonder about the faith it takes to observe the land sabbath. Many farmers rotate crops, leaving a field unplanted for a year to allow it to recover, but farmers rotate those plots of land so they still harvest every year.

It begs the question, "Do I have enough faith to allow an entire nation to give the land a Sabbath? Do I believe God can make the sixth year more bountiful?" I can imagine one out of every seven farms giving their land a Sabbath each year, but the entire country?

What if every farm in America took a year off planting? According to the International Grain Council, The United States produces about 32,000 tons of wheat each year. Add to that corn, tomatoes, lettuce, beans,

barley, oats, soy and more. How could we ever recoup from a year with no harvest?

I can't envision a scenario where an entire nation shuts down production for the year. It's just too big and vast for me to absorb. But it puts into perspective how small a thing the request of the Fourth Commandment. Once every seven days, God asks us to take a Sabbath. The Creator knows we require rest. We need a day to focus on His love and care. Our bodies were created for a Sabbath. In Mark 2:27, Jesus tells us that man *was not made for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man.* God doesn't want our lives to be all work and no rest.

What if we each took the Sabbath more seriously? How would our lives change if we focused on taking a day to simply rest and worship? What if we limited our committee terms to seven years and then took a year off? Have you considered that taking a Sabbath is an act of faith? Do we trust God enough to believe He can provide enough time to do all He's called us to do? When will you enjoy your next Sabbath?

Faith in the Fog

Faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see.

Hebrews 11:1

One evening as I delivered orders from a home party, the driving got difficult. My last delivery was way out in the country, about ten miles from home and a mile from the nearest highway. No streetlights, no lines on the road, just chip and seal pavement barely two cars wide, and that's where I was when the fog settled in.

This was the thickest fog I've ever been through. I couldn't see the road in front of me. The tall weeds lining the road kept me centered. I drove painfully slow, keeping my lights focused on the weeds. I was terrified. So, of course, I prayed.

I truly believe God is almighty and able to do anything. I believe Jesus when he says, "Ask for anything in my name . . ." So as I crawled along, I prayed, and as I prayed, I cried. I asked God to lift the fog. In fact I begged Him to allow me to be able to see. I praised Him for His power, and I pleaded for His protection . . . and a miracle.

I only needed to travel about a mile on that dirt road; but at less than five miles per hour, I had a plenty of time to pray.

The longer I drove, the more I wondered why God refused to answer my prayer. You see, I was and am still sure God had the power to lift that fog. I believe my heavenly Father was and is in the business of doing the extraordinary. In fact, remembering that evening, I think I used that exact phrase in my prayer.

So, after about 15 minutes, having traveled about a half mile, I began to question my faith. I'd heard more than one preacher teach how lack of faith can keep our prayers from being answered. Since I felt confident God could lift this terrible fog if He wanted, I deduced the problem must lie in my lack of faith. So, my prayer changed. I began to plead with Christ to increase my faith, to help me see where it was lacking. And as I did, I heard God.

When I hear God, it's generally not an audible voice. It's usually more a feeling, a thought popping into my head, and I recognize it as something I'd not thought of on my own. And this time I heard, "It takes more faith to trust me as you drive through the fog, than it does to have me lift it."

I grew very quiet in my spirit. I had wanted God to do the miraculous, the extraordinary, the marvelous, and I believe He can work that way. However, in this case, God wanted to change me instead of my circumstances.

It's not easy when God decides to make us into better people. But it's not easy on the clay when the potter finds a mar and works it out. This lesson has stayed with me and helped me through bigger trials than a dense fog. When my husband's sister was lying in bed, breathing her last because of cancer, I had to remember that it takes more faith to believe God is in control even when we're hurting, than it does to have her healed. When someone I cared for hurt me, and I felt as though my heart was being ripped out, God reminded me it takes more faith to stay true to the Savior than it does to change the heart of another person.

Faith is being sure of what I hope for. I am sure God has bigger and better things in store for me than I can possibly imagine. It may not come on my timetable, but God will deliver on all of His promises. It's my job to hope for them and have faith God will come through.

Faith is being certain of what I do not see. I did not see the road, but I became certain God would get me home without incident. I do not always see goodness, but I am certain God meant it when He said He works all things for my good. I do not physically see God, but I am certain He is moving in my life.

It takes no faith to walk where you can see. So, the next time you feel as though life has you blindfolded, keep trusting that God will not let you fall or stray off the path. It's OK, take my word for it, He can get you home even when you're in a very thick fog.

Tools of the Trade

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of,
because you know those from whom you learned it,

¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures,
which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for
teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes,
you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,
with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith,
with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Ephesians 6:13-18

Psychologist Abraham Maslow said “When the only tool you own is a hammer, every problem begins to look like a nail.” That quote makes me smile. Many Christian arm themselves for the work of Christ, but their arsenal is so limited, they use rubber bands against the flaming arrows of the enemy.

In Sunday School, we learn the 23rd Psalm and the Commandments. Christians with this meager equipment are like folks whose only tool is a hammer. When situations rise which require a wrench, a screwdriver or a power tool, more of the meat of the scripture, these

friends of Jesus Christ feel lost or treat it as if it's a "nail."

Paul stressed to both the Ephesians and Timothy the importance of scripture. To the Ephesians he called it the sword of the Spirit and to Timothy he said we needed it to be fully equipped for every good work. Would any knight have ever gone into battle without his sword? Why would we think we can leave the protection of the body of Christ and enter the world without being fully equipped?

Would we drive a car with only three tires or go out walking in subzero temperatures without proper winter wear? Of course not, but going into the workforce or sending our children to school without a growing knowledge of the Word of God is quite similar. Moses compared it to our daily physical nutrition. Jesus called it a seed, and Peter, imperishable seed, something that brings life and growth. The author of Hebrews reminds us the Word is living and active, and several Bible writers described it as the light in the darkness. It's not as though the importance of knowing scripture has been limited to one or two verses.

As Christian leaders and those who want to help grow the Kingdom, reading and studying God's word is crucial. Take a moment and consider, how often do you read scripture, not as a textbook, but as a love letter from your Father? What passage do you talk about with other Christians? Are you able to be a light in the midst of this very dark world? Is your toolbox fully equipped?

We Need Our Rest

³ Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. . . . He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said.

“Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”

⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.”

⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

⁷ The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said,
“Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”

⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food,
he traveled forty days and forty nights
until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

1 Kings 19:1-8

Have you ever felt like Elijah, so overwhelmed with life that you just wanted God to make it all go away? Perhaps your job has you feeling no better than those who've gone before you. Maybe family problems, illness or overwhelming debt causes you to spend much of your time worrying. Nearly everyone gets to the point in their life when they feel like they just can't go on anymore. But usually we just keep pushing forward. Instead we need to take a lesson from Elijah.

When Elijah reached his breaking point, he went off alone, poured his heart out to his Creator and rested. He didn't do anything miraculous or mighty. His prayer couldn't even be considered wise or inspirational. Elijah simply said, “Lord, take me now,” and then He took a nap!

Our bodies were created for rest. One of the first gifts the Almighty gave His creation was Sabbath. Obviously God didn't need the break, but He took one to set the example for His beloved (that's us). Our humanness demands a sabbatical.

If we look to Elijah for guidance in our state of despair, we'll see a

hearty meal also on the agenda. After we pass from this life to the next, the need for rest and nutrition will probably be left behind, but until then, this tent that houses our eternal soul needs both sleep and sustenance.

Elijah pushed himself to the point of breaking. He'd been working hard and worrying so much about his safety that he neglected his simple daily needs. After two good meals and plenty of sleep, Elijah got up strengthened and refreshed. He was able to travel the necessary 40 days and nights until he came to the Holy Mountain of God.

It's easy to believe God only concerns himself with our spiritual side. Elijah's story is a good reminder that our heavenly Father cares about our human needs as well. As leaders, we must be sure to take care of ourselves so we can give to others. And when we do, like Elijah, we'll be much better equipped to make the journey our Creator calls us to. Whether it's four days or forty, when we get to the mountain of the Lord, we'll be ready for everything He has planned!

A Turkey or an Eagle

*but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.*

*They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.*

Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

Driving home one day a turkey flew in front of my truck. I felt so bad for him. He flapped his wings with all his might but never got more than eight feet off the ground. Fortunately, no other vehicles came by as he clumsily flew across the two lane road. With his tail feathers spread and his neck stretched long, he put every ounce of energy into getting to the other side before some oncoming traffic could take his life.

Not one-tenth of a mile further, a little bird darted across in front of me. I couldn't correctly identify the little guy because it moved so quickly. About the size of a sparrow, he flitted by in a flash. It made me wonder if the turkey ever felt frustrated with his limited flying ability. Does he ever envy the sparrows or hawks? He had to be winded by the time he landed, while the second little bird danced with no effort.

The whole picture quickly brought to mind our Christian walk. How many people do I know who feel like turkeys? It seems as though they can't get anywhere, while others speed ahead getting the better view and all the fun. After all, a turkey never gets to coast along on the breezes or just play in the wind.

Isaiah 40:31 is a familiar verse in scripture. "*Those who hope in the Lord (some translations say "wait on" "wait for" or "trust in") will renew their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles . . .*" Isaiah did not say strut like turkeys. It's not God's plan for us to become weary or grow faint. We weren't created to struggle through life, we were created to soar.

Turkeys don't have much choice in the matter. They were created

to strut. Fortunately, they can run pretty fast, and the wild ones blend in with the brush well, so they have an advantage over their predators. But when a turkey hears the phrase "bird's eye view" he must get pretty confused. After all, what's the big deal about a view from eight foot off the ground when you're working so hard just to keep from crashing? Yes, a turkey's lot in life is sealed.

But we are blessed. When God created man and woman, He gave them the freedom to choose to serve and trust Him or live for themselves. We know from history that the ones who chose the independent route generally end up living like a turkey. It's a life full of hindrances and entanglements. The burdens of the day to day keep them from truly flying.

But those who live like eagles trust in God for every aspect of life. They "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that entangles." (Hebrews 12:1) Living like an eagle means allowing His power to work in us. And we discover God is able to do "immeasurably more" than they can ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20) These followers of Christ have learned to "wait on the Lord," and unlike the turkey, we can choose to be one of them. We can walk and not grow weary, run and never faint, and best of all, we can soar.

Selections from
“A Reflection of the Beauty of God”
A Devotional for Moms

The Vacuum in My Soul

¹³*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

My granddaughter likes to go through my plastic container cupboard before getting in the bathtub. For most of her bath excursions, she chooses several plastic cups and a squeeze bottle.

Squirting water out of that bottle is a fun game for all of the grandkids. Each quickly discovered the secret of refilling the bottle

As I watched them fill the bottle over and over, I realized you and I are much like that bottle! I know; it seems a bit strange, but it's true.

We come into this world exactly the way God created us, beautiful, perfect and full of His image. Almost immediately the world starts crashing in. From the vaccinations that cause us pain to our tumbles and falls, physical pain pushes in a bit. Each time we're scolded whether it's legitimate or not, like the air in the bottle, our spirit is forced out. When we begin making friends, we run into kids who hurt our emotions, and the walls of our life continue to collapse. Some children experience abuse that crushes prematurely. Whatever the cause, by the time we reach our teens (or younger in many cases), the world has squeezed the life out of us. Like that bottle my granddaughter plays with in the tub, all that crushing creates a vacuum in our lives that longs to be filled. And filled it will be.

When we place the bottle under water and let go of the sides, it immediately starts filling with water. Likewise, whatever is surrounding us when life's vacuum has become as much as we can handle will fill us. If negativity surrounds us, then we'll be filled up with it. If we're immersed in worldly friends who cause us pain, we'll be filled up with that.

Psalm 1 says blessed is the one who does not keep company with those who scorn God, and 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that bad company corrupts good character. As parents we're often mindful of who our children hang out with, we diligently keep them away from those who could hurt them or mold them negatively; as we should. But do we do the

same for ourselves as adults? Are we careful to surround ourselves with positive Christians who are led by the Holy Spirit?

We can't remove ourselves from the world. In fact, the Bible says we're to be a light in those dark places. However, we can make sure the things of the world that push the life out of us are minimal and the things of Christ, His love, joy and peace, surround us.

Today let's take inventory of our schedule and address book. Have we left time to be filled with scripture and the things of Christ? Do worship and fellowship with other Christians take priority? What does our friends list look like? These determine what fills our spirit after life knocks us down and drains us.

It's time to breathe in and be healed from the things that squeeze the life out of you and create a vacuum. Surround yourself with things to help you focus on the love of Jesus. Be filled with His goodness, His patience and His Spirit. It's time to accept this benediction from Romans and invite the Holy Spirit to fill you with all His joy and peace so you overflow with hope in Jesus Christ.

To All the Supermoms

²⁹ “Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.”

³⁰ Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

³¹ Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Proverbs 31:29-31 (Read all of Proverbs 31) (HCSB)

A few years ago I was invited to go to the taping of an episode of “Dance Moms” with my daughter. My granddaughter would get to dance and maybe even be on the show.

We had a lot of fun, but I was really bothered by the way the hundreds of guest moms went nuts when the television dance moms paraded into the auditorium. Every one of those audience mothers had girls who’d be on stage that day. Every single one sacrifices to get their daughter to dance and pay for classes and costumes. Those television moms weren’t any more talented or attractive than the guest moms. In fact, most of the audience moms probably deserved a lot more applause than those television moms, yet the bulk of them were taking pictures, shouting the TV moms’ names and carrying on like Beetles’ fans from the sixties.

The whole scene made me want to give a standing ovation to the moms I know who actually deserve the admiration. So, to all of you who forget that you are worth more than rubies:

I applaud those of you who work with your hands, as well as those who get up while it’s still night to provide for your family!

I am thankful for those who use your talents to honor the One True King with very little recognition.

I stand in awe and admiration for the business women working around the clock to make a profit and share it with the Kingdom of God.

Highest honor goes to the one who gives to the poor or works with the needy, volunteers at school, the hospital or church or gives

sacrificially in some other way.

I lift up all of you who protect your household and give your children comfort in the storms.

I praise God for you whose reputation goes before you to the extent that people respect your husband more because of you!

It's all of you moms who speak wisdom and teach your children the ways of faith who warrant the photo ops and the shout outs!

And whether they do it or not, you deserve to have your children and your husband rise out of bed every morning with words of appreciation on their tongues.

Finally, to all of you who trust in Jesus Christ and put God and His ways first, remember that "many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."

You, daughter of the Living God, are worth more than you can possibly imagine, so please consider this your very own personal standing ovation, from me and from Jesus! We appreciate your strength and dignity, your love and compassion, your faith and dedication, and most of all . . . we appreciate YOU!

Holding Your Hand

²*But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.*

³*For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

²³*“Lord, I am always with You,
You hold me by my right hand”*

Psalm 73:2-3 & 23

When our middle daughter was about 4, we took the family to the Columbus zoo. It was a long and fun day. Our ten-year old was big enough to walk along beside us, and while the youngest rode in our Red Radio Flyer wagon, Sylv held her daddy's hand.

When the day of fun was nearly over, my husband stopped, and with a panicked look on his face said, “Where is Sylvia?”

We all stared at him like he'd grown an extra head. He asked again in an even more frantic tone, but we all still stood there perplexed. You can understand his anger at our expression, and as the seconds passed, it just got worse. His tone changed when a four-year old tugged on his arm and said, “Here I am, Daddy, I'm holding your hand.”

More than 20 years later, we have a good laugh at Steve's expense every time we look through the pictures or reminisce about the day. It reminds me of the priest who wrote Psalm 73.

So often, like the Psalmist and Steve, we begin to focus on the things around us and forget someone holds our hand. When we see evil prosper and cheaters win, we wonder where God has gone. When your promotion goes to someone else, and life deals trouble to those who don't deserve it. It's easy to think, “Why isn't our Father in Heaven paying attention to all we see here on earth?”

Steve was tired from walking all day. He'd carried that four-year old at least as much as she'd walked beside him, and the crowds made it easy to lose track of one another. In much the same way, we tire from our

routine. Life gets hard, and we lose sight of the One who walks beside us. Like the Psalmist, we need to often enter the sanctuary of our Holy Savior.

Whether it's a physical building or a time we set aside to be refreshed by His Spirit, we need sanctuary, a place of rest and freedom. The sanctuary is where the Psalmist remembered God was holding his hand. It's in that quiet moment we can feel the tug of the Sovereign Lord as He draws us back into the truth, the reality of what we can't always see. God is our strength. Earth has nothing we desire besides the Almighty. Our Savior will always be near, and whether you remember or not, He always holds your hand.

I Hope You Have a Kitchen Window

²⁰*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

Romans 1:20

Today as I was doing dishes two blue jays flitted between the trees. The day left a lot to be desired, but those birds still played. Spring is in full swing. Leaves peak out of the buds. The broad spectrum of green hues makes doing the dishes almost enjoyable.

It reminded me of this verse from Romans. Every time I take a moment to enjoy creation, it makes me feel like there's no excuse for not believing in a Sovereign Creator.

Right now I have a weird kind of life. I'm a full-time caregiver, and in order to really appreciate what I've learned, it's important you know that doesn't come naturally. No one would have ever encouraged me to be a nurse or even go into full time housekeeping. That's not in my makeup. So I feel a little more stressed and tense than normal these days.

You can imagine my amazement when doing the dishes brought me to a place of peace this morning. Just being able to look at those birds playing and the spring springing, calmed my soul in an amazing way. Every piece of nature reminded me the Creator of the universe has it all under control. I don't have to understand everything that's going on in my life, I simply need to focus on Christ and remember if He could create all of this beauty with just a few words, my humble life is a breeze.

I feel very blessed to live out here in the country, to be able to enjoy so much beauty. I've lived in a lot of places with no kitchen window or a view of a brick wall. So this morning, as I was feeling very blessed, I thought about you . . . and I hoped that you too have a kitchen window!

Sunday Mornings at my House

¹*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.*

²*Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.*

³*Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

⁴*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

⁵*For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Psalm 100

I've read the 100th Psalm more times than I can count. Verse four is probably the most well-known: "I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart. I will enter His courts with praise." You've probably heard those words more than a few times in your life, perhaps from the pulpit, or maybe it in a cute little song. Even those who haven't been in church much have heard David's pledge to be cheery as He went into the temple.

I have to admit, I haven't always lived out David's song of praise. Even without the stress of getting three kids to Sunday School on time, I don't always "enter His gates with Thanksgiving."

I'm not a morning person. So, while I love going to church to worship with other Christians, I don't always enter with praise. And when the girls were little, you may have heard me grumbling about something on my way into His "courts."

As the girls grew, it became a bit easier. Even if I wasn't singing songs of praise as I opened the church doors, at least I had a sense of peace. The change came in part because my kids became more self-

sufficient and learned to get ready on their own, but a change in my attitude aided in the transition.

Church became very difficult when my youngest was about 2. Dr. Dobson would have called her “the strong-willed child.” Everything was a battle. She would not sit still in church. Up and down, from my lap to her dad’s, she was constantly on the move. Some Sunday mornings I got up dreading what lie ahead.

I think the enemy wanted me to feel defeated. That ancient snake tried to discourage me from taking my girls to a place where they might hear about the love of Jesus Christ. I decided I couldn’t let him win. I prayed, “Lord, let me teach my children the practice of worshipping you with other believers and not worry about anything else on Sunday mornings.”

It’s easy to get distracted by hair that needs combed and shoes that don’t match. We can easily miss our true purpose as mothers, to “train our child up in the way he, or she, should go.” We want them to know the importance of loving Jesus rather than worrying about fashion, hair design or proper etiquette in church.

As we adjust our attitudes, lay aside our high expectations for our child’s behavior and rest in the love of Jesus Christ, we’ll begin to be able to enjoy our Sunday morning routine. Our children might even see church as fun. They might learn worshipping with the family and other people who care about them is a great way to spend a Sunday morning. And eventually we might even begin to open the doors of the church building with praise and thanksgiving in our hearts. I’m willing to give it a try this Sunday morning, how about you?

Selections from
“Quiet Times for Busy Moms”
A Devotional for Moms

Who Am I?

¹² When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon,
he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior."

. . .

¹⁵ "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

¹⁶ The Lord answered, "I will be with you . . ."

Judges 6:12-16

Tommy's Mom, Joe's wife, Nancy's daughter, someone's cousin . . . Do you ever feel like you don't know who you are? Have you lost your identity in the busyness of home and work? Perhaps it's not lost; maybe you never had it in the first place!

As moms, it's easy for us to feel that way. Someone always needs us to do something. Though we know we're indispensable, we certainly don't feel important. Only a mother understands those two terms are not necessarily interchangeable.

But God sees your hard work, hears your thoughts and understands how you feel. Best of all, He created you, so He knows the real you. He designed you with an abundance of potential, and His eyes see His precious child.

I often feel like this Old Testament judge, the least of the least, as though no one sees me, and if it wasn't for all people need me to do, I might not exist.

God saw a different Gideon. The angel of the Lord, messenger of the Most High, called Gideon "Mighty Warrior." The young man probably looked around to make sure the angel was talking to him. Like us, Gideon didn't feel mighty. He didn't feel like a warrior. Underappreciated, he believed himself insignificant.

If you read Gideon's entire story, you'll see he became a mighty warrior just as the angel said. Gideon could have chosen to go back to his comfortable, yet mediocre, life and ignore the truth. He could have

continued to live the lie, staying hidden in the wine press. Instead, he chose to believe God. He chose to live as God saw him rather than live in the shadow his friends and family had created.

One of my favorite Veggie Tales videos is "The Snoodle's Tale." It's a tremendous reminder God sees us the way He created us, not the way the world convinced us we look. And when we live in the truth of God's Word, we can soar!

So, I encourage you this week to discover what you look like to God. Listen for "The Voice of Truth" (that's a good song by "Casting Crowns") and live in the beauty and knowledge that you are a precious creation of the Almighty with more possibility than you can unleash in this lifetime!

Children of God

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!
The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

*Dear friends, now we are children of God,
and what we will be has not yet been made known.*

*But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.
Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

1 John 3:1-3 (NIV)

John reminds us God loves us so much He calls us His children. However, I'm not sure I completely understood the enormity of that love until I had children myself. I mean, I loved my parents and siblings, my grandparents and aunts. When I fell for Steve, I thought that I'd never love anyone more than that. I've always known I'll never love as much as God loves. But then I had children.

I don't think I realized I had the capacity for this kind of love. Children changed everything. They also began to teach me more than I would have ever imagined about the nature of my heavenly Father. Yes, becoming a parent was one of the best things that ever happened to my Christian walk.

First, God used my girls to teach me about His love. When I began to realize my Creator loved me even more than I loved my children, I stood in awe. I couldn't imagine a love that big.

Through my children, I learned lessons about God's nature. Each time one of them made me proud, I wondered, "Am I making my Father proud?" When their arguing gave me anxiety, and I just wanted them to be nice to one another, I wondered if the way I treated others caused God to be disappointed in me.

My girls' stubborn times, their fits and back talk, made me look at my life and attitudes. I restrain from throwing myself on the floor and

kicking my feet, but my children's defiance opened my eyes to my own obstinance. Parenting a strong-willed child forced me to evaluate my actions in light of scripture.

I could go on and on sharing lessons Christ taught me through my children, lessons about truth, integrity, spending time with Him and setting priorities. And His lessons have not only made me a better person and mother, but a better friend to Jesus.

I pray you begin to understand God's love in light of your love for your children. May the forgiveness you shower on them and their need for discipline help you appreciate your Heavenly Father's forgiveness and discipline. And I hope your wee ones constantly remind you of your place in His family. Because the Creator loves you more than you can ever imagine!

Interruptions

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow.

They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that
not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field,
which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire,
will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

...

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:28-34 (NIV)

Perhaps you've heard the story of Richard. His son, John, gave him the gift of his first grandson when he was in his late 40's. Everyone was so proud and excited. The poor baby, however, had a bit of trouble in his first few months. Nothing serious, just colicky, and the little one somehow managed to get his days and nights mixed up.

For months, John and his wife took turns getting up with their screaming baby; it seemed as though he never slept. One night, or early morning, depending on how you look at it, a desperate John called his father. When Richard heard the phone ring, he leaped for the phone thinking the worst. And there on the other end was his son.

“Hi, Dad,” John began. “It’s been three months. Dad, how long did it take for me and sis to stop waking you up in the middle of the night?”

Richard’s immediate reply, “I don’t know. I’ll let you know when I find out.”

Today I got a late start because one of my girls called. We hung up, and a few minutes later, she called back. A third call and I’m only

about 45 minutes later getting started than I'd planned. Fortunately, my schedule allows for fluctuation.

After that third call, I smiled and thought back to the days when I naively believed my schedule would one day be my own. I started to wish I'd paid more attention to these few verses in Matthew when my children were little.

Back then I used to think, "One day I'll have some time for myself." I kept looking for "someday" instead of enjoying the day right in front of me.

I think when Jesus says, "don't worry about tomorrow," He also means don't wish away today. It seems rough. Keeping up with schedules, enduring the interruptions, planning and then changing plans, it's tiresome.

But look at the bigger picture. "Seek first the Kingdom of God . ." We search for peace and sanity in the "someday." However, as long as others we love bless our lives, the scheduling, the interruptions, and modified planning will not cease. Peace and sanity come from focusing on the "Kingdom." We find them in the lesson of 1 Thessalonians 5:17 lesson, "pray continually."

After three decades of being a mother, I've finally learned to enjoy the interruptions. Because I endured them when they seemed irritating, I now get phone calls in wonderful, albeit sometimes inconvenient times of the day. I'm delighted my girls call me before their friends because they want their dad and me to know what's going on in their lives. I feel privileged they think my advice worth listening to and sometimes wise enough to follow.

I know it's difficult when you can't remember the last time you slept all night or cooked a meal without stopping to see, hear or clean something. It's frustrating when you're trying to have a phone conversation but have to rescue the dog from the doll dress. Sometimes we want to scream when we sit down for a few moments of silence, to read a book or watch a bit of television and our lap is immediately bombarded with books, toys or a small child.

But as Richard can attest (and me too), the interruptions will never stop. It will go from rocking screaming babies to kissing injured knees. Next, you'll be providing quality time and running them all over creation. And if they've learned you care, when they finally leave, there will still be interruptions, welcome, beautiful, wonderful interruptions.

Until the interruptions reach the enjoyable stage, try not to worry if everything doesn't get done quite right. Let your only concern be spending time with God and seeking first His kingdom. And go ahead, spend all day interrupting your heavenly Father. He enjoys the distraction.

Let's Bake Some Bread

⁵ When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread.

⁶ “Be careful,” Jesus said to them.

“Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

...

¹¹ How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread?

But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

¹² Then they understood that he was not telling them

to guard against the yeast used in bread,

but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Matthew 16:5-12

Kneading dough can be very relaxing. Push and roll, push and roll, turn and smash again. It's a nice quiet task that allows us to take out our frustrations and feel productive at the same time. However, working out frustrations isn't the point. We knead to spread the leaven all through the dough so it will rise properly. The kneading causes the yeast to work better.

I have a sugar cookie recipe that came from my husband's grandmother. It's a family favorite because these cookies are the lightest and fluffiest you've ever tasted. One of the secrets I've discovered for very light, yet thick cookies is allowing the dough to sit for a long time followed by massive kneading. It's just baking powder and soda, but the longer the dough is in the refrigerator (or freezer), and the more I knead, the better the cookies.

Jesus said to beware of the yeast, the teaching, of the Pharisees. I believe He compared it to yeast because the more we hear and ponder a teaching, the better it works into our fiber. Consider everything you do in life simply because of all the kneading. Perhaps you comb your hair the way your mother did or use hand gestures like your father. Each of us has quirks, knowledge, habits and even hang-ups that are harbored way deep inside of us because our parents "worked" them in. Generally the

kneading was done very subtly and often without a thought at how it would affect us for the rest of our lives.

As we raise our children, we need to be aware of our yeastful teaching. Everything we do, every word we speak is similar to leaven being measured into the dough. And each time we repeat the action or word, we knead. When we yell more than necessary or speak words of judgement, we knead that behavior into our children.

Jesus didn't tell His disciples that "yeast" was bad. He simply told them to guard against the "yeast" of the Pharisees, teachings that sounded like something God might say, but weren't really from His Father. As you go about your day, consider the kind of yeast you mix into the soft, pliable minds of your youngsters. Is your teaching from Christ or from the world? Are they learning how to love God and others or how to help themselves?

We have an awesome responsibility raising these children God gave us. So take a minute to check your brand of yeast, and have some fun kneading the dough!

A Lesson I Learned from my Dog

The Secret of True Freedom

³⁶ *So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

John 8:36

I learn so many lessons about my relationship with God, and life in general, from my kids and my dog. One time I let my dog out the back door and went in the kitchen to clean for a moment. Thirty minutes later I remembered her. At first, I couldn't find her. Then I looked out front; and there she was, lying in the shade waiting for me to let her in. Almost the moment I opened the door she ran up the steps. Other pups would have run off at the first opportunity, but our little schnauzer learned her boundaries very young.

Paul shared an awesome truth in 1 Corinthians. In two separate places (6:12 & 10:23) Paul reminded the Corinthians “Everything is permissible.” Because of his freedom in Christ, he lived life with no limits. However, in both verses, he completed the quote by saying, “Not everything is good for me.” Paul understood that his liberty didn’t mean he had no boundaries.

The Bible gives us lists of standards. We call some commandments. They aren’t there because God is mean or doesn’t want us to have fun, but because limits provide for a beneficial and constructive life.

The day I forgot Holly, she could have easily wandered off, but she learned to trust the boundaries we set for her. For years we trained her to stay in her yard, and now she does so without being told. Our little dog acts wiser than humans sometimes. The rules we gave our pup protect her and give her the safest and best life possible.

Our Master’s rules do the same thing; however, we often think we know better than God and attempt to operate outside the boundaries our loving Father set for us.

As we grasp the difference between permissible and beneficial,

one of the greatest things we can do is pass this lesson on to our children. If we begrudgingly live like the rules bind us and keep us from being free, if we feel like we can't have fun living within the guidelines of our Christian faith, our children may decide the faith is too hard or not worth it, and become rebellious as they grow. On the other hand, as they see us trusting God and living within His boundaries without complaining, as we live out the attitude that Christ's limits are good for us, "beneficial," and keep us safe and happy, there's a good chance our kids will believe these verses, they'll be anxious to follow them.

It's exceedingly important to always discipline our children the same way that our Father disciplines us, out of love. When love motivates our discipline love rather than anger or the need to be "in charge," our children begin to understand, much like my schnauzer, that we only want the best for them.

They'll very likely grow to be like my puppy, quite content to stay within the boundaries, ready to enjoy living in the love and freedom of Jesus Christ!

Selections from
“**Devotions Inspired by Life**”

Lessons from an Egg Muffin

I eat egg muffins a couple times a week, hoping they make for a healthier lunch than a burger. On one occasion the muffin I received needed some serious help. The top of the muffin leaned to the left and the bottom to the right. The cheese hung half off the egg, and the Canadian bacon sagged on the other side. As you might imagine, my first thought dripped with sarcasm, “And they want to give the guy who put this together fifteen dollars an hour.” My next thought was, “I hope whoever did this isn’t a Christian.”

As I arranged my muffin so it could be eaten, I remembered two verses:

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,
as working for the Lord, not for human masters ...*

Colossians 3:23 (NIV)

I wondered, “Do Christians live these two verses? Do I live out Paul’s words in all I do?” We’re so immersed in this culture of mediocrity, even followers of Christ fall into the trap of a me-first mentality. When employers treat us badly, we often have a hard time working with all our heart. And if there’s no personal benefit or it seems no one appreciates our hard work, doing it all for the glory of God becomes difficult.

But Paul didn’t tell us to do these things when it was easy. He didn’t say, “Whenever people are paying attention and the result could lead them to Christ . . .” Nope, the apostle said, “whatever you do.” And he said it in both verses. We may think some jobs too menial to perform in honor of our Creator, but a famous monk named Brother Lawrence peeled potatoes for the glory of God, and I have a friend who delivers mail as if delivering for Jesus.

Perhaps Christians should do an inventory each evening:

- Did I eat and drink to the glory of God today?
- Did I work as if Christ was my employer?

And if our answer isn't an emphatic yes, we'll need to make a few adjustments for the next day. Because while many have heard Colossians 3:23, fewer know the verse that follows:

...since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

It is the Lord Christ you are serving

Colossians 3:24

So whatever you do, do it for the glory of God today, as if you were working directly for Christ and not that human who pays your wages. Put those muffins together proudly, push your broom with joy, because Christ is preparing our inheritance. Perhaps not today or tomorrow, but the day will come when the One who sees all we do, even in secret, will give us our reward.

Become Part of the Band

*Now if the foot should say,
“Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,”
it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.*

*And if the ear should say,
“Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,”
it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.*

*But in fact God has placed the parts in the body,
every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.*

1 Corinthians 12:15-16 & 18 (NIV)

My oldest grandchildren perform with the best high school band I've ever heard. We've lived in five different school districts, so I've got a few to compare it to. They memorize each piece and play with precision. Recently at an event with less than 50 people in attendance, they played a full thirty minutes as if performing to a packed house, and they looked like they were having fun!

Their performance reminded me of those verses from 1 Corinthians. Each of those teens played their part with gusto. The harmonies blended so well an untrained ear may not have noticed all the unique parts. Every person played their best, but no one tried to be the best.

A great high school band exemplifies Paul's message. Like the instruments in an orchestra, every player in the Kingdom is invaluable. Often we live like only the first chair deserves recognition; however, even a virtuoso's solo performance becomes dull after the first couple numbers. To keep the crowd entertained, she needs the harmonies and rhythms of other musicians, professionals who've perfected their craft.

We live in a world where mediocrity reigns. The "It's Good Enough" mentality infiltrates schools and workplaces. Fortunately, it gives the church a great opportunity to live differently.

Might we perform better if we remember Christ needs our part?

What would we volunteer for if we believed we were created to contribute? Will our actions demonstrate to the next generation no player is too small and every tingle of the triangle is vital to the beauty of the Composer's masterpiece?

We have a choice to make.

Will we sit back and let the soloists do all the work? It's going to get boring soon. Perhaps this is the reason church attendance is falling off. Without each person playing their part with passion, the music gets stale, no one wants to listen.

Instead let's embrace the truth. We have been created with gifts and talents, each a beautiful motif the body of Christ needs to complete our magnificent sonata. The orchestra needs me. And they need you. Every shake of the egg, each pluck of the bass, whatever part you've been chosen to play, the concert won't be the same without you!

Buzzards, Blue Jays, Bullies and Bad Guys

¹*“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.*

²*For in the same way you judge others,
you will be judged, and with the measure you use,
it will be measured to you.”*

Matthew 7:1-2 (NIV)

Recently, I saw a red-tailed hawk on top of a pole. I drove by slowly, hoping to see it take off in majestic flight. A couple miles down the road, I noticed another large bird with wings spread wide in the wind. Straining to see, I wondered if it was another hawk or, better yet, an eagle. Those great American icons exist in our area, but they continue to elude me.

When I got a closer look, my heart sank a bit as I thought, “Just a buzzard.” Almost immediately this conversation began in my mind:

“Really? Just a buzzard? It’s a creation of God. You thought it was cool hanging on the breeze until you found out it was a buzzard.”

Why do buzzards disappoint me? Maybe because I see them every day. Or perhaps their small heads compared to their body make them unattractive. Their scraggly feathers certainly don’t help. Nor does the fact they always sit by the road scarfing dead carcasses.

I started thinking about which birds I “respect” and which I don’t. I know what you’re thinking, “They’re just birds!” But truth be told, eagles, hawks, hummingbirds, and small songbirds bring me joy; while Canadian Geese seem quite dirty and Blue Jays are bullies. Every Spring I eagerly await the Robins, and I love the Pileated Red-Headed Woodpeckers outside my house. But the brown woodpeckers bore me. I can’t even tell you what kind he is.

All these revelations begged the question, “Do I categorize people like I do buzzards?”

Don’t get me wrong; age, race, handicap and gender mean

nothing to me. But as much as I hate to admit it; I judge people and birds similarly. For instance, I think less of people who look “scraggly.” What’s scraggly you ask . . . Scraggly requires a bath and a comb, not because of a hard day’s work, but because of days of neglect. Hopefully I don’t treat these folks badly; I try to smile and speak, but my opinion of them closely resembles my attitude toward the buzzard. It’s not that I dislike a buzzard, but it’s just not appealing to me. I’d rather see an eagle or a hawk.

When I come across a bully or see someone begging when they appear perfectly healthy, my attitude is just as bad. I have to remind myself God created each one in His image. Each time I forget that simple truth, I find myself judging.

That lonely buzzard taught me a lot about myself. He showed me how to appreciate everyone as a creation of the Almighty, even the “buzzards” of the world. He reminded me to see every scraggly individual as a beautiful image of my Savior. Raised to appreciate social graces, I can be polite in every situation; but I want my thoughts to line up with my actions. When I act kind, what goes on in my brain should be kind too. The Holy Spirit is constantly remolding me. So the time will come when I don’t even notice idiosyncrasies. Until then, I’ll continue to treat others as Christ would treat them . . . and I’ll never look at buzzards the same way again.

Do You Have a Spring or a Cistern?

*My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me, the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*

Jeremiah 2:13 (NIV)

I wonder if today's generation, with water pumped from a filtration system, truly appreciates these words of Jeremiah. I grew up on a farm with a spring. No matter how dry the season, we never ran out of water, and it always ran cold. Several springs in our area have been harnessed. The pipes coming out of the hill invite the world to fill jugs from these cool clear sources.

On the other hand, my aunt had a cistern. During dry seasons we used water sparingly because if it ran dry an expensive water tanker would have to fill it. A jug in the refrigerator provided cool refreshment because her tap felt more lukewarm.

Spring water rushes through rocks deep in the earth making it pure and cool. It moves constantly. Cistern water sits there. It may move a bit when rain runs in, but for the most part it remains still and warm.

In Jeremiah's day men dug huge holes for cisterns and lined them with clay to keep the water from soaking into the soil. Today a metal tank fills the cavern. Either way cisterns take a lot of work. Conversely springs occur naturally and require little effort to harness. Even in our world of technology and filters, bottled spring water is still a favorite.

So, when God says we forsake Him, the Spring of Living Water, digging our own cisterns, he's describing something that in my childhood would have been considered foolish. No one who had a good spring on their property would dig a cistern.

Nowadays springs and cisterns are obsolete. Most folks get a monthly bill in the mail for the privilege of drinking water supplied by some municipality. When God addresses our spiritual supply, perhaps

he'd ask if it comes from the city or the Spring.

John tells us Jesus offers a spring of Living Water.¹ But just like the people in Jeremiah's time, many attempt to find peace and refreshment in the world's water supply. Others try digging their own cisterns, one shovelful at a time. These folks work hard and end up settling for stagnant, warm water, missing out on the pure, cool Springs available at no cost to everyone who truly believes.

¹ John 4:14

No More Cracks

*The light has come into the world,
and people loved darkness rather than the light
because their deeds were evil.*

John 3:19 (HCSB)

Have you ever filled the grooves of old paneling with drywall mud? You can transform seventies style walls into something more modern without demolition and reconstruction. I used this technique on a huge room. It took a few days to apply several thin coats of mud.

After filling in every divot, we wet sand, ensuring all the ridges are completely filled without bumps or indentations. And while this sounds like the final step, we then set a spotlight almost parallel to the wall. A flip of the switch reveals the minor flaws that remain.

Four times Jesus calls Himself “The Light of the World.” John uses the phrase to describe the Savior two more times. The light illuminating my plaster faux pas showed me how Jesus does the same thing.

Most people aren’t evil, not in the way we think of the word. Even before I began my walk with Christ, I don’t think anyone would have used that adjective to describe me. If you had asked what I needed to change, I’d have mentioned a few missing graces to avoid looking conceited, but I lived a socially acceptable life. People liked me, and I tried to help others.

But then I turned the light on.

When I began to walk with Jesus, He shined His brilliance on me. Like the lamp on the walls I mudded and sanded, Christ exposed flaws and mistakes I didn’t know were there. His splendor unearthed things only a perfect and holy God would describe as evil. Perhaps this stops some folks in their walk with Christ. Some prefer not to see the rough edges and tiny ridges. We don’t need to work on what we can’t see, correct? Won’t that make life easier?

Unfortunately easier is not necessarily better.

Jesus wants us to have the best life possible. He came to give abundant life. But this comes when we walk in His light. 1 John 1:7 says “If we walk in the light as Jesus is in the light . . . His blood purifies us from all sin.” Jesus came to get rid of the chips, gaps and protrusions. Sometimes the purification process scares us because human nature prefers easy. But I don’t want easy, I want better!

So I pray today you are walking in the Light, letting Him unveil every ridge, crack and bump; so Jesus Christ can finish you to perfection, and you can live the most abundant life possible!

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Lynne Modranski is an author, inspirational speaker, and Biblical Coach who empowers Christian leaders and inspires spiritual growth helping people move from rules to relationship and dive into Christ's abundance.

Wife to Steve, a local church pastor, she is mom to Monica, Sylvia and Julia and "Hada" to Joshua, Corryn, Elizabeth and Jaycee. Worship Leader and Small Groups Coordinator of Sycamore Tree Church, Lynne is first and foremost a follower of Jesus Christ. She has a passion to help others find a real relationship with the One who has given her true life, as she shows them how they can become the very best they can be in Christ Jesus!

Lynne has written several Bible Studies, e-books, devotional readings, children's curricula, plays and advent readings. Visit her website to find out more about her Spiritual growth classes and one on one Biblical coaching.



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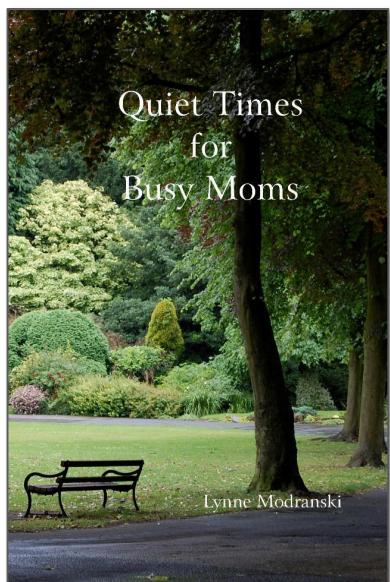
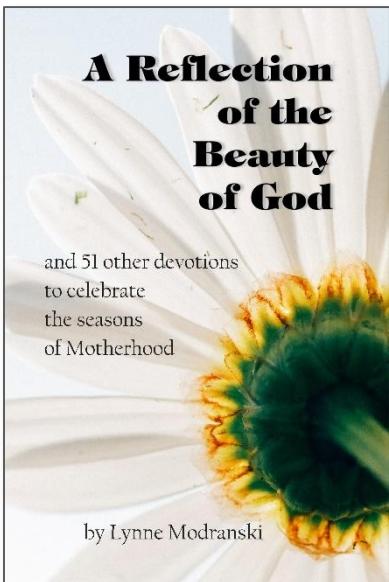
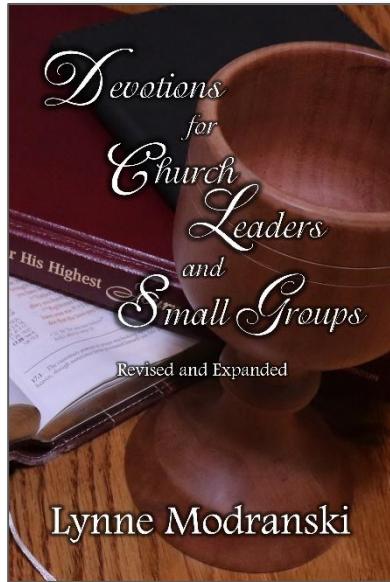
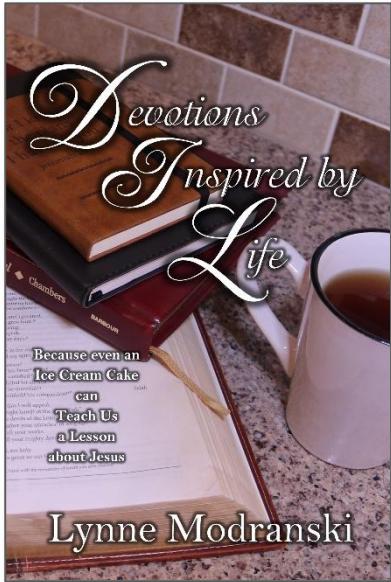
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