

CHRIST-
FILLED
moments

150 DEVOTIONS *for*
YOUR WALK *of* FAITH

MARK ZIMMERMANN



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Christ-Filled Moments: 150 Devotions for Your Walk of Faith

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Practical and Scripture-based, these words and reflections remind us that our God continues to love, forgive and surprise us for ministry to happen to us and through us, as we are assured of his presence in us.

 **RICH BIMLER**, *Ministry consultant; Author of **Joyfully Aging, Miracles in the Middle and Let There Be Laughter***


Mark has spent a great deal of his adult life writing and editing. All of that experience pays off in these short, winsome, creative devotions that provide practical applications for daily Christian life and growth in faith. If you're looking for an impactful way to supercharge your faith walk, you would do well to spend a minute each day in these "Christ-Filled Moments."

 **TOM EGGBRECHT**, *Vice President of Ministry Solutions, Lutheran Church Extension Fund; Author of **Fully and Creatively Alive: How to Live a More Joyfully Fulfilling Life***

These devotions anchor us to Christ. They fill our passing moments with the comforting presence of our Eternal Lord. In these reflections upon the Word, we learn what it means to live *in* this world but not *of* this world, as faithful citizens of the kingdom of our Father.

 **CHAD BIRD**, *Scholar in Residence at 1517.org; Author of **The Christ Key: Unlocking the Centrality of Christ in the Old Testament***

Using illustrations from this world, Mark masterfully takes us into the biblical world so we're empowered to faithfully face our world. Everyone looking to enhance their walk with Jesus will be well-served through these timely devotions.

 **REED LESSING**, *Professor at Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota; Author of commentaries on Exodus, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Jonah and Zechariah*

Honest and vulnerable, these devotions tackle real-world problems with God's promised gifts of forgiveness and refreshment.

✠ **STEPHEN J. CARTER**, *Retired pastor, seminary professor and publisher; Author of My Daily Devotion, Witness to the Light and Heartbeat!*

Christ-Filled Moments is an apt description of these faithful writings by Mark Zimmermann. In these pages, readers will receive respite and refreshment from the toils and challenges of everyday endeavors. The devotions encourage and enliven the reader with a sense of renewal with which to greet the day.

✠ **DAVID MEGGERS**, *Associate Pastor, Concordia Lutheran Church, Kirkwood, MO*

We live in disorienting times. It seems like change and challenge are coming at us from every direction. The brief, user-friendly devotions in *Christ-Filled Moments* point readers toward Jesus, who longs to reorient us to what matters most and awaken us to his work in this world.

✠ **MICHELLE VAN LOON**, *Author of Translating Your Past: Finding Meaning in Family Ancestry, Genetic Clues, and Generational Trauma*

Mark's eyes of faith remain focused on finding Christ-filled, teachable moments in everyday life. He gives significance to what we often see as insignificant. I'm certain the Holy Spirit will use these faith-strengthening devotions to teach us to see and seize Christ-filled moments in our lives.

✠ **TIM WESEMANN**, *Author of Swashbuckling Faith and Jack Bauer's Having a Bad Day*

Thought-provoking and insightful, these devotions are truly relevant and real. Using topics we can all relate to, Mark has a gift of meaningfully weaving Christ on the cross into everyday living. Each one makes me want to read the next.

✠ **JANE WILKE**, *Director of Church Relations, Concordia University, St. Paul, MN*

INTRODUCTION

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ROMANS 15:5-6

What an encouragement it is to know that Christ is present with us. It is his presence with us that infuses circumstances and situations with meaning and purpose. Many times we can't see him very clearly, and at other times we have the very strong sense that he is close beside us. Those powerful times are what we call Christ-filled moments. This collection of 150 devotions is designed to help you see Christ filling many of the moments of your life in the simplest of things. When we sharpen our focus on Christ's presence, we become even more aware of the influence of Christ in our everyday living. During his time on earth, Jesus touched the lives of thousands with his words of promise, acts of healing, miraculous signs and works of service. And he is still touching our lives in similar ways today, bringing harmony, comfort, hope and peace.

These reflections can be read any time in any order in any way you wish. Simply open this book anywhere along your walk of faith, and you will find Christ on every page. Draw near to him as he draws near to you.

Mark Zimmermann, AUTHOR

New Year Visions

On the cusp of a new year, we like to envision a fresh start, a change for the better, a bright future. We often put all our hopes and dreams on a new year. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as we recognize that life does not always go the way we planned. We may be disappointed on any one of the 365 days to come.

As Christians, we put our hopes and dreams on Christ and not on a particular set of days. Every morning is a new start because of his forgiveness. Every day is a new opportunity to serve him. Every 24-hour period is a gift from our Savior, who died that we might live for him. There will be troubles and detours and unexpected bumps in the road, but our confidence in our risen Lord assures us that we will grow and learn and become stronger because of his presence with us.

“We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). No matter what your age, make growing up into Christ your goal for the year. He will make it happen!

FOR REFLECTION

How can you grow in your relationship with Christ today?

The Light from Afar

The wise men followed the star from afar. They did not stop until they came to the palace in Jerusalem where they thought Jesus was born a king. But the chief priests and scribes pointed them in the direction of Bethlehem, where, according to the Scriptures, the wise men found the Christ Child. (See Matthew 2.)

The wise men followed the Word after they followed the star. It was the Word that put them back on course. It was the Word that led them to Jesus, the Star of their lives. And it is the Word that leads us, too, to Jesus, who is the Star of our lives too. As the psalmist says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

The star the wise men saw is no longer present in the sky, but the light of the Word remains today. All we need to do is open the pages of Scripture to see it. The Word enlightens our lives with hope, faith and love. It is the Word that brings us close to the Light of the World, Jesus, our Savior. He shines on us with forgiveness through his death and resurrection and guides us on to everlasting life with him.

FOR REFLECTION

**In what way can you be led
by the Word today?**

Water and the Word

My parents recently reminded me that I was baptized using water my grandparents brought from the Jordan River on their trip to the Holy Land. I was touched and moved by this forgotten news, but it got me to thinking that, when it comes to baptism, the source of the water does not really matter.

What matters is the connection of that water to the Word. This Word is spoken over the baptized person as water is poured: “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The Word of God reminds us: “This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21, NIV®).

Through baptism, we are made brothers and sisters of Jesus, the Word made flesh. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, it is in this Word that we find our hope, with the sprinkling of water, whatever its source.

FOR REFLECTION

**What reminds you
of your baptism?**

White as Snow

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. **ISAIAH 1:18**

Many of us have experienced monster snowstorms, often multiple snowstorms in a row. The aftermath of such storms can be difficult and frustrating, but people also report on the beautiful sight of the snow falling, as their yards are slowly covered over. As I thoroughly enjoyed just sitting and watching the snow softly falling out my living room window one February, I wondered: Why this response? I think it has something to do with the feeling of everything becoming fresh and new. There is a sense that all the world is clean and bright.

Isaiah must have known the comfort of freshly fallen snow when he compared it to the forgiveness of sins. When we take our sins to God, they are completely covered over, snowflake upon snowflake. It is said that no two snowflakes are alike. Through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, God's forgiveness makes sure that no sin is left uncovered by his grace and mercy.

The next time you find yourself looking out at a snowfall, think of the blessings of forgiveness that fall down on us every day, forgiveness that renews our lives with the beauty of God's gift.

FOR REFLECTION

When have you last experienced the joy of a snowfall?

Water Into Wine

In his first miracle, Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding of Cana, and the wedding guests continued celebrating. This miracle foreshadowed the Lord's Supper and revealed the transformation of his people.

Jesus' mother Mary told her son, "They have no wine" (John 2:3). She knew that Jesus could solve the problem. She told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). Jesus was the one to whom they should listen. Without wine, the celebration would end, but the feast continued when Christ provided wine. The marriage feast is a symbol of the feast of heaven, where the Groom, Christ, weds his Bride, the Church, in a celebration that will last forever.

The miraculous wine from water was "the best," but a better wine was poured at the Lord's table the night before his death. That wine was the blood of Christ, shed for the forgiveness of our sins. The wine at the Lord's Supper brings a deeper celebration of everlasting joy through the removal of sins. The wine poured at Cana flowed through Christ's ministry to the wine of the Lord's Supper, wine that flows to us as we partake of the bread and wine of Holy Communion. This very best of wine—the blood of our Savior—enters us in a rich and abundant way.

FOR REFLECTION

**How have you been enriched
by the blood of Christ?**

Candy Hearts

As a kid, on Valentine’s Day, I enjoyed getting candy hearts and reading the messages: “I love you,” “Be mine,” “True love,” “My pal” and “Friends forever.” We eat the candy and then don’t think much about the words, but these candy hearts have a very biblical connection:

And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. 2 CORINTHIANS 3:3

God has imprinted his love and care on our hearts. He truly means it when he says, “I love you,” “Be mine,” “True love,” “My pal” and “Friends forever.” These divine messages on our hearts define who we are and whose we are. These words should motivate us in our love for one another: “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). His love for us helps us to say, “I love you,” “Be mine,” “True love,” “My pal” and “Friends forever” in the Lord’s name to one another. With sincere hearts, we care for one another in the same way that God cares for us. Let every heart be a message board of love.

FOR REFLECTION

What messages of love would you like to share today?

Are You Facing Out?

*For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,
but we preach Christ crucified ...* 1 CORINTHIANS 1:22-23

When my father graduated from the seminary, my mother gave him a ring with a cross at the center. But in his first weeks as a new pastor in Odell, Nebraska, a farmer observed, “You’re wearing that ring all wrong. You have it so the cross is facing you. The cross should be facing out to the people you meet.” My dad has been wearing that ring facing out ever since.

It’s tempting to treat Christ’s cross as something that is just for us. We can look at it as a personal memento or a secret comfort. Is that God’s desire? The message of forgiveness and heaven is meant to be something that we share prodigally in our daily lives. The cross of Christ should be “facing out” in the way we love, forgive and care for others as Christ loves, forgives and cares for us.

FOR REFLECTION

**In what ways can you reach out
to someone with the cross?**

Recharging

Everyone is obsessed with keeping their smartphones charged. Our greatest fear is being somewhere without a fully charged phone. While I know from experience that lost feeling of being in the middle of nowhere with a dead phone, I wonder what our obsession with charging our phones says about our priorities.

We are not nearly as diligent about recharging our faith on a daily basis. If we have the time to search for an outlet to recharge our phones, we certainly have the time to search through Scripture throughout the day to charge ourselves spiritually.

Instead of panicking when we receive notification that our phone power is at 20% and then at 10%, we should be worried if we have made it through 10% or 20% of the day without praying. Our spirits can be refreshed with a few moments of one-on-one conversation with our Savior. If we can drop everything to find our charger or dig around the car for that USB cord, we can certainly have the same sort of urgent approach when we are in desperate need of a reconnection with the divine.

Every day we can recharge our faith through prayer, Bible study, meditation and reflection. It should be an obsession!

FOR REFLECTION

What part of your life needs the most recharging?

The Day of Small Things

For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice ... **ZECHARIAH 4:10**

Sometimes I feel like I am immersed in “small things” every day, the mundane tasks that must be done—doing laundry, paying bills, cooking meals, mowing the lawn, putting gas in the car and running errands. Small things can wear me down. I find solace in the fact that Zechariah acknowledges those who have “despised the day of small things.” I am not alone! Zechariah assures us that we despisers of small things will rejoice because the eyes of the Lord will “range through the whole earth” (Zechariah 4:10). Our Lord is taking care of the big picture, making sure that his grand plan for all things is coming together.

We are on a forward-moving trajectory that is taking us ever closer to the hallways of heaven, where the purpose of all the small things in life will be revealed at the throne of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. For us he became small so that we might live large in his presence forever.

So don't be frustrated by the small things. Those small things are bringing us ever closer to the Last Day, when we will live life to the fullest for all eternity.

FOR REFLECTION

What “small thing” can you rejoice in today?

Strength You Have

The LORD turned to [Gideon] and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” JUDGES 6:14 (NIV®)

When I was feeling over-busy and bedrugged, the words “go in the strength *you have*” really registered with me, giving me hope and confidence that I could accomplish the multiple tasks that lay before me. I may not feel the strongest I have ever felt, but God has given me the strength I *do have* to do great things.

This verse is also a message from God telling me that he is sending me. He knows the challenges I face and he will not abandon me to go it alone. He has faith in me to carry out the mission he has for me. He knows my capabilities better than I do and, if I run into any trouble, he will be there to get me through it.

In the mornings when I haven’t felt much like getting up when the alarm goes off, I simply say to myself, “Go in the strength you have.” That gets me moving to start the day.

FOR REFLECTION

What do you need strength for?

Provenance

In the art world, the term *provenance* refers to the history of ownership of a work of art. Museum curators go to great lengths to determine who owned a particular piece and when. The more known about the history of a painting and its owners, the greater the value of the masterpiece.

As God's masterpieces, we do not have to track down our provenance. Since baptism we have had one owner: God. We belong to him, and we are more precious to him than the *Mona Lisa*. As the Bible says,

*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called
you by name, you are mine.* **ISAIAH 43:1**

So what do we do with this information?

*For you were bought with a price. So glorify
God in your body.* **1 CORINTHIANS 6:20**

All we say and do with these works of art we call our bodies must be to God's glory, to honor the One who crafted and designed us and purchased us at great cost. Each word and action is like a divine brushstroke guided by the hand of the Master. We may not be museum quality, but because of Christ and his cross, we have a place designated for us in the halls of heaven.

FOR REFLECTION

**Why is it good for you to know
that you have a place with God?**

Letters

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. **2 CORINTHIANS 3:2-3**

We don't write letters too much anymore, but in the early Church, handwritten letters were the only way to receive information from a great distance. The epistles were originally simply letters from one friend to another group of friends, talking about the life of faith in Christ. Today those letters are studied and valued for their importance in guiding our lives as Christians.

Letters were so important to the early Christians that Paul refers to those who receive his actual letter as letters themselves. We, too, as recipients of Paul's letters, are letters. We are not letters written with ink that fades, but we are written with the Spirit of the living God. We have vibrancy and force that will last forever. We are not written on cold and unfeeling stone. We are letters written on beating human hearts that supply lifeblood to the world.

FOR REFLECTION

**To whom would you like
to write a letter?**

Dishes

When I bought my house, I was not concerned that it did not have a dishwasher. But I did not realize how often I would be washing plates and cups and silverware again and again. The Bible has a lot to say about dishwashing. The Pharisees in Jesus' day were apparently very good at doing dishes: "There are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches" (Mark 7:4). Jesus used the practice to teach us about spiritual disciplines: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean" (Matthew 23:25-26).

I may think my oatmeal bowls are clean, but inside I find flecks of crusted oats. We can put on a good front of a Christian life, but caked-on sins make us unclean inside. If unclean thoughts creep into my mind, I make a point through the power of Christ to rid myself of those "crusty" thoughts and engage my mind in God-pleasing thoughts. Those "clean" thoughts show on the outside in sincere faith practices and acts of Christlike kindness toward others.

FOR REFLECTION

What do you want to clean out of your life?

Struck Down but Not Destroyed

I love the language of 2 Corinthians 4:8-9:

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed. We are pressed from every angle with the demands of work, family, home and church, but we are not crushed. Nothing can be a crushing blow when we have Christ within us.

Perplexed, but not in despair. We may be confused, frustrated or angry about our lives, but we should never let that angst turn into despair, tempting us to give up on God, on ourselves or on others. We cannot throw in the towel when God is fighting for us.

Persecuted, but not abandoned. For the early Christians in Corinth, persecution was a real threat. Suffering is a given for Christians in this world. Sin and the devil will make sure of that! But we will never be left alone to fend for ourselves. The Triune God loves us and comforts us in every struggle. Our God will never go away.

Struck down but not destroyed. We may be struck down by illness, a harsh word or rejection. We will be knocked down, but we will never be obliterated. Isaiah tells us that God will not snuff out even a dimly burning wick. Christ destroyed the powers of death, sin and the devil through his life, death and resurrection. He will never destroy us.

FOR REFLECTION

What words in these verses impact you the most?

Visual Storytelling

In the Middle Ages, stained-glass windows told the story of salvation to the many illiterate people in the pews. Today there is a resurgence of visual storytelling, most notably through social media sites like Instagram. The goal of Instagram is to share photos of your life with others. As a Christian, then, your Instagram posts can serve as stained-glass windows displaying your life in Christ to the world.

What images are you sharing? What can people learn about you from the pictures you put up on your Instagram or Facebook page? Take a quick look at your image-posting history. Can people see that you are a Christian from these images? If so, then great! If not, what can you include in future image postings that reveal your commitment to Christ and the central role he plays in your life?

So much of social media imagery is about me, myself and I. But as Christians we say it is all about him as we point to Jesus Christ in our social media stained-glass windows.

FOR REFLECTION

What specific visuals point to Jesus in your life?

Encouragement

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet. ACTS 4:36-37 (NIV®)

Throughout the Book of Acts, we read about a disciple of Christ named Barnabas, whose name means “son of encouragement.” His name indicates the impact he had on the early Church and to those to whom he witnessed on his many missionary trips with the apostle Paul.

How can you be a Barnabas, a son or daughter of encouragement, in your life today? You can be on the lookout, as Barnabas was, for the gifts in others. Then encourage people to use those gifts to God’s glory. Don’t be afraid to join them in using your gifts, standing beside them to support them along the way. You can be encouraging by being open and available when people want to talk, as Barnabas was. Be there to listen. Be there to care. Be there to take an interest in the lives of people. Keep urging them on in their work for the Lord and in living in God’s grace.

To whom can you be a Barnabas today?

FOR REFLECTION

Who has encouraged you in your faith?

Adiaphora

The word *adiaphora* means “matters not regarded as essential to faith, but nevertheless permissible or allowed in the church.” Topics such as the floor covering in the sanctuary or the color of the paint on the walls of the fellowship hall, for example, are not essential to faith, but often take up a large part of our time. Adiaphora.

St. Paul was asked about adiaphora by the Corinthian Christians. Should they eat food sacrificed to idols? He said in response: Food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. (See 1 Corinthians 8:8-9.)

We need to spend less time worrying about things that are essentially adiaphora and more time on matters that are essential to faith: Baptism, evangelism, Holy Communion, preaching the Word, Bible study and prayer. Even if something we do or say is not necessarily against our beliefs, we need to be aware of the way in which we go about these things. We are models of Christ even in things that don't really matter.

FOR REFLECTION

What matters of faith can you focus on more fully?

Cairns

While hiking in Rocky Mountain National Park, I noticed stones stacked up into little towers called cairns that served as landmarks and memorials. Cairns are similar to the rock formations used in the Bible by Abraham, Moses and Jacob as altars.

Abraham built an altar to acknowledge that God is God, saying through this cairn that he would obey God's will. God sent an angel to stop Abraham from sacrificing his son. Centuries later, God would sacrifice his own Son, Jesus, on the altar, the cairn, if you will, of a cross on a rock hill called Golgotha.

Moses erected an altar to God after the Israelites defeated the army of Amalek. We have moments in our lives after a trial or tragedy, when we, like Moses, need to step back and honor in some special way the God who got us through.

The morning after Jacob dreamed of angels ascending and descending a stairway to heaven, he used a stone to make a cairn to announce that this was a dwelling place of God. We need to remember, too, that though we are sinners, God still loves us and has a plan of salvation for us, to take us to heaven to be with him forever.

Honor the Lord, who is the Rock, on your journey through life.

FOR REFLECTION

At what times in your life did you stop to worship God?

Judge Not

“Judge not, and you will not be judged,” Jesus clearly states (Luke 6:37). But that is easier said than done when we are living in an increasingly judgmental society. It is easy to join the chorus of voices judging others.

As the saying goes, every time you point one finger at someone, there are three fingers pointing back at you. We are all sinners, and we all fail. As Christians, we need to replace the judgments that may be welling up inside of us with forgiveness and love. That is how we would like to be treated if the roles were reversed.

Jesus continues, “Condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37). It is not our place to condemn. That is up to God. But it is our role to forgive. We are all in need of Christ’s mercy for our failings, big or small. Our role as Christians is not to point to people in judgment but to point people to the cross. Only there can grace be found.

FOR REFLECTION

What judgmental thought is nagging at you now?