

THE GIFT OF ONE DAY

HOW TO FIND HOPE WHEN
LIFE GETS HARD

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PROOF

KERRY & CHRIS
SHOOK

Best-Selling Authors of *One Month to Live*

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For Mary Love

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INTRODUCTION

One Day with Jude

I, Jude, am a slave to Jesus Christ . . . writing to those loved by God the Father, called and kept safe by Jesus Christ. Relax, everything's going to be all right; rest, everything's coming together; open your hearts, love is on the way!

JUDE 1:1–2, MSG

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He was given the gift of one day. One sunset. One sunrise. Just one rotation of the planet before he left it. Unlike the average American, he wasn't gifted with almost eighty years of life on this earth. He wasn't granted eighty years or eighty days or even eight days. No, he was given the gift of one day.

However, the way Jude Samuel Shook unwrapped the divine gift of his one day gave us, his grandparents, a gift that has changed the way we now live every day. A little boy who lived on this earth for just a handful of hard-fought hours taught us how to live our years.

Ask us what we remember about that day—that particular twenty-four hours from midday on January 7 to midday on January 8, 2017—and we can tell you absolutely everything.

But here's the biggest change of all: ask us what we remember about



all the days *since* then, and we can tell you a whole lot more than we could've told you about almost every other day in all the years before it. The intense twenty-four hours we lived on that January day, as well as the things that took place leading up to it, have substantially changed how we approach each new day.

One day turned us upside down. And we've never gotten over it. We never *want* to get over it. One day changed the way we now live *every* day. And we pray our story will do the same for you.

Imagine never facing another day just hoping to get through it. Imagine staying alert all day to its vital importance, even with the onslaught of interruptions and the hypnotic hum of your routine activities. Imagine turning each spare moment into a memory-making encounter for someone you come across. Imagine seeing what's usually unseen in the people and places all around you, things that are all too easy to overlook but that become surprisingly visible when you're viewing them through the eyes of faith and hope, grace and courage.

Imagine each day being different. Imagine the dull becoming exciting. Imagine your first thoughts each morning being charged with energizing expectation. Imagine the grocery store cashier going home and telling her husband about this incredible person who said something to her in line today that touched her heart, which hadn't happened in forever.

Imagine one day holding all *that* instead of being another ordinary day.

January 8, 2017, was a really, really, really hard day. We'd hate to live it again. We'd hate to think you'd *ever* need to live it—or anything close to it—just as you'd never wish certain hard days of your own on anyone else.

But something amazing happened. Living through that difficult day

refocused our priorities. It altered some habits and attitudes that we'd gradually allowed for our own comfort and protection. It deepened us in places where we preferred living in small-talk safety. It shook up our routines, helping us see our hours as opportunities rather than obligations—as chances to be specific and intentional in our living.

NOTHING SURPRISES GOD

Jude Samuel.

Jude—meaning “praise.”

Samuel—meaning “the Lord has heard.”

We loved his name from the moment we heard it: “Praise! The Lord has heard.”

Jude Samuel Shook is our third grandchild. He's positioned right in the middle of Ben, Joanna, Lincoln, and Mary Love. He is no less or more loved, no less or more treasured, no less or more special than any of our other adorable grandkids. It's just that Jude's story is unique.

Here, let us introduce you to him.

Josh, our middle son, and his wife, Kelli, announced their first pregnancy to us during early summer. And like any parents whose child is expecting, we celebrated their news with giddy excitement for what it meant to their young family, as well as to our larger one.

In no time, of course, all the routine developments and happenings of prenatal life soon commenced—not routine to Josh and Kelli at the time but routine somehow in spite of the always-miraculous process of childbirth. Once Kelli's pregnancy reached the twenty-week mark, having had nothing but textbook-perfect medical visits until that point, the two of them went in for her scheduled checkup with the ob-gyn. Kelli had her first full-body scan to obtain a major set of ultrasound images.



The technology involved in these exams has advanced exponentially through the years. But the thrill of seeing your tiny child on the screen, visibly existing there in the womb, invokes the same level of wonder as in any past generation. Every parent can remember what that moment was like, even if the ultrasounds were too garbled and grainy to ascertain exactly what the technician was showing you. Josh and Kelli were over the moon looking forward to it.

But they were on their knees coming out of it.

Nobody—not us, not them, not even the medical staff who’d been providing high-quality care all along—had seen any signs to indicate what our son and his wife were about to face. The analysis of these twenty-week pictures indicated that Jude was missing his entire left kidney, which was bad, of course, though not fatal in itself.

But missing a kidney wasn’t the worst of his problems. The reason this unexpected update was so devastating was that his other kidney—his right kidney—was multicystic and dysplastic. Those are frightening terms that mean his one existing kidney was tumorous (multicystic) as well as enlarged (characterized by dysplasia). It wasn’t functioning and could *never* function. Once outside Kelli’s body, Jude could not survive with this extreme deficiency.

But not even this was the full extent of concern. The critical condition of his kidneys created other complications that were equally troublesome. Without healthy, functioning kidneys, the amniotic fluid stays below optimal levels. As a result, Jude wasn’t quite as comfortable and protected as he should have been. Worse, he was unable to practice breathing in the amniotic fluid. Kelli’s body would provide for him while he was in the womb, but his lungs wouldn’t be strong enough to sustain him after birth.

As compassionately as possible, the doctor shared the grim news that

Jude would not be able to breathe and would probably be stillborn. Within a matter of moments, Josh and Kelli went from their lives being great to being told their son wouldn't make it.

You can only imagine the heartbreak that followed. Or perhaps you can do more than just imagine it. Maybe you, like us, have experienced the jolt of being plunged from a sunny, expectant outlook to that crushing moment when the room spins, when faces blur. You hear people speaking words that would seem plausible only if they were being said of someone else.

It's all so incredibly disorienting. Unbelievable.

How could this be? Jude? Not well? Not fine? Not progressing according to plan? He'd been developing so effortlessly, it seemed—growing the same way other babies had before and have since. Sure, Josh and Kelli never expected pregnancy to be easy, completely comfortable, or without inconvenience. But they had every reason to expect the next twenty weeks to progress normally, toward the crib and the cadence of the rocking chair, toward the decorated nursery and the dresser filled with tiny newborn clothes.

Now everything was different? Just like that?

Yes, despite how far-fetched it might have seemed when Josh and Kelli went to sleep the night before, we were facing a life-changing tragedy. Oh, how much different tonight's bedtime would be. Tonight there wouldn't be any sleeping at all. For any of us. Our entire family gathered at Josh and Kelli's house. Sobbing. Praying. Begging for a miracle.

We were totally blindsided by the devastating news. We just never saw it coming. But fortunately, there is One who is never blindsided by anything, and His presence was with us that night. Our son Josh was the first to put into words what God was speaking to all our hearts that night when he said, "It's good to know that nothing surprises God. We just

found out today, but God has known Jude's condition all along. He's not surprised by this, and He's the one writing Jude's story. So we'll trust Him."

Maybe you've also been blindsided by devastating events in your life. Perhaps you've had the kind of gut-wrenching, knocked-to-your-knees moment when your world came crashing down all around you.

You go into work one morning and come home without a job at the end of the day. You begin planning a vacation but receive a doctor's report that leaves you wondering whether you'll still be here that far into the future. You start the day full of hope, but before the end of the day, you've discovered your spouse has been unfaithful and you're reeling from the betrayal.

Remember, no matter what has unexpectedly smashed into your life, God wasn't surprised by it. God didn't cause it, but He wasn't blindsided by it. He was grieving for you before you even knew about it. Nothing surprises God, and He's the one writing your story. And guess what? He's not finished writing!

It gave us so much comfort to know that even though we were numb from the shocking news, God wasn't and He would keep guiding us along the way. We could trust Him with the unknown.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF MIRACLE

Unable to sleep the night after the diagnosis, our oldest son, Ryan, began digging around on the internet for everything related to these multisyllable medical terms we weren't sure we'd ever heard—and certainly not in connection with anyone in our family. Somewhere in the course of his search, he hit upon something—an article containing information about an experimental program conducted at the Cincinnati Children's Hospi-

tal, which reported having limited success treating unborn children who suffered from the same or similar conditions as Jude.

Okay, well . . . what should we do? Should we call them? I mean, if there's a one-in-a-thousand—even a one-in-a-*million*—chance you can save your child or grandchild's life, you take it, right? Isn't that better than just accepting his approaching death as inevitable?

So within seventy-two hours of receiving Jude's diagnosis, Josh and Kelli were on a plane headed for Cincinnati, Ohio, where they would spend the next two months, along with various members of our family who visited or stayed with them. During that time they meticulously followed the protocols the team of doctors was using—efforts that held out a glimmer of hope that our little Jude could fight through his multitude of dreadfully critical setbacks and come out on the other side a champion.

That's what we prayed for. Incessantly. Passionately.

Yes, we knew the odds were stacked solidly against him. The doctors and nurses, who were absolutely wonderful, pulled no punches in describing just how tough this road would be, even in the best case. No one gave any of us what you'd call an optimistic prognosis, except to tell us that it had been done before, that it was not impossible. Success rates only in the single percentage points maybe, and yet . . . a pulse, a prayer.

So with only this spiderweb fragment of hope to hold on to, we prayed for a miracle, knowing all the time that we were praying huge—praying way bigger than we'd probably ever prayed for anything.

Yet in the end, things didn't happen how we wanted.

Which hasn't stopped hurting, even now.

The book you're about to read isn't the story we wish it were; it is not the story of Jude's heroic, miraculous victory despite enormous medical obstacles. We miss him every day and ache to see our son and his wife

endure the pain. We'll share a lot more with you about what happened, as well as the takeaways we've gleaned from the narrow parameters of Jude's life—his one day of life. We are *still* learning from these experiences, so much so that we wanted to bring you along as we unpack how all of us can spend the rest of our days on things that really matter.

But here's the miracle: Jude's story is a good one. It's not the one we would have written, but despite all the hard and hurt, God has made it good. God has made it right.

EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT

Not long after Jude went home to be with the Lord, our daughter, Megan, sent a group text to everyone in our family. She quoted a couple of verses from the beginning of the tiny New Testament letter ascribed to Jude, the half brother of Jesus.

Perhaps because of the name they share, we'd each found ourselves turning to that book often, searching for meaning and comfort. With just twenty-five verses, it barely occupies a full page. When we received Megan's message, the book of Jude wasn't on our minds at all, but as soon as her text came through, it was as though *our* Jude were speaking to us directly from heaven. These were among the most encouraging words of our lives spoken at the single most discouraging time: "I, Jude, am a slave to Jesus Christ . . . writing to those loved by God the Father, called and kept safe by Jesus Christ. Relax, everything's going to be all right; rest, everything's coming together; open your hearts, love is on the way!" (1:1–2, MSG).

Wow.

Every day after Jude's negative prognosis had been a battle. We'd been laser focused on doing whatever it took to get both Jude and Kelli

into the best possible shape, beseeching the Lord to intervene. It was one high-intensity day after another, after another. And then—

It just stopped. In a heartbeat. And it left us feeling as if we were still out on that racetrack, bursts of adrenaline coursing through our veins, yet the finish line had suddenly disappeared.

But the truth of those two verses just reached out and grabbed us and pulled us close. The Lord, as He often does, had come and found us in our emptiness, in our sadness. And through words He'd written long centuries before, He said to us, "Relax . . . rest . . . open your hearts."

"Everything's going to be all right."

Not "all right" as in "okay." But all right.

When everything in our world felt and looked all wrong, God was reminding us through Jude that everything would be all right.

A lot of things are not all right in our broken, decaying world.

But someday.

One day.

All that is wrong will be made all right.

For many of us, our instinctive reaction is "Things turn out all right? No—things *don't* turn out all right." Maybe they don't necessarily get worse—you might be thinking, *How could they be much worse?*—but except for time dulling the edges of the pain, maybe your life experience hasn't shown you this truth.

Sometimes the only thing harder than going through the suffering itself is trying to piece together a logical explanation for it. The hardship is real. And the answers, the dots, the clues that might yield some measure of comprehension or reveal purpose in what you're going through can feel like guesses and rationalizations at best. It doesn't matter whom you ask or how hard you try to think and pray about it, the whys just keep gnawing away.

Let us be clear: We're not trying to explain all suffering. Nor are we naively hinting that you will witness a complete resolution of your ordeal within the limited space of your lifetime and that if you don't, you're lacking in some spiritual area or harboring a pessimistic, sorry-for-yourself attitude.

Truth is, it's not all right that you've experienced intense loss or are aching with grief. It's not all right that Jude's not here. It's not all right that Josh and Kelli have been forced to endure the things they have. It's not all right when we gather as an extended family and Jude is absent. It's not all right. It's messed up. It is *not* all right.

That Jude was given only one day on this earth feels all wrong, but we know that one day God will make it all right and we will be with Jude every day for eternity.

If we're honest, this is easier to believe at certain times than at others. Yet already, in small ways and occasionally really big ways, God keeps giving us evidence that whispers to our grieving hearts, *It's going to be all right*.

NOT ONE DAY LESS

Since baby Jude went to live there, God has given us a one-day insight into heaven and eternity that we had never quite grasped.

During those frantic few hours when Josh and Kelli were working hard to secure a spot in the Cincinnati program, Josh made a statement that settled all our hearts, one that speaks to the confidence a relationship with God brings within tangible reach of all His children. Obviously, Josh and Kelli wanted as much time with Jude as possible, to make the most of every moment with him. Obviously, they wanted to do whatever they could do to make him comfortable, to give him room to grow and

develop without restriction. “But no matter what happens,” Josh said, “whether he lives a day or a hundred years, we’ll still have no fewer days to spend with him in heaven.”

That’s what eternity does for us.

Eternity brings peace. Eternity brings hope. Eternity weighs in when life outweighs us.

Our future may indeed be as full as the Bible says, but it still feels empty right now. God understands we do not possess the natural capacity to trust in eternity whenever He chooses not to give us what we want on this earth. But the future He’s promised us is *secure*. The future we struggle to bank on is *real*.

Jude *is* with the Lord. We *will* see him again. And the time we’ll have with him, despite how briefly we got to be with him here, will not be diminished even one day because of it.

The apostle Paul instructed us to “encourage one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18), these biblical truths that affirm the sure coming of eternity, because no loss, not even the loss of death, is “able to separate us from the love of God” (Romans 8:39). God, who could have allowed this sin-cursed, death-confined planet to be the last word on all our suffering, has instead given us the hope of eternity.

And if we’ll look for it, we can actually see hope for eternity wherever we are today.

LIFE LESSONS

If this experience with Jude has taught us anything, it’s that we’re still learning. We’ve got a long way to go. We are still figuring out how to internalize and articulate all these life lessons we’ve been given and apply them to our lives.



But we'll tell you this: we are changing in specific, practical ways.
And maybe you'd like to change with us.

Knowing that one day everything will be all right is comforting, but we found ourselves asking, *How am I going to make it through this day?*

That's the focus of this book. The lessons God taught us through Jude have been our lifeline for making it through one day at a time, one breath at a time—unwrapping each day as a sacred gift from God by opening our hearts to receive the love He brings every day.

We still don't understand why God chose to end Jude's life on earth so soon. We miss him. We want him in our arms. But what comforts us is this: during the one day God set aside for him to be here with us before choosing to call him home, Jude obeyed his Father's will. The Lord asked only that he be Jude Samuel. And because he did his best to fill up those lungs with all the breath his little body could muster, God worked through that thin wisp of air to bless us with a lasting prize from that day.

This realization made us wonder, On how many of our "one days" have we made even a breath of difference in the lives of others? We think of days we've wasted, when we've been selfish or just wandered through aimlessly.

It's taken a little boy doing everything he was meant to do during his one day on earth to help us see the truth that God can take one day, totally surrendered to Him, and do something through it that lasts for eternity.

The day before we headed to Cincinnati, loaded down with all our fears, hopes, and confusion, we packed a small Moleskin notebook that we called the Miracle Book. We decided to start writing down all the miracles we saw God doing through our journey into the unknown, and we're so glad we did. After Jude went to heaven, we got the book out, read

through it, and realized it was filled with life-altering lessons God had taught us along the way.

The Miracle Book is now one of our most prized possessions, and we want to share it with you. The fourteen lessons outlined in this book have changed the way we approach each and every day God gives us.

No matter where you find yourself right now—whether you have serious hurts that you want to learn how to walk through with your shoulders straight, you're stuck in a rut and eager to escape it, or you simply want to stop letting your days slip by without leaving a significant mark—we welcome you on this journey. Whatever your reason, we believe God wants to teach you something through the one-day life of one tiny, helpless, fragile boy; his courageous parents; and the people we met on this journey.

It's our prayer that these lessons from Jude will open your heart and help you learn how to boldly unwrap the gift of one day.

LESSON 1

When Tomorrow Is Too Much, *Pray Just for Today, Lord*

God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

—GENESIS 1:3–5

Millions long for immortality who don’t know what to do with themselves on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

—SUSAN ERTZ

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Isn't that passage from Genesis 1 beautiful? Both in its power and in its simplicity? Darkness and light. Evening and morning. These were the basic elements of "the first day."

They are also the basic elements of *every* day. Of *this* day: today.

A day was one of the first things God made. Before He made starfish and eagles and mountains and people, He created a day. Before even making the sun and the moon, He chose to frame the manner in which He wanted us to experience life. Right from the start, our time here on earth was to be measured in days with an ending and a beginning. Evening and morning.

This has continued and will continue for as long as the earth exists. Life is a stitching together of days. We encounter life—and we encounter God—one day at a time.

Just sit with that idea for a moment. Ponder the reality of what this pattern suggests, what a gift it really is. The structure of what we know as a day is not merely a random measurement of time. God made *this* day *this* way for a reason. He makes *all* our days this way. For a reason.

I mean, think of all the other ways He could have made them.

What if the sun could never be counted on to come up at all? What if you just never knew? It might rise in ten minutes; it might not rise for ten years. Can you imagine? How much different life would be—how much scarier and more disorienting—if each morning and evening didn't arrive as reliably as clockwork.

Every day is designed by God with precision, with purpose, with a plan, with importance.

Every day is a new treasure.

But we don't see days that way, do we? When we look at an average day, we see something else. Perhaps we see a canvas that's nowhere near big enough to hold all the things we need to cram into it before tomorrow comes. Or we see a dull, monotonous repeat of the same old tasks and routines. Or we see a basketful of worries and questions and challenges we don't want to face. Or because of regrets and the consequences of our actions, we can't really see much promise in today, having become so controlled by the past.

We don't typically see the treasure in each day. We don't recognize it as a gift. We don't start out often enough asking ourselves, *What am I going to do with this day?*

But what if we did?

What if we did?

How much different would our days become?

JUST FOR TODAY

We arrived in Cincinnati early in November, riding a wave of fresh unknowns. Swinging our feet to the floor the next morning, all we knew was that we'd followed the trail of hope to this town, to these people. But what it meant for that day exactly—and for however many more days might follow—we really had no way of gauging. All we knew to do was to get up, start walking, and find out.

We understood the gist of the process in broad terms. After a slew of initial tests, scans, and consultations, Kelli would undergo a surgical procedure. The doctors would implant an amniopore in her abdomen that would enable her to receive amniotic fluid infusions directly into her uterus. The operation involved a measure of risk, but if it was completed according to plan, doctors could supply enough amniotic fluid around Jude to decrease any discomfort he was experiencing, encouraging his growth and allowing him to “practice breathe” to strengthen his lungs. Nothing, of course, could immediately correct the problems he had with his kidney. But the more these infusions could prolong Kelli's pregnancy (her due date was still nearly twenty weeks out), the greater the chance of success.

Success in this case meant that if Kelli was able to deliver Jude and if the medical team was able to stabilize his little body after birth—which the odds were stacked against—he'd immediately be put on dialysis. (Dialysis, you probably know, is a procedure that filters the blood, performing various tasks that normal kidneys naturally do.) Then, under close monitoring, if he continued to make it past a number of milestones that indicated his body was strengthening the way it should, the ultimate goal was that by the time Jude was around two years old, Josh would donate

one of his kidneys to his son. And if all went well with *that*, Jude would be one of the few poster children for this experimental procedure.

That was the long-shot scenario we locked on to with every prayer, with every dream. And we kept walking toward it with each new day that dawned.

Morning and evening.

Morning and evening.

That's how we learned to live.

Each day took on its own meaning and sense of progress. The cliché you hear about living life one day at a time had never seemed so unavoidable, so absolutely necessary. The line we prayed more often than any other, and with more intensity than ever, was this: *Just for today, Lord . . .*

- *Just for today, Lord, give us the strength to endure whatever hard things we have to face, whether we think we can keep going or not.*
- *Just for today, Lord, provide us with the wisdom to know what to do, which questions to ask, and how to prioritize all the things we need to take care of.*
- *Just for today, Lord, help us respond kindly to people who may frustrate or irritate us.*
- *Just for today, Lord, help us not to give up. Not us, not Kelli, not Josh, and not Jude.*
- *Just for today, Lord, meet the needs You know we have.*
- *Just for today, Lord, hold us close.*

Asking Him for tomorrow seemed like asking too much. The weight of the day we were in was all we could focus on. Have you ever been there? Maybe you're there now. Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself" (Matthew 6:34). Similarly, dwelling on the challenges of yesterday felt like borrowing trouble we

couldn't afford—not if we expected to make it to the end of the day. The only way we could deal with the long road ahead of us was to break it down into manageable pieces. *Just for today, Lord.*

Just for today.

Now that our true condition was exposed, these two verses became the bookends of our days:

Every morning

I lay out the pieces of my life

on your altar

and watch for fire to descend. (Psalm 5:3, MSG)

At day's end I'm ready for sound sleep,

For you, GOD, have put my life back together. (4:8, MSG)

We began each morning with a laser-like focus: *Lord, please get us through this day.* Our awareness of our absolute inability to manage even the smallest detail of Jude's life made us rely on God for every hour, every breath. And since we were already trusting Him with the most important thing, it was easy to trust Him with everything else.

It was during this time of intense reliance on God that we realized we were finally seeing our true condition. We'd *always* needed God for absolutely everything! *All* the days of our lives so far had been stuffed with His provision, but we'd allowed ourselves to somehow take credit. Sure, we admitted God helped us—but only in a supporting role. We were a team with God. As if our Creator needed us to help Him!

There's actually a quite profound biblical precedent for living this way. Think of what you remember about the words of Jesus's model prayer—what's come to be known as the Lord's Prayer. It begins (say it



with us), “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9–10, KJV). Then comes the line that speaks so directly, yet so simply, about what we can expect from God and how He wants us to look to Him: “Give us this day our daily bread” (verse 11, KJV).

Only seven words. And two of them tell us about living in the moment with Him: “Give us *this* day our *daily* bread.”

We should’ve realized the importance of this basic truth sooner in life. The first thing we’re taught to pray, after we’ve praised our heavenly Father and aligned ourselves in faith under His will and purpose, is to ask Him specifically and expectantly for “daily bread.” But notice it’s perfectly in line with how God has created us to live from the beginning. We ask Him for this day’s bread. We lift to Him this day’s need. We walk with Him through this day’s minutes and hours. We keep ourselves tucked inside this day’s grace and provision.

How are you responding to this idea? Maybe it doesn’t feel as groundbreaking to you as it became for us as we watched our son and daughter-in-law work so hard each day at trusting and believing and enduring and staying strong. And maybe it shouldn’t be. Living with a daily-bread mentality should probably be common enough and shouldn’t strike us as being in such stark contrast to our standard way of thinking and operating.

But, boy, doesn’t it feel different? Different from our usual?

Here you are—today—living your life. You’re surely dealing with a number of things that could create anxiety. You have certain decisions to make. Maybe there’s a misunderstanding you need to untangle. You’re most likely thinking of several matters lingering somewhere in the back of your mind, whether they are coming up in a week or in a month. Perhaps they’re things you’ve been putting off, but you know you’ll even-

tually need to stop delaying and deal with them. All this stuff, just swirling around in your head.

But what if instead of dwelling on this huge landscape of next weeks and last years and childhood memories and dreams for six months from now, you yanked the curtains in hard from both sides so the new image through your viewfinder is only what is pertinent to today? Nothing you've just obscured really matters at present, except how it influences today. Except what it means for today. *Just for today, Lord.* What if you could box this stuff of life down—the full weight of everything you've been carrying—to only what would fit inside today? Would that change anything for you?

Whenever we allow our minds to be consumed by the plans we're making for later—whenever we refuse to rein in our emotions and fears of what *might* happen—we functionally stop living in today. Our bodies and brains are here, but our souls are mostly somewhere else. We've stopped occupying this daily space where God created us to live. And therefore, His daily bread that He's promised us doesn't feel like enough. We demand that He show us *all* the meals, or we assume He's fine with watching us go hungry.

God created us as daily creatures. He has assured us He will provide an abundance of daily bread. Our role is to discipline our attention and stay focused on only those things we're colliding with today. To stay in our place at the table. Where there is always enough bread.

Just for today, Lord.

A DAY'S DIFFERENCE

Before this issue emerged with Josh, Kelli, and Jude, our lives were pretty busy, just as yours is. Unbearably busy, it often seemed. We had dealt

with our fair share of difficulties, as well as tending to other people's hurts and needs in the everyday outflow of our ministry—so we thought we knew what stress was like.

But . . . no.

We didn't know.

Spending time around a children's hospital will reconfigure your perspective on that.

We didn't have to watch our grandchild endure pain each day as we noted his wearied facial expression or as his tears wet our collars after a difficult procedure. Jude was there, of course, and was constantly on our minds, but at the same time, he didn't need to be visited, consoled, and encouraged from our depleted resources. So while we definitely were struggling, we didn't face a lot of the situations we saw and heard about from other folks in the hospital.

What we learned and witnessed during that time was both inspiring and heartbreaking. Such incredible people going through such unending crises.

The first thing you notice about families enduring long-term stays at a children's hospital is the constancy of it. Having a sick child just consumes your life. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. With never a break. That would be hard enough all by itself, separate from everything else, but it's *not* isolated from everything else. Life goes on. The bills still need to be paid; the house still needs attention. And what's more—this is the part we'd somehow never realized to such an extent before—many parents have *other* children they need to make arrangements for, even as their time is being understandably monopolized by caring for their child in the hospital. And they may be far from home, as we were, having to juggle everything from a distance, with one or the other parent often traveling back and forth. You can see the stress in their eyes. You

can sense its impact on their marriages. You know for sure there is financial stress, from both the staggering medical bills and the loss of income from the parent who's stationed there away from work.

When we talk about staying positioned inside each day, we're not just waxing philosophical. We're not trying to oversimplify the putting together of misshapen parts that can be so incredibly sharp and heavy and impossible to assemble. Not only have we dealt with this reality ourselves, but we've also seen it in others. We've heard some of their war stories, shared with us in conversation.

We're certainly not suggesting your problems would all go into nice, neat little piles if you'd just learn to think a bit differently about everything. Viewing your life more in terms of its daily needs and God's daily provision will never completely smooth out those rough patches that are sure to occur. We don't want to minimize *anything* about what you're going through or downplay how truly overwhelming it can be.

All we're saying is that tomorrow is too big for us. We weren't made for it. We were made for *today*. We were made to consume *daily* bread.

And when we do this, He is able to make it more than enough . . . even on those days that seem like way, way, way too much.

Without God's moment-to-moment sustenance, we knew we'd go under. It came as a complete surprise that this realization didn't leave us feeling abandoned. In fact, we felt His protection most acutely in the hard times, just as the psalmist described:

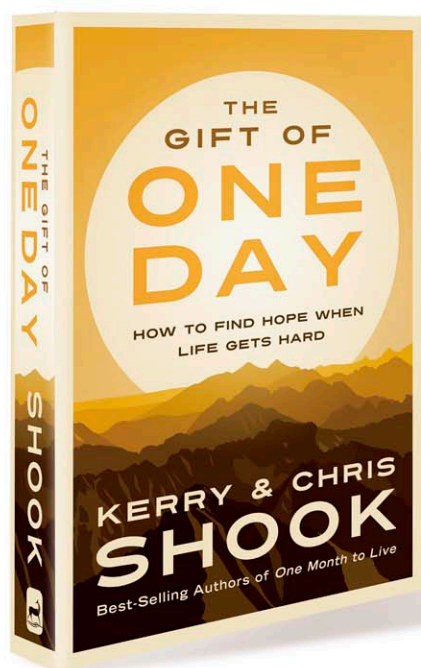
I was pushed back and about to fall,
but the LORD helped me.
The LORD is my strength and my defense;
he has become my salvation. (118:13–14)

God had been rescuing us every day of our lives, and He wasn't about to stop when things got difficult. For the first time in our lives, we realized that God was truly our everyday salvation! Scripture is clear: "Indeed, the 'right time' is now. Today is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2, NLT).

God's salvation is found in today. We'll never find His provision for today by looking for it in tomorrow. That means when tomorrow overwhelms you, all you need is God's saving strength for today. *Just for today, Lord.*

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