

# New Year's Day Baby

“Before they call I will answer;  
while they are still speaking I will hear.”

—Isaiah 65:24, NIV

It was the first day of the new year. As soon as I came into the obstetrics department where I worked, I knew by the sounds coming from one of the labor rooms that a baby was soon to be born. He arrived in time for breakfast—robust, healthy, and ready for his first meal. Midmorning the hospital chaplain, Danny Parada, came to visit my patients. After he had made his rounds he came to me and said that the mother who had delivered that morning had nothing at home but a box for her baby to sleep in. Her two- and four-year-old boys slept on the floor with blankets. “Do you know of any cribs the mother could have or borrow?” he asked.

“No,” I told him, “but give me some time and I will make some phone calls.” The first person I phoned was the director of the local community service center. I knew the center was not large enough to store any furniture, but sometimes the director was aware of things people were willing to donate. On the phone she told me she had just gotten a call about an hour before from a friend, stating that she had a daughter-in-law who wanted to give away a crib. When I phoned the daughter-in-law, she was delighted to find someone who could use the crib, and she was also willing to deliver.

The new mother was thrilled with the news I shared with her. When I asked her for her delivery address, she hesitated for a moment and then asked me if delivery could be postponed until she got home. Her husband was in jail. Fortunately, other arrangements were made for the successful delivery and setup of the crib. Later that afternoon the donor phoned me at work to ask if the new mother could use linens for the crib and a safety bumper. When I told her Yes, she asked, “Is the new baby a boy or a girl? I have some boys’ clothing I’d be happy to donate.”

“It’s a boy!” I happily informed her, “and he has two other brothers at home. They can use *any* clothing you have to share.”

In a matter of three hours God had arranged a chain of events to help a young mother with some very real needs. What a way to start out the new year! As you begin this new year with our loving and caring God, be mindful of ways and events He uses and puts in place to meet not only your needs but also the needs of others—through you.

January 2

## New Beginnings

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

—Revelation 21:5, NKJV

Last night I changed my profile picture on Facebook. Previously I had a picture I had taken of a monarch butterfly. This time I decided to showcase another of my photographs, which was of a monarch butterfly in the chrysalis stage. You can actually see the monarch in the chrysalis! This morning, when I checked Facebook, several friends had left messages about my new profile picture. Some of them were, "Wow! New beginnings!" "God's handiwork!" "Beautiful!" "That's awesome! My wish for this new year is for God to make me a new creature."

If someone were to say to you, "Close your eyes and tell me what comes to mind when I say, 'new beginnings,'" what would you say? Here's my list: September—beginning of school. A baby. Morning. Waking up. Baptism. Butterflies.

Interestingly, I chose the picture of the monarch butterfly to showcase my photography skills. Then I realized what a fitting picture it was to start the new year with. It is so fitting because everyone in the world (I think) can relate to the life cycle of the butterfly. Each butterfly starts out as an egg. Then it changes to a caterpillar. The third stage is the pupa, and the fourth stage is the butterfly. In Bermuda alone there are six species of butterflies. Although some may differ in color or eating habits, they all go through the same lifecycle. What unfolds after the caterpillar stage is an amazing, beautiful creature that only God could make.

In Revelation 21, John shares the vision God gave him of a new heaven and a new earth. Why would we need a new heaven? In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, we read, "As the earth came forth from the hand of its Maker, it was exceedingly beautiful. Its surface was diversified with mountains, hills, and plains, interspersed with noble rivers and lovely lakes; but the hills and mountains were not abrupt and rugged. . . . There were no loathsome swamps or barren deserts."\* Death, tears, and sorrow were nonexistent. These evils are now so much a part of this world that, to remove them, God must make all things new. I want to echo my friend and say, "That's awesome! My wish for this new year is for God to make me a new creature."

If He can do it for a caterpillar, He can do it for you.

Dana M. Bean

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\* Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1958), 44.

January 3

## God's Security System

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

—1 Peter 5:8

Recently, while visiting relatives in North America, we stayed in a neighborhood of beautiful homes. Expansive, well-manicured lawns, punctuated here and there by majestic trees and colorful ornamental shrubs, surrounded each home. The gardens sloped right down to the road. As a European, I was intrigued by the complete absence of any dividing hedge, wall, or fence between properties or even between the gardens and the road. Therefore, when fierce-looking, loudly barking dogs raced to the roadside to meet me during my early-morning walk, I became more than apprehensive. However, to my utter amazement and relief, they all stopped exactly at the edge of the road.

When I shared my amazement with my relatives, they told me that an invisible electric fence surrounded each property. The electric current, sent out by the invisible electric fences, reacted with a mechanism in the dogs' collars, giving the animals a low-voltage electric shock. It was this shock from their collars that brought the animals to the abrupt halt just where their property lines ended. This protective measure kept the dogs from harming people.

In God's eyes, we, His children, are far more precious than any stately home. He calls us His jewels (Malachi 3:17) and has paid an immense price to buy each one of us back from the enemy. To protect us, He has encircled us with an invisible fence. Not only does it keep us from harming those around us, but it also saves us from attacks from our spiritual enemy, the devil. Written in our hearts and invisible to others, God's law of love, His royal law—the Ten Commandments—is this protective wall around us. The commandments encourage us to treat others with the same love and compassion with which God treats us. At the same time, they restrain us from behavior that would harm others and subsequently cause much pain to us as well. For we would eventually reap a bitter harvest from the evil we are so often tempted to sow.

God did not give us His law to spoil our fun or take the pleasure out of living. He gave us His law to protect us. He longs for us to enjoy life to its fullest. May we all be able to say with King David, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

Revel Papaioannou

January 4

## God Provides

And my God shall supply all your need  
according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

—*Philippians 4:19, NKJV*

**M**y husband Dan and I were having one of those talks that few married couples enjoy having. It was the dreaded talk about finances. I was working part-time as church secretary, and my husband was working full time as a pastor. We were also sending our two children to a private church school. There just wasn't enough money to go around. The solution to our financial situation seemed to be for me to find a second part-time job. My husband and I prayed about this and trusted that God would help us.

A few weeks after our talk I was in a large department store purchasing a nightgown in the lingerie department. I felt impressed to ask the saleswoman if there were any job openings in the store. The woman said Yes—in fact, there was an opening in that very department. I applied for the job and was trained for it right away.

My new job became my mission field. I would pray before going to work that God would help me to be a good witness for Him. I met many women who had breast cancer and needed to find comfortable undergarments to wear after their surgeries. I was able to find them the items needed both in the store and in the store's online catalog. I listened to these customers' stories and told them I would pray for them.

One day a woman came to my department and asked if I had any pink camisoles. I told her I didn't have any pink ones in my department but they did have some fancy camisole-type shirts in the women's department. The woman came back to my register with a pink T-shirt to purchase. She told me she was purchasing the T-shirt for her mother. Mother's Day was a week away, so I thought the shirt was a gift for her mother. I told her I thought her mother would like the shirt because it was a pretty shade of pink. The woman then told me her mother had died, and this shirt was for her mother to wear with her suit in the casket. I immediately said, "Oh, I am so sorry—I will pray for you!" Tears came to both our eyes, and the woman said, "Thank you!"

God provided that job for me, not only so He could help my family financially, but also so He could provide encouragement for others through me. Encourage someone today.

Christa White Schiffbauer

## Beautiful on the Inside

“Only I can tell you the future  
before it even happens.  
Everything I plan will come to pass,  
for I do whatever I wish.”

—Isaiah 46:10, NLT

I believe in miracles. I really do. They happen daily all around us. Some miracles are extraordinary, and others are quiet, like the sunset or the workings of the human body. Christ performed lots of miracles when He was on this earth. He walked on water, healed the sick, turned water into wine, and even raised the dead.

I was faced with a health issue a few years ago. At first I thought it would pass, but after discussing it with my doctor, I realized the problem had to be dealt with. The first two in-office procedures failed. Painfully so, I might add. I was so frustrated! Why did I have to be the one unable to get help through a simple procedure? Procedures for which I had to pay in full, by the way. Unbelievable! I decided to ask a friend, a medical doctor, for her advice. She suggested I see another doctor for a second opinion. I did and learned that my best option for dealing with the medical problem was to have surgery—my greatest fear.

You see, as a registered nurse, I work in a hospital operating room and know too much of what can go wrong during surgery. Thinking about these things turned me into a nervous wreck! *What if something goes wrong?* I thought. *What would my three boys and husband do?*

With the prayers and support of my family I did undergo surgery. During my first follow-up appointment my doctor came into the room smiling. In her hand were pictures of what she'd seen inside my body while operating. She said, “Shelly-Ann, if those earlier failed procedures had been successful, you would not be here right now. I do not know why they failed, but I am happy they did. The problem is now solved!” I looked at her and said, “I serve a risen Savior.”

Back at home I again looked at the picture of my internal organs and thought, *I am a special creation of God. I am God's masterpiece. To be alive is miracle enough.*

Sometimes God beautifies our lives with answers in obvious ways. Other times He performs His miracles quietly. Only later do we look back and realize what He has done for us and, as in my experience, *in us*. What beautiful miracle has He done for you?

January 6

## Do You Know God?

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”

—Job 13:15, NKJV

Over the years, I have preached many sermons to my sisters. Messages I know God provided for them and for me. One of my favorites is titled “God Knows My Name; Do I Know His?” In the sermon, I show how in Psalm 139 and other Bible passages we see how intimately God knows us. Not just as a group but individually. He knows each one of us. But the question begging to be answered was, “How well do I know God?” And the answer was, “Not as well as I should.”

I put that question to you today. Do you know God? How well are you acquainted with who He is?

I ask this of myself also, for my knowledge of God grows each day, but only if I am intentionally looking to learn more about who God is. There is much information in the Bible about God. James 2:19 says, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” (NKJV). So knowing about God is not something unique to us. Anyone can find out about God by reading the Bible. But to truly *know* God we must have an intimate relationship with Him. To know His heart of love, His desire that *all* be saved, including the drug addict and the man on death row; to know He loves us no matter our past or present. Such knowledge begins in the heart of the believer. It comes from a personal experience with God.

That’s the way we need to know God. Yet we fall short of this knowledge so many times as we allow the distractions of life to block our view of God. A popular chorus written by Helen H. Lemmel says, “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”

When we turn our eyes to focus on Jesus, our knowledge of who He is increases. We see the love, experience His mercy and forgiveness, and accept the hope He gives for an eternal future.

So today, take time to turn your eyes and look at the One who loves you more than anyone who lives or ever lived. The One who gave His all, His life for you and me.

That is the experiential knowledge that allows us to know God.

Heather-Dawn Small

# The Illuminator

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

—Psalm 119:105

While out on my walk one spring evening, I noticed that most of the houses along the route had path lights. The personal taste, creativity, and structural style of the homeowners were quite evident in the design and positioning of the lights. Some lined the walkway, while others extended up the steps to the entrance door. Several were placed along the edges of flower gardens, between the plants on the side of the house, or surrounding the bottoms of trees sporting beautiful foliage.

It was clear to me that a number of the lights were functional, whereas others were merely decorative. There were those that were strategically located to reveal tripping or falling hazards. Perhaps some were even situated intentionally to deter intruders. Whatever the reasons, the many styles of walkways and path lights were unique to the landscapes and personal tastes.

As I continued my walk, I thought about those lights. I then began to notice that some of the houses had no path lights, even though they all had an outdoor light positioned above or beside the entrance door. Others, like my home, had a light over or next to the back door. I pondered the different functions of the lights. The path lights along the walkway were foot lamps that showed only where to place your next footstep. On the other hand, the lights above or next to the door illuminated the entire path so you could see.

The psalmist David presented God's Word as both a lamp and a light. Scripture is sufficient to guide us through the cares and chaos of each day. At the same time, the Word guides us through the vicissitudes of our entire lives. It allows us to see our life's journey and set our course. When we hide God's words in our hearts, it becomes our most portable Bible.

How does this "life-light" shine? Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16. He says that God-breathed Scripture teaches us doctrine and truth; it rebukes us and exposes our rebellion; it corrects our mistakes and faults; it trains us in right living. We can take it anywhere, and it cannot be taken away from us. This guiding light is accessible all the time, permeating our thoughts, and regulating our lives. What remarkable provision our Father has made for us, illuminating life's pitfalls and guiding us along life's treacherous course. Take it with you today.

January 8

## He Listens to Details

Take delight in the LORD,  
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

—Psalm 37:4, NIV

Lord, it's time for us to move again. I'm not asking for a big house, but I just want to ask You for one favor. The next place we move to . . . would it be possible to please give us an apartment or house on a street that has the name of a flower? I would really love that!"

My husband, on the other hand, was praying, "Lord, we need to move out of here. The rent here is going up like crazy. Father, You know the maximum amount we are able to pay for rent, so please help us to find the right place at that very price."

And in Jesus' name, we prayed.

During a women's meeting a week later, those present prayed for God to help our family find a new place. A couple of days later the women's ministry leader called my husband and said, "My husband and I would like to rent you our house." We checked the house out on the Internet, and oh my! It was huge! We'd seen smaller houses than this listed for much more than we'd be able to afford. Yet, to be polite, we agreed to go see the house.

Our sister from church welcomed us and started showing us through the big, beautiful house. Knowing we couldn't afford to live there (even while seeing all its benefits) felt like torture to us. After the tour we sat in the living room with the couple, and my husband asked the all-important question: how much rent were they asking for the house? Without hesitation the wife responded with the exact figure my husband had earlier prayed would be the reasonable amount for us to pay. The couple was asking not one penny more, not one penny less. God must have smiled at the expressions on our faces. "Would you like to pray about this?" asked our hostess.

"Sister," responded my husband, "we *have* been praying for this. We'll take it!" Later we learned that she too had been praying—praying that we would say Yes to their offer.

We said our goodbyes, got inside the car, drove a block away from the house that God had given us, and then stopped just to praise God! Screaming. Laughing. Crying with relief and amazement that He had provided a beautiful house at the right price—and on Magnolia Way!

Don't hesitate to tell God everything on your heart. He listens to details.

Sayuri Ruiz Rodriguez

# Living With God One Day at a Time!

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

—Psalm 23:1

**E**ven though you are a child of God, life will frustrate you. People will stand negatively in your way. You may lack adequate food, clothing, housing, and family support. You may be left to cry alone with no one to comfort you when you fail or cheer you on when you succeed. The enemy of our souls will do his best to discourage you after you have made the decision to walk with Jesus and live your life according to the Bible. I know because this has been my ongoing experience.

After I finished secondary school, an American couple promised to help with my university tuition at the University of Nanga-Eboko in Cameroon, the school they had advised me to attend. I began the nursing course in February 2011. But when the couple did not fulfill their promise, I was suddenly wondering how I was going to live, eat, and pay for my school fees. What should I do? Because of my lack of immediate funds, I was removed from class, forbidden to use and even enter the library for study, and unable to eat in the cafeteria. I was tempted to leave school and altogether abandon my hope of earning a degree. Yet where would I go? So I prayed, and determined to finish what God had enabled me to start—no matter what.

Since that personal decision to hold on to God in the face of destitution, the Almighty has shown me that all things are possible with Him. Yes, at times, I've had nothing to eat, but never for longer than a week. I've gone for more than a month without money. Yet when I have had a true need, God has always provided. Here at school my faith has grown. When I face a difficult situation, I know that *God* will solve it. When it's time to go for an internship, I call on *Him*. Whatever I need, *He* is my first and last option. That is why I am still here. I thank Him for strengthening me in times of hardship or sorrow. And He somehow puts just enough money into my school account at just the right times. Some of my tuition has come from the Women's Ministries scholarship fund.

I am learning to trust God and cultivate patience. Most of all, I am learning to listen to Him and live with Him during my fourth and final year of schooling. What a miracle! One day at a time. If you are facing troubles in your life, don't cry. Don't give up. Just persevere. God will take good care of you—one day at a time.

January 10

## The Fall

For He will give His angels charge concerning you,  
to guard you in all your ways.  
They will bear you up in their hands,  
that you do not strike your foot against a stone.

—Psalm 91:11, 12, NASB

A friend gave me a stained-glass piece for Christmas. Because my office has windows on two sides I decided to take it to work. As soon as I got to the office I pulled a chair and climbed on the credenza so I could display my new gift. It looked great up there.

I stepped down toward the chair forgetting I was wearing a long skirt. My boot caught in the skirt hem. My subsequent fall slammed my back into the filing cabinet, hitting with such force that the lock key broke in half. I slowly straightened up, praising God that I was OK. I was also grateful for my guardian angel who, I believe, helped break my fall.

That incident reminded me of another fall—Adam and Eve’s fall in the beautiful garden called Eden. The consequences of their fall were much more serious than the results of mine. Instead of trusting God’s word, Eve let the devil, in the form of a serpent, deceive her. Curiosity got the best of her. She ate the fruit and shared it with her husband, who joined her in the first sin. No guardian angel could have helped break that fall. What pain, ruin, and loss that first couple’s fall in the garden has brought upon this world in the intervening centuries!

Yet, as with the pain of my fall being broken by what I believe was the intervention of a guardian angel, God already had a plan in place to intervene on His first created children’s behalf. And on ours. You know the name of that plan: the Plan of Salvation.

The Father loves us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to pay the price. The price not only for the first fall of mankind but also for every heinous sin that every sinner has ever committed since then!

But we must be willing to accept what God and His Son have done for us and to allow His Holy Spirit to revive us, helping us recover from the Fall. His Word tells us, “Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4–6, NIV).

What redemptive intervention for our fall! Far beyond what any angel could ever do!

Sharon Long (Brown)