

GREGG MATTE

CAPTURE THE
MOMENT



365-DAY DEVOTIONAL

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PUBLISHING
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

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Printed in the United States of America

978-1-0877-5245-7

Published by B&H Publishing Group
Nashville, Tennessee

Dewey Decimal Classification: 242.2
Subject Heading: DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE / CHRISTIAN
LIFE / SPIRITUAL LIFE

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To the congregation and staff of Houston's First,
you are loved and cherished in the heart of your
pastor. It is a joy to journey with you each day as we
"Capture the Moment" together. You are a contin-
ual blessing to our family, Team Matte. Let's keep
seeking the Lord, in the quiet times alone with
Him and when we gather together as a church!

Foreword

A lot of days, I am in a rush, and don't feel like I have the time to warm-up for a workout. It seems like a waste of time. I'd rather just get on with it. But over the years, I've had unnecessary injuries and discomfort in my workouts all because I haven't taken the time to "warm-up" the muscles before doing the "real thing" with exercise.

Ever since college, I have used daily devotional books or Christian inspirational books as a "spiritual warm-up" for my daily time alone with God. They get the spiritual juices flowing so I can focus on God and what is important in life. *Capture the Moment* by Gregg Matte is a great spiritual warm-up for time alone with God through Bible study and prayer.

Here are a few reasons I think you will like it as a daily spiritual warm-up:

1. It is short. It won't take you long.
2. They include biblical verses and passages that allow God to speak to you from His Word.
3. Each one is relevant to everyday life. Whether it is dealing with anxiety about the future, discerning God's will, dreaming big, success, wisdom, marriage, prayer, ongoing temptation, love, having a healthy sex life, and many other crucial topics; every devotion speaks to life right where we live.
4. But most of all, so many of these devotionals focus on how to have healthy relationships with others and even more so, a healthy relationship with God. They help you understand what God is really like and who Jesus is. Since healthy relationships are a key factor to the fulfilled life, Gregg's insights are so helpful.

But there are a couple more huge reasons I am excited about *Capture the Moment*:

1. One is the man, Gregg Matte. He is the real deal when it comes to living the Christian life. He is authentic in what he writes. He is one of those special individuals whose spirit and character is so much like Jesus, whom he follows as his Lord. He doesn't just preach well and write well—he lives well—according to Jesus' way!
2. As just one example of that, he has designated all the royalties from this book to the compassion and relief ministry, Send Relief. It reflects his desire to build up Christ's kingdom

versus his own. It's another way for people to come to know Jesus personally.

In light of all of this, I urge those of you who are pastors to use *Capture the Moment* as a church-wide devotion for every member of your church. It can be a great unifier in keeping everyone on the same page as your church fulfills Christ's Great Commission.

So, enough about why I am excited about Gregg's book. It's time to get started. Whether it is January 1 or August 15, today is the day to begin using this "spiritual warm-up" to enrich your time alone with God through prayer and Bible study.

Bryant Wright, president of Send Relief

A New Year of Following

1 Corinthians 11:1

Happy New Year! It's a brand-new year and God has new moments for you! The calendar has turned, and now you have a brand-new 365 before you. Allow the beauty of the year to become obvious as you choose to follow Jesus each day. This year don't just tip your hat to God; tip your heart. God wants to use you as a person of impact, a leader of influence.

Everybody wants to make a difference, but to do so, we must first be a follower. Our living is based on our following. Paul told the Corinthians to follow him as he followed Christ. I don't think there is a greater example of a person who led people to be followers of Christ. Paul was someone who lived . . . by following. He followed the example of Christ and changed the world.

If you want to be a believer who lives well and has the characteristics and decision-making skills that Christ had, you have to be His follower. For this 365, read God's Word, understand Christ's teachings, "Capture the Moment" through our devotional journey, and know His heart so you can follow well to live well. The following of Jesus will impact your profession, your singlehood or marriage, your parenting, your church, and your joy. Live as a Christ-following believer here on the earth with a heart toward heaven.

What does God have planned for you this year? Ponder with anticipation. There will be highs and lows, but He will be with us every step. I'm honored to walk daily with you in these devotionals. God wants to bless us both and use us to make a difference in someone's life this year. So exciting!

Everyone has the ability to be a person of impact somewhere—in your house, your church, at work. If you're wondering this year how you can be the best mom, it is by following Christ. How can you be the best husband to your wife? By being a follower of Christ. How can you be the best employee? By being a follower of Christ. How can you be a single adult who honors God, it is by following Christ's example today. It is not about titles, money, personality, or things.

The word *leader* definitely sounds more powerful than *follower*. But true leadership is based on following. I encourage you to be a follower of Christ, just like Paul, so you can lead the way Christ desires for you. Let this new year bring a new you . . . a following-Jesus-closer-than-ever you. Lead others well by following Him even better.

January 2

Private and Powerful Praying

Matthew 6:5–8

One of the greatest aspects of being a follower of Christ is prayer. It's mind-blowing that we can talk with God! We want to deepen our lives of prayer, not just thanking God for the day or for our food. Instead, we should live as believers who call out to God in the good and the bad.

Usually, people feel they need to pray more. We all do. Jesus talked about being prayerful people. He tells us not to worry about the number of words we are using and there's no need to stand on street corners praying long, eloquent prayers for everyone to hear. Now, I know you're thinking, *Praying on street corners? That would get us ridiculed in today's society.* But that is what the Pharisees did 2,000 years ago. Jesus wants us to pray privately and individually at a time and in a place where we can connect and be intimate with the Father. In true prayer, private intimacy far outweighs public praise.

Followers of Christ choose the invisible power of God over the visible praise of man. It's not about how smart or spiritual we look when we pray in front of our friends or pastor. It is about pouring out our heart to God. Even when there's nothing to say, He knows what we're thinking. The prayers we pray today from the privacy of our own space can affect something that happens ten years from now. Do we realize God is answering prayers we might have prayed a while ago? Think seed planting, not drive-thru window. Before I was married, I was praying for my wife. Before I had kids, I was praying for my children. I love throwing prayers into the future. It builds my trust in Jesus today to know I'm going to walk in His answers for tomorrow. He meets us now and in the future. There's a power in the unseen prayer closet that is stronger than the Pharisees' prayers for personal praise.

Let's choose intimacy with God through prayer this year. Imagine looking back from December 31 saying, "I went to a deeper level of prayer this year and look at all God has done and seen me through." It's not about big words but about a big heart. Asking God to do something deep within us gives us clarity. Jesus spent a lot of time in solitude praying with the Father. He spent all night in the garden of Gethsemane praying to God.

Think about a marriage. A good marriage is not based on how good the couple is with a group of people but how they are when it's just the two of them. It's the same with God. It's not about your public life before others but your private prayer with Him.

This year . . . pray like never before. Start today by kneeling in private and call out to God from the depths of your heart for the year before you.

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9–13

In Israel, there's a church in the Mount of Olives called Pater Noster, which is Latin for Our Father. In the church, there are more than 100 plaques of the Lord's Prayer translated into various languages. Try to think of twenty languages. I bet you'll struggle to get there. I have been to Pater Noster, and I will say that it's amazing to see the Lord's Prayer translated into that many languages. It tells me the Lord's Prayer is a worldwide passion.

The Lord's Prayer meets all our needs. Isn't it incredible to think about that? Jesus was showing us through this prayer that this was the form to pray. He didn't need big words or prayers on the street. He was teaching us how to pray.

Now, for Jesus to teach the Jews how to pray was a huge deal. The Jews were people who prayed. They would spend all day praying on the Sabbath. They prayed three times a day, they prayed at their festivals, and even wore prayer shawls. And then, Jesus stepped forward and gave them the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is not just something you hang on your wall at home. It's a prayer from the heart of Jesus. It's telling God that He is holy and meets our every need, that we love Him, and we desire to be a prayerful person. We pray with the desire for God to do something great in and through us.

I encourage you to recite the Lord's Prayer today. We are so familiar with it, I encourage you to truly think about the words. Pray it slowly instead of saying it quickly. Let it seep into your heart as it comes out of your mouth, ponder as you pray.

Slowly pray from your heart, "Our Father who art in heaven . . ."

January 4

God Wants Intimacy

Matthew 6:14–15

Jesus spoke the Lord's Prayer to teach us how to pray. However, right after, He slipped in a verse that says to forgive others. He calls us to do the hardest thing we can do. It is so difficult—to forgive someone when they have wronged you. We're the ones who want to receive an apology, not give forgiveness.

Jesus is saying when you come from a place of intimacy with Him and the Father, you will realize how great He is. It means He is great enough to meet your every need and allow you to usher in forgiveness to others because you know the forgiveness He has given you.

You can turn to the Lord as your companion. Billy Graham put it like this: "Jesus prayed briefly in a crowd, a little longer with His disciples, and all night when He was alone."¹ Today, many reverse the process. We want to show off our prayers but don't make time to be alone with the Father.

Prayer with the Lord is for every moment of our lives. It's not just for times of suffering and joy, but prayers of place—the place where you meet God in genuine conversation. Remember, He knows your needs before you ask. You can really say anything you want as long as you pray with honesty and simplicity.

If you do an internet search for prayers written by children, you may learn a thing or two from them. "Dear God, I think the stapler is one of Your greatest inventions." "Dear God, in Bible times did they really talk that fancy?" "Dear God, I think about You sometimes, even when I'm not praying." Kids know they can be honest and say anything to God. That is intimacy, my friend.

God wants intimacy. He wants you to walk with Him, to know His heart deep enough to trust Him. That happens through prayer, not in a group, but individually, alone with God.

Physical Need or Spiritual Plea?

Matthew 6:16–18

As you start this year, let's take this a step further as followers of Christ. Are you inspired to take another step—one that requires application? It's going from level 101 to 201. This next step is fasting.

Fasting is moving from intimacy with God to being hungry for God. Here is the phrase I use: "No Food, Know Prayer." Fasting is not something weird or odd, or something done only in Bible times. It has nothing to do with diet and health. It's about our hearts.

There's something special about pulling back from our norm and our routines to fast, using the time we would normally spend eating to seek God. It's allowing the rumblings in our stomachs to be a hunger for Him. We turn to food for comfort and all sorts of stuff, but we've got to be able to show God we want deeper walks with Him.

Fasting is letting go of a physical need for a spiritual plea. It's hungering for something higher. Fasting is referenced more than seventy times in the Bible. When we fast, our aches for hunger become our aches for prayer.

Fasting is a sacrifice. It should be! Let me say something that seems incorrect in the Christianity of our day and age. Christianity involves sacrifice. It involves suffering at times. In this small place of sacrifice, we are telling the Lord that our hearts desire something bigger. We are saying that we want more than a hamburger; we want Him to move in our lives. You may think, *Of course we want God more than a burger*, but wait until you miss out on that burger. You'll feel the sacrifice.

Fasting is a statement that says, "We're more than physical beings; we are spiritual beings." It elevates heavenly needs over earthly needs. It's not only about removing food; it's about adding prayer. It's using your cravings and mealtime as prayer time. It's dining on true, heavenly bread. As you start the year, fast a meal or a day and call out to the Lord for His will to be done in your life this year—you won't regret it.

January 6

Everything for Life and Godliness

2 Peter 1:3–4

In 2 Peter 1:3–4, the apostle Peter tells us that God’s divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness. He said by the precious promises of God, we can share in His nature and stay out of sin.

When we know Christ, we have all we need for life and godliness. It is not through us or what we do. Knowing Jesus is what will rescue us from living a life of sin.

At times we feel like: “I don’t have the resources to do what God has called me to do in life.” And yet Jesus is our resource. He has given us everything we need in life (Rom. 8:32).

When I need courage or wisdom, Jesus is my resource. When I need help in parenting or my marriage, He is my resource. For those who are single, He is your resource for singleness. He is your heart. He is your strength for life and godliness. I love that!

We often say, “Eh, I hope I can do this.” Jesus is saying, “In My power, you’ve got this. You can do it. You can walk in a spiritually mature and godly way because I am your resource.”

All of us struggle with sin. Some of us have such sweet or persuadable personalities that we can get mowed down by peer pressure. We say yes when we should be saying no. Stand strong. God has created you with a sweetness but He can also give you power stronger than what people think.

I want you to hear from the apostle Peter and from the Word of God so you have the strength to live for God. You don’t have to sin. You don’t have to follow that path. You have *everything* you need for life and godliness. When you need strength to follow Christ—not others—Jesus is your resource. When you need peace in the storm, Jesus is your resource. When you need wisdom in decisions, Jesus is your resource. It is through knowing Him that we are equipped to live a life for Him (Phil. 3:10).

“TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS CAREFULLY SO THAT WE MAY DEVELOP WISDOM IN OUR HEARTS.”

These words from Psalm 90, prayed by Moses, reflect an eternal truth: we need God’s help to number our days, and to capture every moment, so we can live it with wisdom.

Capture the Moment is a 365-day devotional that will help you do just that.

For those who get bogged down in the mundane, distracted by the noise, and lost in the busyness, pastor and author Gregg Matte has written these daily devotions to point us back to what matters most. Begin or end each day with a short snippet of Scripture and a helpful devotional thought so you can capture each moment, rather than letting it slip away.

GREGG MATTE is the senior pastor of Houston’s First Baptist Church and the founder of Breakaway Ministries at Texas A&M University, one of the largest college Bible studies in the nation. Gregg holds a marketing degree from Texas A&M and a master’s degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the author of numerous books, including *Unstoppable Gospel* and *Difference Makers*. Gregg has been married to his wife, Kelly, since 1997, and they have a son and daughter, Greyson and Valerie.

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RELIGION / Christian Living / Devotional
978-1-0877-5245-7 \$17.99 USD



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