

# Heaven Calling



365 Day Devotional



STEPHEN VAN ZANT

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FAITH FOR TODAY

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# O Jesus, I Have Promised

O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end;  
Be Thou forever near me, my Master and my Friend;  
I shall not fear the battle if Thou are by my side,  
Nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my Guide.

O let me feel Thee near me, the world is ever near;  
I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;  
My foes are ever near me, around me and within;  
But, Jesus, draw Thou nearer and shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear Thee speaking in accents clear and still,  
Above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will;  
O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;  
O speak, and make me listen, Thou Guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, Thou has promised to all who follow Thee,  
That where Thou are in glory there shall thy servant be.  
And Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end;  
O give me grace to follow, my Master and my Friend.

John Ernest Bode, 1816–1874



# Foreword

**IN THE AUTUMN** of 1986, my mother gave me a copy of the devotional *God Calling*. Two poor women, who referred to themselves as the Two Listeners, wrote the book in the 1930s in England. At the time, I was entering my first year of college at the University of Kentucky. I was not a religious person, and my family had not been regular churchgoers. However, this devotional had a curious effect on me as its simple messages of love, joy, and peace drew me in.

Four years later, I became a Christian while in my first year of law school at the University of Louisville. I believe *God Calling* planted the seeds of faith I needed to discover the Jesus of the New Testament. In January of 2004, fourteen years after my baptism, I happen to reread the foreword to *God Calling* and noticed for the first time the reference to the book *For Sinners Only* by A. J. Russell. I soon obtained a copy for myself, and Mr. Russell's description of an assembly of Christians known as the Oxford Group intrigued me. This group tried to imitate first-century Christianity and practiced

the spiritual discipline of quiet listening. My wife and I began to practice quiet listening, or two-way prayer, in our own quiet times and found in it an added sense of joy, peace, and insight in our morning devotionals.

Some may doubt our ability to hear His voice today; others may find the whole practice of quiet listening a form of heresy. I can only speak of my own experiences, which have shown me that He is willing to deliver needed spiritual messages and practical insight to personal problems daily. This book is a compilation of my entries over the past fourteen years as recorded in twenty-three journals. These entries were never meant to be made public; it has only been recently that I felt prompted to put them together in a book formatted like *God Calling*. It is my hope that this devotional may encourage you and provide greater faith in His specific plan for your life. It is not necessary that it prompt you to try the practice of quiet listening, although I hope it will. (See afterword: “Suggestions for Quiet Listening.”)

*God Calling* may be the inspiration for this book, but this devotional is different in several respects. The amount of prayer *from* the Two Listeners in *God Calling* is limited; in *Heaven Calling*, I provide more of my

daily prayers. Often, I discovered that when I was experiencing the greatest stress, my journal entries had greater meaning. Proverbs 17:28 states, “Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongue.” Similarly, Mark Twain once said, “It is better to keep your mouth shut and appear a fool, than to open it and remove all doubt.” By publishing this book, I risk not following this advice by including my private prayers and by sharing the content of the entries themselves.

The entries included in this devotional reveal my daily personal struggle to find peace and joy. I do not claim to have experienced more problems than others have. In fact, I think the entry from July 3 is correct in stating, “Life is difficult for everyone.” The words of C. S. Lewis also ring true that “most of us hold our mental health by a thread.” In this regard, I suppose I have had my fair share of problems and personal trials through twenty-six years of marriage, raising four children, experiencing family health issues, practicing law, and suffering a business failure. I have heard that the best advice when traveling is to observe new surroundings with a sense of appreciation instead of comparison.

I think the same advice works well in considering the struggles of others.

Another area where this work differs from *God Calling* is the number of times there are promptings to repeat brief prayers or short sayings. *God Calling* contains some of these. For example, it suggests “All is well” many times as a wise refrain. The entries in this book contain a larger number of these short prayers. When compiling this devotional, the number of times I had written, “Pray today,” or “Say today” struck me. For instance, the entry for March 31 suggests that I say, “Jesus guides my way,” September 17 implores, “God bids me to rest,” October 11 encourages, “The real me rests with Jesus,” and October 13 states, “Let love prompt all I do or say.”

Many of my journal entries have a different feel to them than those in *God Calling*. I find the entries in *God Calling* to be beautifully written and pleasant to read. When I review the entries in *Heaven Calling*, I think they, too, convey the gentleness of Jesus, but many also contain a directness that differs from the entries in *God Calling*. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. However, what we need from Jesus and how we need to hear it is different

for each of us. Likewise, Paul's letters to Timothy are different in tone and content than his letter to Titus. Paul was the same, but the personalities and needs of Timothy and Titus were far different. Similarly, in Acts 2, the Jews all heard the Good News in their *own* language. I believe Jesus speaks to us in the way that is most beneficial for us to hear, though He himself never changes.

There are numerous references in *Heaven Calling* to the masculine gender. I have received suggestions that by shifting to gender-neutral wording, this book might find a wider audience. Since I never intended these entries to be anything other than private, I did not set out to make any type of patriarchal point by this language; I simply wrote as I heard. Some may say that this only shows that I am a product of my own environment. This may very well be true, but I hope the reader would understand my reluctance to change the language from how it was originally written, in part to keep this devotional as genuine as possible. Additionally, I believe that gender distinctions have value as we discover our spiritual identities as men and women of faith. For example, the consequences of Adam and Eve's fall as reflected in Genesis 3 are quite different for women than

for men. Likewise, there are entries in *Heaven Calling*, like March 12, September 24, and October 8, where I wrestle with what it means to be a man of faith.

This is a book for the humble. It is for those who recognize that they are broken and in need of a Savior who has the power to renew them day by day. I do not claim to be an expert in matters of faith. I do not have a degree from a seminary and have never been on a church's staff. I certainly do not claim to have any special insight into the Christian faith. Moreover, I have a lot to learn about godliness and imitation of our great friend. Accordingly, I offer this book as an amateur's collection of personal quiet times and in the spirit of "sharing my notes" with you. It is my great pleasure to sit with Him each morning and allow Him to change me. My prayer is that that this book may in some small way draw you closer to Him.

Stephen Van Zant  
November 14, 2017  
Crestwood, Kentucky

JANUARY 1 –

## Spiritual Success

*Lord, thank You this morning for refreshing my soul with the joy of spiritual growth. Give me a full portion of Your will to implement in my life. Let me feel the joy of helping others as You are helping me.*

**NEW BEGINNINGS BRING** renewed hope for success. All true success is spiritual. Spiritual success may mean a new lesson learned, a new hope believed in, or a troubling sin overcome. It may mean finding new strength in Me. Make it your ambition to be a channel through which I can carry out My work, first within your own life, and then in the lives of others. Your spiritual success comes from continual surrender to Me. Know that only surrender to Me brings true hope, joy, and peace; tell others that only such a life truly lives well.

In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. Luke 14:33

JANUARY 2 –

## Sweetness to Christianity

*Jesus, help me today to be strong in grace in my thoughts and actions.*

**LEARN TO VALUE** My grace like my servant Paul, who had to turn from his obsession with following the letter of the law in order to find Me. Be true to the Word but closer to Me. The Word was meant to be understood through grace-filled eyes. My grace qualifies, completes, and satisfies you. Know no religion besides a grace-first, Spirit-led set of beliefs. Let My grace, peace, and calm fill you today. There is a sweetness to Christianity that no other philosophy can provide. It is the effect of grace.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17

**JANUARY 3 –**  
**Say Thank You**

*I am sorry for the apprehension that I have allowed to control me in the last few days. Restore calm in me.*

**SAY YOUR THANK-YOUS** to Me. Break through the clouds of despondency and despair with thanksgiving. Let the light of praise change the downcast morning and brighten the day. There is much to be thankful for. See and name the sources of joy all around you. This is My will for you today.

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

JANUARY 4 –

## Relax and Trust My Protection

*Lord, you know my struggles. I feel You have largely left me alone with the day-to-day pressures of my work and finances. Be big in my life. Overcome the evil one and this sense of failure.*

**YOU FEAR WHAT** could go wrong in your life. You worry especially about finances. You seek safety and security, and I have pushed you out into deep waters. My command to you is relax and trust My protection. Feel protected and blessed. I will hold you safely from all threats—safer than the gold in Fort Knox. You stuff these worries within you in your waking hours, but I see them. Say today, “My Lord will protect me from all harm.”

He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91:1 JUB

## JANUARY 5 – Sunshine

*Jesus, shed light on my day the way only You can.*

**IS THERE ANYTHING** more beautiful than sunshine? Its rays bring clarity, life, and warmth. Imagine the earth without it: bleak, dark, and cold. The same is true for each man who lives without the light of Heaven. Let My light be in you. My light fills you with love, joy, and peace. My light makes your path clear. Brighten your day by keeping Me at the center of your being. Say to yourself, “I have Jesus’ light within me.”

Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. 1 John 2:8

## JANUARY 6 – Competence

*Thank You for all Your blessings; help me overcome my insecurities.*

**YOUR COMPETENCE SHOULD** come from God. All men have different gifts and callings, but man's fitness for each task comes from Me. This is a hard lesson for you. It is the Lord who completes you and enables you to carry on every good work. Can you see yourself as always competent to carry out any task I give you? See yourself as a capable servant for Me. I will show you the areas where you can help Me. Be an able minister, made competent by Me for the tasks I set before you. This competence comes from God the Father and Jesus, your Lord.

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." John 14:8

**JANUARY 7 –**

## Greet One Another Warmly

*Use our family as you will.*

**LET ME HAVE** full sway in your home. I love being here. Take My peace of mind when you have none of your own. Take My love for life when you have depleted your own supply. I will send others here for you to help. Greet each of them warmly. I can use you and each member of your family to encourage others.

Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.  
1 Corinthians 16:19