

# *Heart to Heart*

Devotional Thoughts for Women

January 2017

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## **Adjust Your Focus**

“*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...*” These familiar words begin the Charles Dickens' story of *A Tale of Two Cities* which takes place during the time of the French Revolution. Some would say that was a particularly dark time in the history of France, and for good reason, so how could it also be “*the best of times*”?

Have you ever seen a photograph, say for example of a bride, where she is the only thing sharply in focus? So much so that you can see the finest details of her lovely dress, but everything in the background of the picture is blurred and not clearly seen. Perhaps there is a lovely Victorian house or rustic barn behind her, but you wouldn't be able to pick out any details of it because it isn't in sharp focus – only the bride is, and that is exactly what the composer of the photograph intended. He wants all eyes on the bride. Everything else is supposed to just fade away. A camera lens is able to produce such effects because the focus is adjustable. You can emphasize certain objects in a photograph while letting other things fade into the background.

Even in the darkest times of life, there is always light, and that is what our eyes are drawn to. During a time of war and strife, how many times have we heard of people who rose to the occasion with heroic deeds or great feats of physical or personal strength? We marvel at these stories of impressive perseverance, endurance and sacrifice. When we read of early Christians or missionaries facing persecution, torture, or even death, how often have we heard of amazing faith in the face of such adversity? We stand in awe of such

faith that sings praises to God while a hungry lion is charging or a soldier stands with a razor-sharp sword in hand ready to thrust. In these cases, and many others, our mind's eye is being drawn to the good in the midst of the bad, the light in the darkness.

When a new year is upon us, we generally do two things: 1) Look back at the old year, and 2) Look ahead to the new year. Sometimes, as we look back and reflect on the old year, we may only see the negative. Maybe it was a year filled with pain, challenges, and disappointments. We inwardly sigh and hope that the new year will bring something better. But what if we were to adjust our focus and re-evaluate such a year. What if we blurred the “worst of times” and let them fade into the background while bringing the good things clearly into focus? I challenge you to think only of every good thing that God blessed you with in the past year and give thanks for it, and as the new year unfolds, try this simple exercise: Place a large jar or sealable tin in an easily accessible place. Beside it, place a basket of slips of blank paper and some pens. Each time something good occurs in your life, no matter how big or how small, write it down and place it in the jar. Continue this exercise throughout the year, then on New Year's Eve 2017, open the jar and read each and every slip of paper. You will most likely be blown away, humbled, and overwhelmed at all of the good and perfect gifts the Father of lights showered down on you throughout the year – many of which you would have probably forgotten all about if they had not been written down.

No matter what we are each facing in this new year, we can still say it is the best of times when we focus on the light of the Lord and not the darkness of this world. The words of a familiar hymn say it so well:

*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.*

~Heather Pryor

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**Ladies Bible Class – January 21<sup>st</sup>, 9:00 a.m.** Please bring your Bible and a breakfast item to share. We will be studying **Lessons 7 & 8.**

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Inscription found on a sundial: *Horas non numero nisi serenas* - “I count no hours but unclouded ones.”

*“This is the day that the Lord has made. I will be glad and rejoice in it.” ~Psalm 118:24*

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### **Search the Scriptures**

**Match the name on the left to their description on the right. Use the scriptures in the box below to help.**

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| _____ 1. shepherds | a. He asked God to show him His glory.                                     |
| _____ 2. Stephen   | b. They told Philip they wished to see Jesus.                              |
| _____ 3. Moses     | c. Jesus told him that he believed because he had seen.                    |
| _____ 4. Thomas    | d. He looked into heaven and saw the glory of God.                         |
| _____ 5. Greeks    | e. An angel stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. |

Exodus 33:17-18	John 12:20-21	John 20:29
Acts 7:55	Luke 2:8-9	

# RECIPE CORNER

*"She...provides food for her household." ~Prov. 31:15*

Nothing hits the spot like a bowl of chili on a cold day! Here is my husband's version of this wintertime favorite:

## PAUL'S CHILI

- 1 lb. pork sausage
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped fine
- 1 can mild diced tomatoes with green chiles
- 2 cans mild chili beans with sauce
- 1 (12 oz.) can tomato paste
- 1 (15 oz.) can tomato sauce
- 2 glasses of water
- 1 envelope chili seasoning

In a skillet, brown and crumble the sausage; drain. Add sausage to crock pot. In the same skillet, brown the ground beef; drain. Add ground beef to the crock pot. Add in all other ingredients and stir until well-mixed. Cover and cook on low for about six hours.

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# *Happy New Year!*

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