

Heart to Heart

Devotional Thoughts for Women

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Starting Over

“Tomorrow is always fresh with no mistakes in it.” This is a favorite quote of mine from the *Anne of Green Gables* book. Anne was a precocious, red-haired orphan with a quick temper and tongue to match. To her great chagrin, she would get into many scrapes because she struggled to keep control of her temper and her tongue. Many times she acted before she thought, then spent a lot of time in anguished reflection after the fact. Her consolation would always be the above quote – that no matter how badly she had behaved, she could always start fresh the next day and try harder to avoid the same mistakes.

Consider Peter and Judas - Two men, both in the inner circle of Jesus, who failed Him miserably at the most crucial time in his life. Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. His greed tempted and consumed him to the point he was willing to assist in the arrest of Jesus which would lead to His trial, torture, and execution. After Jesus' arrest, Peter followed just close enough to observe what was happening, but he didn't want any part of being publicly connected to Him. He vehemently denied even knowing Jesus three times, the last denial being accompanied by swearing and cursing. Both of these close friends of Jesus failed their friend, their Lord, their Savior. The difference between them came in the aftermath. Judas could not overcome his guilt, grief and shame. In his hopelessness, he took his own life, leaving a legacy of being a traitor. Peter was consumed with grief as well over his failure. When he denied Jesus for the third time, he heard the rooster crow as Jesus had predicted, and he went out and wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:75) In John's account, we read about something interesting that occurred

between the rooster crowing and Peter weeping. John 22:61 tells us that after the rooster crowed, *the Lord turned and looked at Peter*. What must have Peter seen in that look? Was it frustration and disgust because Peter couldn't keep his mouth shut? Was it wrath over a friend's betrayal being held back by supreme control? I think not. Was Jesus disappointed over Peter's failure? Undoubtedly. But Jesus also loved Peter, and Peter saw that in the eyes of Jesus. Peter was cut to the quick in his heart and wept, but he didn't stay steeped in his defeat. He went on to become a faithful preacher and elder in the Lord's church. He penned two books of the New Testament which still give us teaching and encouragement today. His legacy is the beauty of grace and forgiveness, ironically, from the same mouth that had asked the Lord how many times one should forgive.

Throughout the pages of the Bible, we see imperfect people trying to serve a perfect God. Each of them had failures in their lives, just as we do, but failures do not have to define us. Because we also see in the scriptures that the perfect God we're all trying to serve is a God of second chances...and third, and fourth, and fifth...

Is it too late to start over? When you feel like you've failed in your relationships, when you feel as if all you do is disappoint others, when you're tempted to feel that is too late to change, when you feel like you have let the Lord down so many times in so many ways and wonder "What must God think of me?" Here is exactly what God thinks of you...

For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:21-23)

The Lord your God is in your midst, the Mighty One will save; He

will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

But God shows His love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

We need not be consumed with focusing on our past failures but instead should confidently focus on our future. God gives us steadfast love, unending mercy, and hope each day to walk in His ways with His guidance and by His strength. We don't have to wait for a new year. Each new day the Lord gives us is always fresh, with no mistakes in it. It's never too late to start over. ~Heather Pryor

Ladies Bible Class & Breakfast – Mark your calendars for **January 20th**. We will continue our study of the book of Hebrews. (Book Lesson #4) Start the new year by reading that entire book of the Bible, if you haven't already.

*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.
~Philippians 4:13*

**Answers to last month's quiz
“Contentment”**

1. *“Now godliness with contentment is great gain.” I Timothy 6:6*
2. *“Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4*
3. *“Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” Hebrews 13:5*
4. *“And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses.’” Luke 12:15*

RECIPE CORNER

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

There's nothing like a bowl of hot, hearty soup for comfort on a cold day!

CREAMY TORTELLINI SOUP

- 1 lb. ground pork sausage
- 1 sweet onion, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 cup carrots, chopped
- 1 T. minced garlic
- 1 T. Italian seasoning
- 2 tsp. chicken bouillon powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 4 cups low sodium chicken broth
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- ¼ cup water
- 4 cups half-n-half
- 1 (12 oz.) package of cheese tortellini
- 5 cups fresh spinach

In a skillet, brown the sausage and drain. In a large crock-pot, place the sausage, onion, carrots, celery, garlic, Italian seasoning, chicken bouillon powder, salt and chicken broth. Cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 7 hours. In a mixing bowl, dissolve the corn starch in water, then add in half-n-half. Stir until combined, then pour into the crock-pot. Add in the tortellini and stir well. Cover and continue to cook on high for 45 minutes or until the soup has thickened and the pasta is soft. Add in the spinach, pressing the leaves down to submerge and stir until leaves are wilted. Serve as is or add a little milk to thin if the consistency is too thick.