

LIVING IN THE BLESSING

A 365-DAY DEVOTIONAL

CHARLES "CHIC" SHAVER



THE FOUNDRY
PUBLISHING®

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The Foundry Publishing®

PO Box 419527

Kansas City, MO 64141

thefoundrypublishing.com

978-0-8341-4084-4

Printed in the

United States of America

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Interior designer: Sharon Page

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Shaver, Charles, 1935- author.

Title: Living in the blessing : a 365-day devotional / Charles “Chic” Shaver.

Description: Kansas, MO : The Foundry Publishing, 2022. | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary:

“Living in the Blessing is a 365-day devotional book inspired by the faith journey of Dr. Charles “Chic” Shaver, who has traveled the world winning people to Jesus Christ. The devotions are ordered to move readers from the basic tenets of the Christian life to the reflections of a mature and seasoned faith”— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021038156 (print) | LCCN 2021038157 (ebook) | ISBN 9780834140844 |

ISBN 9780834140851 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Devotional calendars.

Classification: LCC BV4811 .S3763 2022 (print) | LCC BV4811 (ebook) | DDC 242/.2—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021038156>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021038157>

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Introduction



As I was growing up, though I was raised in a Protestant church, God was never real to me. While I was a pre-law student at Dartmouth College, I crossed paths with Peter, a student body leader who had dropped out of school because of alcohol but had now returned. Right after a chapel service, Peter shook my hand and said, “Chic, I’m different than I used to be because I’ve found the Lord.”

Peter’s words impacted me. I had never heard anyone talk that way—God was real to him. A few weeks later, Peter came to my dormitory and shared in detail how he had met and received Christ. He invited me to his church. In a Sunday night service on November 20, 1955, Christ entered my heart and life. I knew I was forgiven, and God became real to me and present in me. I knew exceeding joy.

Over the next few months, I grew spiritually. The Bible came to life, and I experienced a close connection to God in prayer. I regularly shared my faith with others, never missed a church service, and experienced profound changes in my daily life.

About sixth months into this new life, I began to notice ugly tempers arising from the basement of my soul—resentment, jealousy, pride, a critical spirit, and a lack of spiritual power in my attempts to influence others. My willpower was not enough to resolve these problems.

In the midst of my growing concern, I began to hear and read promises of a deeper spiritual life—a life of victory. This deeper life was referred to by terms such as: “sanctified through and through;” “filled with the Holy Spirit;” “the rest of faith;” “to be crucified with Christ;” “holiness;” “life more abundantly.” I began to seek God for his answer.

On September 2, 1956, God dramatically answered my prayers for this new life with a fiery cleansing of my heart. I died to the old Chic Shaver, and God’s Holy Spirit filled and sanctified me through and through. Immediately, my whole Christian life moved to a new, higher level.

I had many lessons to learn. Beyond the moment of being filled with the Spirit, there lay a whole life of living and walking in the Spirit. Galatians 5:25

became my key verse: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

By this time, I had received a call to ministry, and I began to preach and teach this life to others. Over time, I discovered that many Christians were confused or uncertain about this deeper life. As I came to the latter part of my life and ministry, a strong conviction grew within me to write a daily devotional book about this life of holiness in language that would be understandable to ordinary people. I’ve included several reflections written by my daughters, Rachel and Miriam, and my wife, Nancy.

You now hold that book in your hands. A scripture and a truth flows from each day. I have tried to show how these truths work in everyday life. In doing so, I have drawn from other books and writers; testimonies of Christians from the past; interviews with present-day Christians; and my own life experience.

You may use this devotional book along with your personal Bible reading; you may even keep a journal of your thoughts, insights, and prayers as you go. You may use this book according to day-by-day calendar dates. It may be that you are a newer Christian and have started your life with Christ in the middle of the calendar year. You will note an alternate system, which is simply a number system of 1 to 365. You can start at 1 even in the middle of the year. Perhaps you have been in a Bible study with a friend in your new faith. Some of you may have been going through *Basic Bible Studies for New and Growing Christians*. These devotionals will correspond with and support what you have been learning.

So let us adventure together, “that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19). Don’t be scared off by such a tall order; the next verses from Ephesians 3 say, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory” (vv. 20–21).

Between ages thirty-three and fifty-eight, my son, Paul, had five major cancer surgeries, the most severe of which involved the removal of his voice box. Still, he is remarkably joyous and happy in life. Many people have asked him, “How come?”

With his new, raspy voice Paul replies, “I was living under the blessing before cancer, I was under the blessing after they removed my voice box, and I’m living under the blessing today.” For this reason, when I was concerned about what to call this book, Paul suggested *Living in the Blessing*.

Many early Holiness preachers called sanctification “the second blessing.” The sanctification song “I Surrender All” includes the following verse:

*All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to thee;
Fill me with thy love and power,
Let thy blessing fall on me.*¹

Some believe that Paul's words in Romans 15:29—"I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ"—describe his own sanctified, Spirit-filled life. Whatever the case, we are eager to see everyone experience Spirit-filled entire sanctification. When we "keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25) on a daily basis, we can truly say, "We are living in the blessing!"

These devotionals are filled with the stories of real people. In some cases I have changed names to protect privacy, but the stories are true.

This book includes a number of devotionals written by others; in each of these cases, the author's name is listed. Additionally, for years, my wife, Nancy, and I have written devotionals for various publications. With permission, we have included a number of those devotionals within this book.

1. Judson W. Van DeVenter (words), Winfield S. Weeden (music), 1896, "I Surrender All," *Sing to the Lord: Hymnal* (Kansas City, MO: Lillenas Publishing Company, 1993), #486.

Into Your Future



The apostle Paul took his ministry deeply to heart. He said, “[God] gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, *sanctified by the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 15:16). In the same chapter he said, “I know that when I come to you, I will come in the *full measure of the blessing of Christ*” (v. 29).

In the Psalms, David asks, “Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will *receive blessing from the LORD* and vindication from God their Savior” (Psalm 24:3–5).

To the Ephesians, Paul rejoiced, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with *every spiritual blessing in Christ*” (1:3).

To each one who reads this book, may you live in its lessons and continue *living in the blessing*.

He Is Greater Than . . .



*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them,
because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

1 John 4:4

An amazing thing happened to you when you came to Jesus Christ. Revelation 3:20 contains these words: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

We understand that when a person opens the door of their heart to Christ, Christ enters. He says he will eat with that person, which is his way of expressing deep fellowship. Because of these truths, you may honestly say, “Christ lives in me.”

Prior to today’s scripture in 1 John 4:4, John warns his readers about evil spirits and false prophets in the world. Then John assures all true Christians that the *Christ living in them is greater* than any evil force in the world. By his presence and power, we may be victorious over any evil.

Think of all the benefits that are now part of your life because Christ lives in you:

- All your sins have been *forgiven*. “I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name” (1 John 2:12).
- You are now *alive* spiritually. “But 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” (Ephesians 2:4–5).
- We can now be *comforted* in every hard place in life. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).
- You are now under God’s *keeping* power. “He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:8).
- God will carry you and your new life to *completion*. “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

Peter's life was filled with alcohol and immorality. In today's terms, he was spending a thousand dollars a month on alcohol. It got so bad that he resigned his position on the college varsity soccer team and resigned as the president of his fraternity. He dropped out of college. He began living up and down the east coast of the United States. He slept in the back of his car and got in trouble with the police in six different states. His life became a disaster.

Peter crossed paths with some Christians whose lives were entirely different from his. One of these Christians told him that Jesus was the difference. Peter thought, *Maybe that's what I need.*

He began searching. One Sunday, as he listened to a sermon, his sins flashed in front of him, and God became real to him. Peter left the church as soon as possible and drove to a quiet spot in the country. He got on his knees and confessed his sins. Later, when describing that moment, Peter would say, "God changed me." He admitted it sounded strange but said, "I crawled up on the car seats and went to sleep—it was the first peaceful sleep I'd had since I was four years old." Peter was delivered.

Peter grew spiritually and began telling others what Jesus had done. He was soon readmitted to the college he had left. In the years that followed, he lived a happy, joyous Christian life and became a man of prayer and a teacher of the Bible.

Peter was the man who brought me to Christ.

All the benefits of being a Christian listed above became true in Peter's life; they can be true in your life too. Christ in you is greater than any evil force in the world. You can overcome.



JANUARY 2

2

New Year, New Start



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:

The old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17

Every January, many people make New Year's resolutions. These resolutions are the expressed hope of replacing old, negative things with new, positive things. Often, people are unsuccessful in keeping their pledges.

God's way of making a new start is helping you have a personal relationship with Christ. Being "in Christ," as the verse puts it, results in a new way, a new life, a new creation.

Spontaneous testimonies after a week of revival services at a Michigan church reveal just how new Christ can make a person. Here are a few of those testimonies:

- A middle-aged mother found new light-heartedness: "I got instant heart surgery—God removed my bitterness."
- An usher received: cleansing from "a critical spirit."
- Another mother said: "The Spirit gave me peace and power."
- A high school student expressed thanks to be "back on track."
- A grandmother said: "It's not about me; it's about Jesus."
- A school counselor testified: "One word comes to mind—surrender."
- A skilled machinist was struck by Scripture's promise of "no condemnation!"
- Another congregant recalled the ongoing source of spiritual power: "I forgot how simple we really are . . . and how much I needed to get back into his presence."

What new thing has Christ done for you in the past year? What new thing will you ask Christ to do for you this year?



JANUARY 3

3

Don't Stop God's Chosen



*Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth,
spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" But Moses replied,
"Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were
prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"*

Numbers 11:28–29

Is it not good that our heavenly Father is in control? I say let us rejoice and give thanks wherever, whenever, and however God chooses to work. Let us give, encourage, support, cheer, and be there for one another as we go about our Father's business.

Let no one rain on our parades. Let no one say our dreams can't come true. Let no one drop their negativity onto our visions from God, because

he chooses the most unlikely, he uses those who are available, he selects the cream of the crop, he convicts those I don't think are ready, he calls those who are already too busy. He convinces me that "I can" in his strength, he scares me out of my comfort zone because he cares so much, and he always gives me another chance.

So, let's keep on when we're struggling. Let's keep on when we can't see clearly. Let's keep on when doubts arise and fears dismay. Let's keep on until we get home—because we have been chosen.

Nancy Shaver²



JANUARY 4

4

Is There a God?



*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim
the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.*

Psalm 19:1–2

An atheist says there is no God. An agnostic doubts and says, "I'm not sure if there is a God." I was agnostic as a young adult, though I had been raised with a church background.

In college, I was troubled. I thought, *If there is a God, I'd better get this settled.* I felt I was a very logical person and determined to think it through. I eventually established six basic ideas:

1. I possess a highly accurate and perfectly functioning watch. As it is hard to believe there is a watch without a watchmaker behind it, so it is hard to believe there is a perfectly functioning world without a world-maker behind it.
2. If this whole world could be destroyed by atomic power in one year (as my chemistry professor taught), then ultimately life doesn't make much sense unless there is a God and an afterlife.
3. If this is true and there is a God, the most important thing in the world would be to get to know him.

2. Previously published in *Come Ye Apart* September-October-November 1998 (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House), 91. Used by permission. (This publication became *Reflecting God*.)

4. If God isn't real to me (and he wasn't), there must be a barrier between us. Chances are the barrier is caused by my neglect of him or my sin against him.
5. If he is the offended party and there is a barrier between us, then he has the right to tell me how to cross the barrier and come to him.
6. That is the very thing he did in sending Jesus Christ into this world—he is the bridge over the barrier to God.

Paul highlights this final truth so clearly when he writes, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). And moreover, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (v. 21).

From these conclusions, I stepped out into a search for God. And within months, by God’s kindness to me, I found him. Where are you? Have you stepped out in that search yet?



JANUARY 5

5

Conversion—What’s Next?



*But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles.
He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and
that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus
he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.*

Acts 9:27

*Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when
he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year
Barnabas and Saul met with the church.*

Acts 11:25–26

Conversion is also called being “born again” (John 3:3). It is compared to physical birth. Imagine if, after you were born, all your parents did was talk about the moment you were born. They never held you, bathed you, fed you, or cared for you. What would your condition be after three weeks? You would get sick and die.

So in the spiritual life, after you have been converted—or born again—you must be nurtured, spiritually fed, guided. Barnabas, who is also called “son of encouragement,” is one of the best disciples, or follow-up workers, in

the Bible. He is the one who reached out to Saul (later Paul), made a bridge that brought him into the life of the church, and repeatedly worked with him until Saul became a great spiritual leader. Together, Barnabas and Saul served in Antioch (Acts 11:26) and were sent by the whole church on a missionary journey (13:2–3).

The same pattern is happening today. Dave, a young adult, was new in the city. When he saw a teen church car wash, he stopped. The teens who washed his car were so friendly that he decided to visit their church on Sunday. After his visit, a pastor phoned him and asked if they could stop by and visit. Dave gladly agreed.

The pastor brought with him a seminary student named Dan, whom he had been training in pastoral skills. During a warm visit at Dave's apartment, they discovered that Dan had accepted Christ in college and was now in the city for an engineering job. The pastor suggested Dave begin *Basic Bible Studies for New and Growing Christians*, and Dan agreed to meet with Dave weekly to review his studies. Dave grew spiritually through Dan's love and guidance and later joined the church by profession of faith. He eventually married Linda, a godly young woman he met through a church activity.

Dan finished seminary and began his first pastorate. David and Linda moved to a new state, where they got fully involved in their local church. David became the church treasurer and eventually published a book of considerable spiritual power.

Barnabas and Saul. David and Dan. The pattern is the same: after conversion come growth, strength, and service because of faithful discipleship. Where do you fit in this story?



JANUARY 6

6

Johnny and the Penny Jar



Repent, then, and turn to God.

Acts 3:19

To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Acts 26:18

His dad regularly came home and dumped all his pocket change, from quarters to pennies, into the “penny jar.” It was a big jar with a fairly small opening. This money was always reserved for a special family project. The family rule was that no one was to get into the penny jar until Dad felt it was time for the family project.

One day, Mom and Dad left the house for a short time to pick up a surprise gift for Johnny. They left him at home, trusting him to be on his best behavior.

As soon as they left, Johnny decided he could get some money out of the jar, buy candy at the store next door, eat it, and make sure the jar was back in place before his parents returned—no one would be the wiser. He could barely get his hand through the opening at the top of the jar, but he jammed his hand deep into the stash of coins and got his fistful. But there was a problem—his fistful of coins was too big to come up through the opening of the jar. Just then, he heard the car door slam, and he realized his parents would enter the house in moments.

In his childish mind, he thought, “I can hold onto the precious coins with my hand trapped in the jar, or I can let go of all the coins and make my hand small enough to pull out of the jar. I can have my freedom, or I can keep grasping the coins and be trapped and caught.”

Johnny chose freedom, let go of the coins, and put the jar back in place. Mom and Dad were excited as they came in and placed the surprise gift in his hands. Because he’d let go of the coins, his hands were now completely free to receive the gift.

Repentance is letting go of our sins. Salvation is receiving the gift of forgiveness of sins. You can’t keep holding onto your sin and still receive God’s forgiveness. Turn from sin and turn to God so that you may receive.



JANUARY 7

7

No Condemnation



Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

Two sins when I was six, four sins when I was eight, eight sins when I was ten . . . and the closer I got to the present, the more sins and selfishness I saw. I felt guilty, condemned, and sorry. Hold that scene for a few moments.

Why do we feel condemned? Some of us feel condemned because we confuse sins and mistakes. To sin is to break a known law of God. A mistake may fall short of God's perfect will, but because it is done in ignorance, or with good motives, it is a mistake. Even James recognizes this when he writes, "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them" (James 4:17). You must *know* about it for it to be sin. If you lump sins and mistakes together, you will condemn yourself needlessly for mistakes.

Some feel condemned because they have low self-image. Their thoughts about themselves, perhaps stemming from childhood, are, "I'm not worth very much," or "I'm not very talented." But that is not what God thinks about them—God values them so much that he actually gave his one and only Son to secure their forgiveness and salvation: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God teaches that each Christian has at least one gift, but because our God-given gifts are different, we are different from each other. Even Jesus taught, "Love your neighbor as *yourself*" (Matthew 19:19).

But the main reason people feel condemned is not because they confuse sins and mistakes; not because of low self-image—but because they have been sinning. They are guilty; they feel condemned; they are condemned.

For years, I thought I would have to wait until death and the final judgment—then, and only then, would I know if God accepted me. But that is not what the Word teaches: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." It says *now*—there is no condemnation here and now. You can *know now* that you are not condemned, that your sins are forgiven, and that you are right with God.

Do you not realize "that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1). We are no longer condemned. This reality is for only one group of people. See today's scripture again: "Now no condemnation for those *who are in Christ Jesus*."

That night, I reviewed my sins from age six, told God I was sorry for disobeying and neglecting him, and that, with his help, I was turning from my sins. I then accepted Jesus Christ and received him into my heart and life as my Savior and Lord. Immediately, I sensed total forgiveness from God—I was

no longer condemned. There is now no condemnation for anyone who comes to this place—they are “in Christ Jesus.”



JANUARY 8

8

To the One Who Is Victorious



To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Revelation 3:21

The overcomers are celebrated in the book of Revelation. But to hear some Christians talk today, the default pattern for the Christian life seems to be the defeated.

Note how strongly victory is stressed in Christ’s letters to the seven churches in Revelation:

- “To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (2:7).
- “The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death” (v. 11).
- “To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it” (v. 17).
- “To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations” (v. 26).
- “The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels” (3:5).
- “The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name” (v. 12).
- “To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne” (v. 21).

Overcoming, or “victory,” is defined in Revelation 12 as victory over “the accuser of our brothers and sisters” (v. 10), “the devil” (v. 12): “They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (v. 11). There are victors today, overcoming sin and the devil by the blood and testimony. For example, let me tell you about Chuck.

A friend urged me to call on Chuck at the county jail—he said Chuck had recently accepted Christ. When Chuck discovered I was a minister, he greeted me warmly and told me his story: He’d been involved in drugs, committed robbery to buy drugs, and dramatically accepted Christ as Savior and Lord. Instantly, he was delivered from his desire for drugs. He went to the police, reported his crimes, and was now in jail. He was radiant in his faith. He started *Basic Bible Studies for New and Growing Christians*, and we agreed to have a weekly discipleship meeting to review his studies.

During our third meeting, Chuck was troubled. He told me his old desire for drugs was coming back. I reminded him of 1 Corinthians 10:13, a verse he had previously memorized: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

“Chuck,” I said, “God won’t let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. He knows that with his help, you can overcome it. I had sins in my life, and they controlled me; I didn’t control them. But when Christ came into my life, he gave me power I never had before. Not once have I returned to those sins. He can do it for you!”

“Yeah!” Chuck said. “I can make it!” And Chuck went on from there in victory. He completed each week’s Bible study successfully. He led several other prisoners to Christ. He was filled with joy and devotion. He never went back to drugs.

Finally, Chuck was released from jail. The judge required him to live under the roof and influence of his family’s Baptist minister. The last time I talked to him on the phone, I asked, “Chuck, how are you doing?”

He answered, “I’m doing great. I’m planning to go to Bible school. I think God has called me into ministry.”³

“Yeah! I can make it!” An overcomer!



3. Reported in *The Good News: The Chic Shaver Center for Evangelism Newsletter* (September 2012).