

From *Today's Thoughts...A 90-day devotional with thoughts from Genesis – Deuteronomy*  
by Crystal L. Ratcliff

## INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

Hey there! I'm so thankful that you've decided to join me for some daily devotional thoughts. I thought I'd take some time here at the beginning to explain where this idea originated and how we ended up here with this little devotional book.

Many years ago, the LORD got a hold of my heart and impressed on me the importance of studying my Bible. Studying God's Word changed my life so drastically that it ignited a passion for studying and the desire to share that with other Christian women. Up until now, the resources you will find from me are Bible studies and Bible study guides.

In the beginning, I did not devote daily time to *reading* God's Word—only digging deep and studying daily. In fact, I truly had a somewhat negative attitude about simply *reading* the Bible. You see, over the years I had witnessed many Christians who read their Bibles faithfully, yet never seemed to let it affect them and their behavior. This is where we might even use the word *hypocrites*. You probably know what I'm talking about. A person who Jesus would describe as a whited sepulchre in Matthew 23:27 where He says, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

I would even venture to say that I saw the same thing from those who would faithfully read a devotional book like this. Perhaps in my pride, I thought reading the Bible or spending only 5-10 minutes considering a short devotional was simply not enough. It didn't seem to me that these people were allowing reading the Bible and considering devotional thoughts to truly convict their hearts, affect their lives, and change them. It seemed to be just something they did. And *that* was exactly what I wanted to avoid.

I had been going through the motions of Christianity long enough! Through my study of God's Word, my eyes were opened to a different kind of relationship with the LORD. I developed a personal walk with Him filled with joy and peace that had evaded me for so long. After experiencing that, I had no interest in continuing a "spiritual practice" just to do it.

Of course, looking back, I know my perception of those Christians could have been very wrong, and it wasn't my place to judge them and their walk with the LORD. If I've learned anything over the last several years of writing Bible studies and speaking at women's events, it is that we all grow spiritually at our own rate and in our own time.

So how did we get here?

Leading up to 2020, the LORD began stirring on my heart a word of the year: *invest*. He pressed me, prodded me, and convicted me to get out of my comfort zone and invest more in others. Invest more time in His Word. And invest more time in prayer.

During that time, there were a few men who had preached at my church and challenged us to read through the Bible four times in a year. At first, I completely dismissed this because of my previous bias toward reading the Bible and feeling as if it were impossible for me. I had a full-time teaching job at the time, as well as a part-time coaching job, all while running my inspirational stationery business and finishing up my latest Bible study.

As you can probably guess, I suddenly had a lot more time on my hands in the spring of 2020. I started to invest more time in God's Word by continuing my study routines and adding reading through specific books of the Bible. As the year progressed, the LORD prompted me to take the challenge of reading the Bible four times in a year (spoiler alert: I failed, *kind of*;:-)). Toward the end of August, I sat down with my Bible and divided the pages by 365 and determined that I would need to read about 20 pages a day to meet my goal. I realized that I would spend time reading 20 pages a day of another book. Why not God's Word? I also determined to avoid what I feared could become "meaningless reading" by summing up what I read each day in one simple thought. This became "Today's thoughts..." on my social media stories and the inspiration for this devotional book.

As I began working toward my goal in September, I found that reading through the Bible that quickly was amazing! I didn't get stuck in "difficult" passages that previously would have derailed me. I began to connect things in Scripture that I had never connected before. It was hard at first NOT to stop and study. I kept my study time and my reading time separate. I also managed to do this while returning to work that fall. If I wasn't able to finish my reading before work, I would leave my Bible open and waiting for me so that I would be more likely to return to it when I got home.

I finished reading through that first time on December 23, 2020. I enjoyed it so much I started over the very next day. Since then, I have averaged three times a year, so a bit short of my intention when I started, but meeting the larger goal of investing more time in God's Word.

"Today's thoughts..." continued in my social media stories for about five years before I felt the LORD wanting me to limit my social media time. I still have thoughts and write them in the margins of my Bible as I read, but I am no longer sharing them. When I made that decision, many ladies let me know they would miss the posts and encouraged me to put them in a devotional book. I began praying about that and sometime later, here we are.

Thanks for joining me for this first volume of "today's thoughts." My prayer is that these thoughts will encourage and challenge you, but also that they would spark a desire in you to invest more time in God's Word and in prayer.

In Christ,  
Crystal L. Ratcliff

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