



He  
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to You

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## *How to Use This Book*

**T**he sisters and I have long talked about wanting to find a simple way to share some of what's been passed on to us with young women, to pass on some of what we know and have learned and hopefully have lived: basic principles of the interior life and how to live them in daily life. As religious sisters, we have the incredible blessing and benefit of something called spiritual formation, where the Church basically opens up her treasure trove of wisdom and shares it with us, over the course of the several years of our initial training. We not only get grounded in theology and philosophy, but also in how to apply it all to our lives in order to grow in God's grace and become the women of God He is calling each of us to be. These common treasures are applicable to every state of life.

What better way to share than through short Scriptures, reflections, suggestions, and prayers? Each day begins with Jesus speaking directly to your heart. Words that console, even as they challenge. Each month has a different theme and although the progression flows from January on (beginning with God's Love), feel free to begin anywhere.

The "To do" section is for those who prefer some practical activity (the Marthas!), while the "To journal" section is for those who prefer to contemplate and write (the Marys!). But of course, we're all called to be *Martha and Mary*, so try switching it up often!

We are very grateful to our friends, the sisters from other congregations who contributed to this book.

Many of the books and other media recommended in this book are available at your nearest Pauline Books & Media Center (see addresses at back of book) or [www.pauline.org](http://www.pauline.org).

Each of you are so beautiful to Him! May you always open your heart like Mary to let the Word Himself love you and become incarnate in you.

SR. HELENA RAPHAEL, FSP

# January 1

*Do you have any idea how much I love you? I hope you have heard throughout your life, "God loves you." Do you really believe it? If you don't, talk to Me about what makes it hard to believe.*

## *God's word*

"For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made . . ." (Wisdom 11:24 NRSV).

## *Words of wisdom*

Ground yourself in God's unconditional love. This is the foundation of your life. A vocation may be difficult to discern and may depend on many different things, but God's love is constant. Even if it takes a whole lifetime to fully realize how much God loves you, what could be more worth pursuing?

## *To do*

Every day when you wake up, let your first words be, "I love you, Lord." Listen to Him answer, "I love you!" Sometimes, let Him say it first.

## *To journal*

What is your earliest experience of God's love?

## *Prayer*

Dear Jesus, I believe in Your love for me because You are God who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

# January 2

*Do you worry over everything—afraid to make a mistake, afraid you might be committing a sin? Do you think your sins are greater than My love? But that would make you greater than Me! That would make sin bigger than Me! (Can you see Me smiling?)*

## *God's word*

“We love, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

## *Words of wisdom*

“God is not looking for rigid perfection. We are not machines; we are human beings. Human beings are sinners. We must humbly accept our human condition. Saints are sinners who never gave up trying to be better. Every time you’re tempted to doubt God’s mercy and forgiveness, say, ‘Jesus, I trust in you.’ (Sister Susan Miriam Wolf, FSP, [www.daughtersofstpaul.org](http://www.daughtersofstpaul.org))

## *To do*

Whenever you feel yourself concentrating on your sins in a morbid way, take your mind off yourself and do a good deed for someone else.

## *To journal*

Write a litany of trust: “I trust in Your love, Jesus, because. . . .” Think of ten reasons.

## *Prayer*

Dear Jesus, even if “our hearts condemn us,” Your love is greater than our hearts (cf. 1 John 3:20).

# January 3

Do you easily excuse yourself with, “It’s really not that bad,” “You’re only young once!” “I’m basically a good person,” “I’m not hurting anyone”? If this sounds like you, ask Me for the gift of a more sensitive conscience, as well as repentance, awe, wonder, gratitude, and praise.

## God's word

“Do not be so confident of forgiveness that you add sin to sin” (Sirach 5:5 NRSV).

## Words of wisdom

“Ask yourself when making decisions, ‘What will this profit me for eternity?’ Life is short, and we will have to account for how we spend our time. Time is precious! It’s all we have. Sin is wasted time. Live in continual conversion.” (Sister Mary Thecla Paolini, FSP, [www.daughtersofstpaul.org](http://www.daughtersofstpaul.org))

## To do

Make a good confession on some finer points of your attitudes and actions that you know could be better.

## To journal

What do you tell yourself that might show that you take God’s love for granted?

## Prayer

Dear Jesus, I gaze on the crucifix and remember that Your love for me cost You everything. Give me the gift of repentance, wonder, gratitude, and praise.

# January 4

*There are two extremes of conscience that I find in My people: scrupulous and lax. The first is tempted to the sin of despair, the second to the sin of presumption. In the middle is the healthy conscience—sensitive to both sin and My unfathomable love. Where are you on that spectrum? Wherever you are, move to the center.*

## *God's Word*

"I have found in David . . . a man after my heart . . ." (Acts 13:22). "With all your might love your Maker . . ." (Sirach 7:30).

## *Words of Wisdom*

Every evening make an examination of conscience. Look back on everything you have to be thankful for, and then look at how you responded to these gifts from God. Ask forgiveness for where you have failed. Doing this every day will make you more aware of how God is working in your life.

## *To Do*

The examination of conscience and the sacrament of Reconciliation are wonderful means for spiritual progress. Go to confession regularly, e.g., once a month. Put it on your calendar for the rest of the year.

## *To Journal*

Where are you on the conscience spectrum—from scrupulous to lax? Explain your reasoning.

## *Prayer*

Dear Jesus, make me a woman after Your own heart.



# January 5

*Why do I love you so much? Because I Myself am Love. It is My nature, My essence. So you see, it's all about you and not all about you! I love everyone as if they were the only one, and I love each one the most. Humans are not capable of this kind of love. Put your trust in My infinite love for you.*

*God's word*

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

*Words of wisdom*

“Life is a matter of love. Our vocation is a matter of love. I used to think I had to be holy to approach God. Then I realized I had it backwards! I approach God to become holy!” (Sr. Margaret Michael Gillis, FSP, [www.daughtersofstpaul.org](http://www.daughtersofstpaul.org))

*To do*

Today, begin to see your life as an adventure in love. Take each thing that happens as a way to learn how to give and receive love.

*To journal*

Is love the ultimate goal of your life, your *raison d'être*?

*Prayer*

Dear Jesus, turn my heart more and more to love. Teach me to love unconditionally as You do.

# January 6

*Life is all about love. There are so many things to distract you and make you think it's really about something else. But it's not. Love is more than just romantic feelings. Love is more than just an act of the will. There is something mysterious about love, because I am Love, and I can never be fully comprehended!*

## *God's Word*

"Love never ends . . ." (1 Corinthians 13:8).

## *Words of Wisdom*

Living a life focused on love doesn't mean you have to change your personality. It doesn't matter whether you're a flowery, romantic person or a practical, down-to-earth realist! Everyone needs to receive and give love. Love is the gift of self.

## *To do*

Read all or part of Pope Benedict's encyclical, *God Is Love*.

## *To journal*

What are some mistaken ideas about love that you have seen or heard? It's easy to fall into common ways of thinking. Do you sometimes live according to these mistaken ideas?

## *Prayer*

Dear Jesus, help me keep my life on track by letting myself be loved, and loving through everything.

# January 7

*Let My love attract you. If you understand how much I love you, you'll be able to interpret everything, all that happens, within the context of My love. You are never outside the bounds of My love, in fact, there is no escape. Even when you are angry I love you.*

## *God's word*

"O LORD, you have enticed me, and I was enticed . . ." (Jeremiah 20:7 NRSV).

## *Words of wisdom*

No matter what we do, no matter how we feel, God loves us. Have you ever felt angry at God? Anger is often hidden, even from ourselves, but we need to work it out (sometimes with the help of others). We need to get past the anger so we can live from a place of love.

## *To do*

Today, try to be honest with God about your feelings. Let whatever you are feeling surface, whether it is toward Jesus, toward others, or about a situation. Share it all with Jesus.

## *To journal*

Why are you sometimes angry with God? He knows you're angry anyway, and He can deal with it.

## *Prayer*

Dear Jesus, I thank You that Your whole purpose for my life is to draw me into Your heart forever.

# January 8

*Bad things may have happened in your life. Do you think these things negate My love, or prove that I don't really love you, or that I'm not there for you? Even though bad things aren't part of My plan, suffering is part of life. Sometimes there is even horrific suffering, caused by natural disasters or by sin. I, too, have suffered.*

## *God's Word*

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . .” (Isaiah 53:4). “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46 NRSV)

## *Words of Wisdom*

As you work through your anger and question God, do you try to move on—or do you keep going over things in your mind? Don't let yourself remain stuck in one place.

## *To do*

Listen to the lyrics of Bryan Duncan's “Blessed Are the Tears that Fall.”

## *To journal*

Write about the worst thing that has happened to you. Can you see any good that has come of it, or *could* come of it?

## *Prayer*

Dear Jesus, You never promised to shield us from suffering. No one shielded You. Help me to endure. Help me to know and believe that Love wins in the end.

# January 9

*Everyone can love. I have put that ability into every heart. You can love as much as you want. Love doesn't get used up; it grows when it's given away.*

## *God's word*

"He who does not love does not know God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8). "... [L]et us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

## *Words of wisdom*

"We have come to know of God's great love for us through prayer, life experiences, the beauty of creation, loving and being loved. Having accepted the love of the Heart of Jesus in our lives, we are called to pour out our love in service to others. Our call is to share the love of the Heart of Jesus through our actions." (Sr. Susan Marie Krupp, ASCJ, [www.ascjus.org](http://www.ascjus.org))

## *To do*

Think of your favorite romantic movie. Does the main character go overboard or *underboard* in loving others? What about you, compared to that character?

## *To journal*

What holds you back from loving well?

## *Prayer*

Dear Jesus, love is what makes us human. Help me live my human vocation to love and be loved.

# January 10

*Are you afraid of My love? Do you think I'm going to ask something too big in return? My love is free. The only thing I ask in return is your love, your heart. Love for love.*

## *God's word*

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love" (1 John 4:18).

## *Words of wisdom*

God never asks more than we can bear, and He gives the grace to bear whatever He is asking. Even if we fall under the weight of our crosses, He will help us get back up.

## *To do*

This week, notice how you are able to overcome problems with God's help. Notice the little ways that people show generosity toward you. Notice things of beauty that you find delightful. These are all signs of God's love.

## *To journal*

Is there something you fear God might ask of you if you open yourself fully to His love?

## *Prayer*

Dear Jesus, I know it's silly to be afraid of Your love. You are the giver of all good gifts, and Your best gift is love. Take away my fear.