



Bound Up Devotion

Opening Prayer: We come to You, O Lord, eager to hear Your Word. Let Your message penetrate our inner being and take root in our souls. May Your Holy Spirit guide us through life's trials and temptations. Keep us safe from the evil one. May Jesus reign in us richly and fully. Amen.

*Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.
From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I
For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.
I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings. Selah.
For you have heard my vows, O God;
You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name
Ps. 61:1-5 (NIV).*

My kisses appeared to be like magic when my boys were young. Well, at least they thought they were. My kisses worked as though they had a soothing balm in them. Whether it was a cut finger, bumped head or leg, or even the occasional time when their feelings were hurt, a kiss from Mommy was all it took for them to calm down and the hurt to go away.

Fast forward ten years. Now my sons think Mommy kissing their boo-boos is childlike and yucky. Believe me, they still think I have some sort of wonderful power that can make everything tum out okay, but kissing boo-boos is totally out of the question. Now it's straight to either an ice pack (truly a gift from God) or a box of bandages.

I don't know exactly when my kisses lost their "magical" touch or when the healing strength seemingly yielded to an innocent looking box of bandages, but it did. Now, whenever the blood is flowing or the scratch is just too deep to be worn as a tattoo, a bandage is pulled out and put on to cover the wound, and the healing begins. Did you know our Lord uses bandages, too? Listen to this: He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds Ps. 147:3 (NIV).

When we as adults experience things that hurt us, instead of reaching for the box of plastic strips, we tend to wrap ourselves in our own type of bandage, giving ourselves time to heal. When the darts come at us slowly and infrequently, perhaps striking one at a time, we seem to recover easily. That's when a little personal pampering can heal what ails us. Maybe a manicure, a pedicure, or stopping for a special cup of coffee will give us the boost we need to persevere.

Then there are those other times when the darts are fired rapidly, and we fall flat on our faces. The more trying the experiences, the more tightly we become wounded. Our problems are like a noose around our necks, choking the life out of us.

When life gets this way, we may tend to close in and isolate ourselves from the rest of the world. Thus, we wrap ourselves in our own problems and tie ourselves up in knots. We may feel just like Lazarus. Wrapped in our own emotions and struggles, we feel like we are wrapped in grave clothes, that we lie behind a large rock of a tomb from which we cannot escape on our own. For

whatever reason, we forget all the things we try to encourage others to do when they are experiencing this same thing.

Our Bible lays unopened on the table and we wonder why we cannot hear God's voice. Our prayer life is replaced with a pity party as we sink deeper into our feelings of helplessness. Communication with fellow believers becomes almost non-existent so we don't even hear godly advice and direction from our fellow Christian sisters and brothers.

As we try to drag ourselves out of the person hole we have dug, we realize it is actually our sinful pride that is holding us down. We keep trying to solve our own problems rather than bringing them to the throne of our Lord and laying them at His feet. Once we humble ourselves and realize that we cannot fix our problems ourselves, we turn our eyes to Jesus. He alone can drag us out of the muck. He is always ready, willing and able to do the job.

Jesus, our dear sweet Lord, calls us out of the tomb we have created and tells us to follow Him. Our loving Father wants us to walk in the light of His Word. Confessing our sins, we are freed, not condemned. Jesus wants all of us to experience this freedom. He knows our problems and comes as our Savior in all aspects of our lives.

Whether it is life's darts or our own sinful natures that keep us bound up, away from a deeper relationship with Him, Jesus calls us to come out of the tomb. He also sends His believers to be the messengers of His love. Somehow friends know to come and take off the ties that have bound us. They allow us once again to move freely under His wings. Jesus uses his people as an antiseptic to whatever ails us.

One by one our bandages fall limply to the ground, as we rediscover God's faithful promises in His Word and Sacrament. Our souls are rejuvenated through prayer and words of encouragement. Wings are given to our souls through worship with fellow believers. We are renewed, refreshed, and strengthened through the power of Christ.

Then it is that we are healed. Then it is that our broken hearts become whole again. Then it is that Jesus can once again do His miraculous work in us. All of us have experienced healing from our Lord and Savior. We need to share these experiences with others. The Holy Spirit will guide each of us to make the phone call to someone we haven't seen in church in awhile. At the prompting of the Spirit, we remember to send notes of encouragement. In Christian love, we are able to reach out a hand to a stranger. Using the gifts God has given us will benefit His kingdom here on earth. May our healing begin today.

Prayer: Dear Father, Thank You for allowing us to come to Your throne of grace to experience the richness of Your mercy. Forgive us for our lack of trust in You when we have been wounded by the fiery darts of the world. Give us strength and courage to stand in faith each day. Help us to encourage others and open our hearts with compassion for those around us who are suffering. Help us reach the lost and the erring with Your message of love and salvation. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn: *Jesus Sinners Will Receive* LW229 or *Jesus Sinners Doth Receive* LSB 609

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