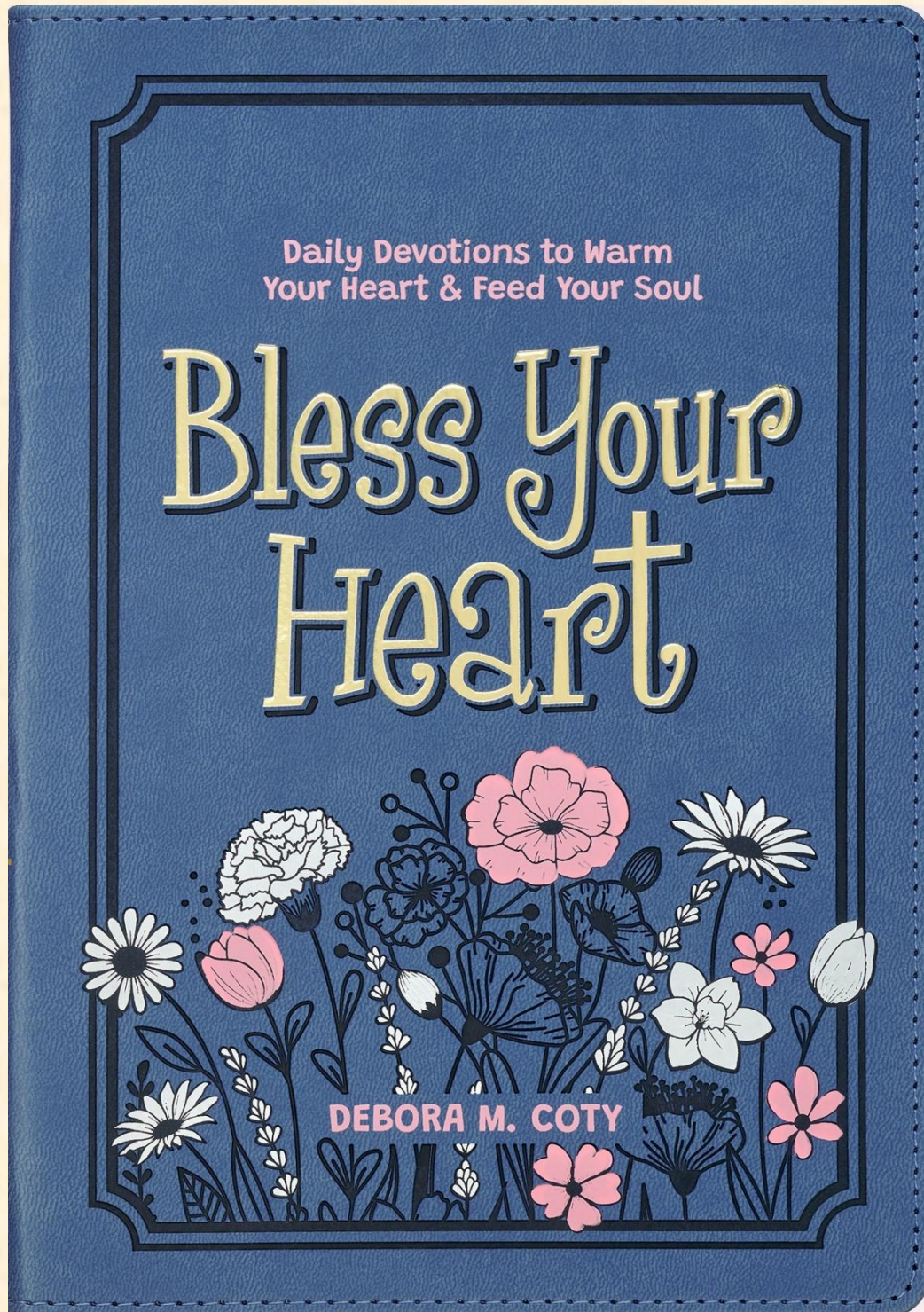




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Bless Your Heart

Daily Devotions to Warm Your Heart & Feed Your Soul

With special love for my dearest BFFs,

from Debora M. Coty

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January 1

Splashing Joy

Joy-seeds are planted in good heart soil. So, God's people, shout praise to GOD, give thanks to our Holy God.

PSALM 97:11-12, MSG

The beginning of a new year is a good time to take stock and assess goals for the coming year. For me, that means sitting on the wooden swing in my backyard beneath the canopy of oak trees and spending some quality face time with Papa God. This year, I feel compelled to get more in touch with my Jesus-joy, which flows deep in the veins of believers but is sometimes buried beneath the cares of the world that can pile up and block the flow like a beaver's dam if we let them. And sadly, I let them. I allow worries and problems to collect like logs and make me lose touch with the refreshing, bubbling joy of knowing Jesus.

But I'm going to do better this year. I'm going to be cognizant that Jesus-joy is ninety percent gratitude and comes from knowing what Jesus did for me—*not* deterred by my circumstances—and choose to rejoice in His presence daily. Even though I may not *feel* joyful every moment, if I know Jesus as my friend and



Savior, joy is always accessible. And I'd much rather live a lighthearted, joyful life than be oppressed by the joy-sucking dully-funks (my term for the blahs).

As one of my longtime faith heroes, Jill Briscoe, says, "Joy is faith dancing." Yep. I think I need a little more dancing in my life. How about you? Jill also says, "God, through His spirit, grants us love, joy, and peace no matter what is happening in our lives. As Christians, we shouldn't expect our joy to always feel like happiness, but instead recognize joy as inner security—a safeness in our life with Christ."

I plan to get drenched this year in the joy of the Lord, where my very strength comes from (Nehemiah 8:10). And when Jesus-joy saturates me and overflows, I want it to splash onto everyone around me.

Prayer: Precious Savior, fill me with Your joy and peace as I trust daily in You, so that my joy may overflow onto those around me by the power of the Holy Spirit. All praise to You! Amen.



January 2

Blessings: Be One, Get One

Bless—that's your job, to bless. You'll be a blessing and also get a blessing.

1 PETER 3:9, MSG

Two women stood before a display of prepackaged bags of apples at the supermarket. Each lifted a bag to examine the apples, pondering completely different dilemmas. One wondered, *Will this be enough for my daughter's sleepover this weekend, or should I buy oranges too?* While the second woman thought, *My kids would love these, but I don't have enough money for both meat and fruit this week.* She put the bag down.

The first woman saw her defeated expression, discerned the situation, and lifted a silent prayer for guidance in how she might somehow bless this stranger. Then she noticed the BOGO (Buy One, Get One free) sign. “Excuse me,” she said to the woman who was turning to walk away, “I only need one bag of apples but they're BOGO this week. Would you like the other bag? If you check out behind me, you can just take it on your way out.”

Most of us are acquainted with BOGO offers at the grocery store, but did you know Papa God offers us a BOGO on blessings? Just look at today's verse—if we do our job correctly as Christ-followers, we'll not only *be* a blessing to others



(and to our Savior), but we'll also *get* one in return. Sounds like a terrific deal to me! I don't know about you, but I need all the blessings I can get.

The word *bless* appears over 500 times in the Bible and can be defined as “to divinely care for.” That plunks our heavenly Father smack dab in the middle of all our blessings, since divine means “from God.” Sacred. Anointed. Intentional. He wants to be intricately involved in blessing our hearts and helping us bless other hearts. Blessing others often involves Christlike characteristics Papa God wants to cultivate in His children (us): joy, kindness, generosity, and patience, to name a handful. Few of us can say these are our forte, but cultivation is what solid growth is all about.

Hey, it's not always easy to bless hearts. But it's our *job* and our *joy*, so let's resolve to do it well!

Prayer: Benefactor of all blessings (Galatians 3:14), thank You for constantly blessing my heart, and help me to take seriously my job of blessing others in Your name. Amen.