

from the Marta Maria Podcast

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A WOMAN'S

faith



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Living Scripture Daily

The summer of 1999 was unforgettable for my family. With its pristine beaches and impressive sand dunes, Fortaleza, Brazil, was everything we had dreamed of for our long-anticipated vacation. My siblings, Henry and Jacqueline, and I, full of teenage energy, eagerly embraced every adventure the trip offered. One day, we boarded a dune buggy for a famous ride through the breathtaking dunes.

With a grin, the guide asked us, “With or without emotion?” Naturally, we chose *emotion*. The buggy roared to life, soaring over the dunes, twisting and dropping with exhilarating speed. The wind rushed past us, the sun warmed our faces, and the sand shimmered like gold. Each turn felt like a moment suspended in time, full of joy and anticipation. The ride culminated at the “butt slide,” a massive dune where visitors could slide down its sandy slope on their backsides.

Henry, Jacqueline, and I raced each other down, laughing freely and wholeheartedly. Each trip was faster and more thrilling than the last. But suddenly, on one of my runs, everything went dark. I passed out, slipping into a stillness that felt like eternity, as though time itself had stopped. It felt like I was dreaming. Time, space, and awareness all blurred together into a strange sensation.

Suddenly, I awoke and found myself lying on the warm sand. My father knelt beside me, his hands gently on my head as he concluded a priesthood blessing: “In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.” I realized I was lying in the shade of a large *tenda de sapê*—a simple lounge area nestled within the dunes, covered with woven palm leaves to provide relief from the sun. This spot, a resting place for adventurers like us, held a few bottles of water and other small comforts for the journey. My family was gathered around me, their expressions a mix of relief and worry, while a couple of locals nearby looked on, their faces kind and reassuring.

Someone placed a freshly opened coconut in my hands. The cold, sweet water inside contrasted with the dry heat of the dunes, its taste, soothing and refreshing, spread through my body. I sipped slowly, the cool liquid reviving me further, as I sat propped up on the warm sand in the shaded shelter.

It wasn’t just the coconut water that brought comfort; it was everything around me: my family, the concerned onlookers, and their willingness to help us in this moment of despair. While I was recovering and drinking the coconut water, my mother pulled me

into a tight embrace, her voice trembling as she said, “You passed out. We were so scared.”

At that moment, I felt something profound: God’s unmistakable presence. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88 came to mind: “And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.” That scripture captured exactly what I felt at that moment, a sense of being lifted, protected, and surrounded by divine love.

This realization became even more meaningful when I considered where we were—miles from the city, surrounded by towering dunes in what felt like the middle of nowhere. There was no immediate help available, no nearby hospitals or emergency responders. What my parents relied on at that moment was not the resources of the earth but the power of heaven. My father’s priesthood blessing, uttered with faith and authority, bridged our need on earth with the divine help of heaven.

This connection between earth and heaven is a central truth of the gospel. God has provided us with tools and channels enabling us to access His power: prayer, scripture, faith, and ordinances through the priesthood. These are not abstract ideas; they are real, tangible, and designed to help us navigate the challenges of mortality. When we make the effort to engage in these channels, the veil between heaven and earth becomes thinner, and miracles happen. It’s not that heaven suddenly intervenes, rather we align ourselves with heaven, inviting divine power into our lives.

One of the most powerful tools we have is the word of God. The scriptures are far more than an ancient record; they are alive, relevant, and offer guidance and strength for every moment of our lives. My mother was a living testament to this truth. Growing up, she taught us to see the scriptures as a personal letter from God to His children. She reminded us that every story, every teaching, and every promise in the scriptures has relevance to our lives today. Through her example, I learned that the scriptures can be both a source of power and a shield, fortifying us against life’s challenges.

That day on the dunes, the scripture from Doctrine and Covenants 84:88 wasn’t just a verse I had memorized. It was a truth I had internalized. My parents had taught me to see scripture as more than words on a page. They encouraged me to live scripture daily, to let them shape my thoughts and guide my actions. It wasn’t a passive exercise, but an active process of applying the lessons and promises of God’s word to my everyday life. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”¹ became our family motto, guiding countless decisions big and small. I remember as a young girl being invited to an exciting event on a Sunday, but I had already made the decision to honor the Sabbath. Though it was difficult to say no, I remembered that promise. Later, even better opportunities followed—ones that didn’t conflict with my values. It was a small but powerful reminder that when we put God first, He truly provides all that we need—just as He promised to add “all these things” unto us.

My father’s priesthood blessing over me that day was simple yet powerful. It wasn’t his words that made the difference—it was the faith behind them. Through prayer, my father called upon the power of heaven to intervene on earth, and I felt the reality of that power in the peace and strength that followed. But the foundation for that moment had been laid long before, through years of living scripture as a family.

Living scripture daily means seeing it as a living, breathing guide for the challenges we face. It means building a relationship with Christ so that, like my mother taught us,

we can draw on its power when we need it most. For example, years later, when both of my parents became ill at the same time—each with different and serious diseases—it was one of the hardest seasons our family had ever faced. But because we had spent years rooted in the scriptures, they became our source of strength. Hope, comfort, and love weren't distant ideals; they were tangible realities we felt in the middle of our trials. We prayed together constantly. We leaned on God's promises as we took turns accompanying them to appointments, coordinating hospital visits, and managing treatments. The Word gave us direction, and more than that, it gave us peace. We didn't just read the scriptures—we lived them. And in return, they carried us. God's promises are real, and His words have the power to shape our hearts and actions.

The dunes that day symbolized life: its peaks of joy and sudden drops into darkness. Like the moment I passed out, challenges often come without warning. But because my parents had taught me to rely on scripture, prayer, and faith, I was prepared. Years later, when other trials came into my life—disappointments, heartbreak, or loss—I leaned on those same promises. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88 came back to me again and again, as if God were whispering directly to my heart: "I am here. I will bear you up." Living scripture daily doesn't mean life will be free of challenges, but it means we are never alone when we face them.

To live scripture daily, we must go beyond reading—we must ponder and apply it. Let the words become part of who you are, influencing your choices, strengthening your faith, and giving you courage in trials. My mother often asked us after family scripture study, "What does this mean for you today?" Her question taught me that scripture is a conversation between us and God, and that its lessons are meant to be lived, not just understood.

President Marion G. Romney once said: "I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness."² This powerful truth reminds us that studying the scriptures daily brings divine guidance into every facet of our lives, helping us navigate life's unexpected dunes with faith and confidence.

Prayer and scripture work hand in hand. Prayer allows us to speak to God, while scripture gives Him a way to speak back to us. When we combine these practices, we open ourselves to His direction and power in a way that transforms our hearts and strengthens our resolve.

When we use the tools God has given us—scriptures, prayer, faith, ordinances—we invite His presence into our lives. We align earth with heaven, opening the way for miracles, peace, and strength.

Caroline Melazzo

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

I encourage you to reflect on your own life:

- How has God gone before you?
- When have His angels borne you up?

This week, study Doctrine and Covenants 84:88 and consider writing down one scripture each morning that resonates with you. Think about how you can apply it to your day. Pair your scripture study with a prayer for understanding, and watch as God's words shape your actions and bring clarity to your challenges.

Living scripture daily means believing that God's words are for *you*. They are alive and real. They have the power to comfort, guide, and transform you. That summer in Fortaleza taught me this truth in a profound way: God's promises are real, and He is always near. His angels bore me up that day—through my father's blessing, my mother's embrace, and the truths they instilled in me.

When we choose to live scripture daily, we invite the power of God's word to shape our lives, fill our hearts with peace, and carry us through even the most unexpected moments.

1. Matthew 6:33.

2. Marion G. Romney, "The Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, May 1980, 67.

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