

Devotions

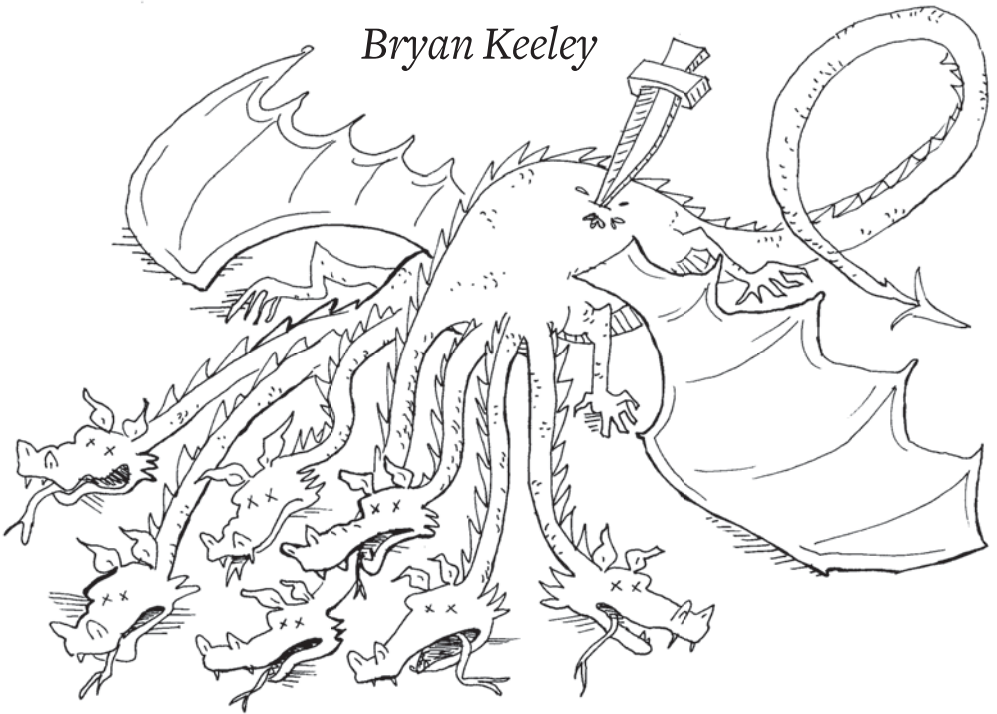
Devotions



DIVE

Devotions

Bryan Keeley




**FAITH
ALIVE**[®]
Christian Resources

Grand Rapids, Michigan

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About This Book

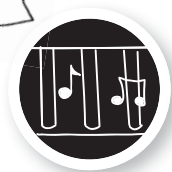
Hi!

I wrote this book for YOU. OK, maybe not you personally, but I hope you like it anyway. Here's what you'll find inside:

- Interactive readings—three per week. Sounds doable, right?
- Story symbols. They look like this



If you're using this book along with Dive for Sunday school or youth group, the symbols will match the stories you explore together at church. Look for a new symbol at the beginning of each week's readings.



- **Bible passages.** Sometimes these are written out, other times you'll need to look them up.
- **Q&As.** These are short summaries of the teachings of the Reformed/Presbyterian church. We'll look at one or two each week.
- **Questions.** Each reflection comes with a question. Ponder it yourself or talk it over with a friend, parent, or mentor.
- **Challenges.** These help you dive in a little deeper. Who doesn't like a good challenge?
- **Christmas and Easter readings.** These are meant for the week of Christmas and Easter. Find them when the time comes; skip them if you reach them too soon.
- **Sketches and doodles.** These are just for fun. Add your own to make it personal.

When you read this book you'll need to have a Bible nearby and a pencil or pen in hand—you never know when you might be asked to sketch a UFO, draw a timeline of your life, or name three of your best friends.

Talk to God about your thoughts and reactions to each reading. Most of all, use this book to help you grow in faith, connect with God's people, and live out God's story for your life.

Bryan



A Few More Things . . .

How is this book organized?

Dive Devotions is part of a curriculum called *Dive* that many churches use for Sunday school or youth group. For each Dive session there are three readings that build on what happened in church that week. These may be about the story, the Q&A, or the Memory Challenge. With each reading you'll have the chance to dive in a little deeper.

What if my church isn't using the Dive curriculum?

No worries, you can use this book on its own. Just go at your own pace and enjoy the stories, Q&A's, and the time you spend with God.

Where do the Q&A's come from?

The Q&A's used in this book are a short summary of creeds and confessions of the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition called *Q&A: A Summary of Biblical Teachings*. They include teachings from the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort.

Why do the Christmas and Easter readings come at the end of the book?

These readings are at the end of the book so that you can easily find them when Christmas and Easter arrive. If you're using this book as part of the Dive curriculum, you'll celebrate Easter and Christmas with a session at church and then read the three devotions during the following week. If you're using this book on your own, read them leading up to or following these special days of the church year.

Belonging*



What is your only comfort as a Christian?

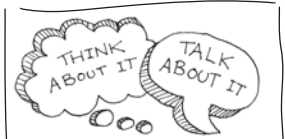
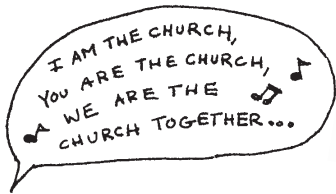
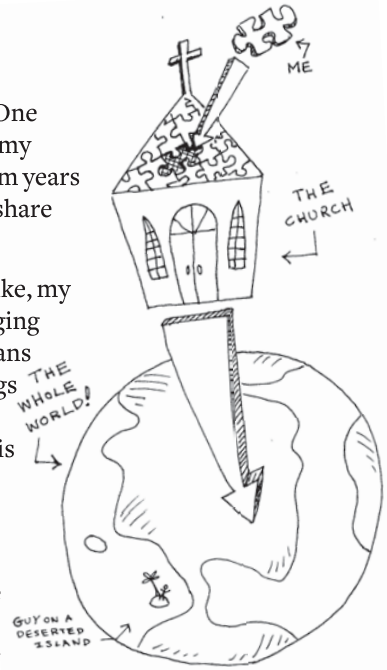
*That I, body and soul, in life and death,
belong to Jesus Christ.*

—Q&A 1

On Facebook I belong to lots of different groups. One group I belong to is Camp Greenwood. It's one of my favorites because I can reconnect with friends from years ago, see pictures of what is going on at camp, and share stories with other campers.

But I also have things that belong to me, like my bike, my iPod, and my cell phone. These two ways of belonging mean very different things. The first “belong” means being a member, like the way a puzzle piece belongs to a puzzle. The puzzle doesn't own it, but the piece belongs to the puzzle. The second “belong” is possessive; like the puzzles that I have at home—they belong to me, I own them.

So what is my only comfort in life and in death?
That I belong, like a puzzle piece. I was made to be here! I'm a member of a community, the church. I'm a unique part of God's family because I belong to Jesus. My life fits into God's big-picture plan for the whole world!



Can you name

A deacon at your church: _____

An elder: _____

3 Adults (not related to you): _____

2 Kids: _____

2 Teenagers: _____

1 Friend _____

Do you feel like you belong in your church? Why or why not?

What could you do to help someone else feel like they belong this week?



The End of the Story

Read Acts 16:16-25.

Wait, what? You're going to stop the story there? Paul and Silas get thrown into prison and beaten, their feet in stocks. What about the good part? When do we get to read the part about the earthquake and the prison doors flying open? It's like watching the first half of *Return of the Jedi* without getting to see the Ewok battle scene!

NO WAY, IT'S LIKE WATCHING _____
WITHOUT _____!

Think about the movies you have seen recently. Have you noticed there is usually a problem that makes the main character uncomfortable? But no fear, you know that within 120 minutes that problem will be fixed somehow. Nearly every movie is a story of problems that are quickly fixed. But in life it's not that easy. Some problems we live with for a long, long time.

In real life, there are people who make you think you're worthless. They tell you you're not good enough. There are problems that you don't know how to fix. Life isn't full of quick, easy solutions—but we know the end of the story! No matter what happens, no matter what problems we face, "whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord" (Romans 14:8). That's a promise!



MOVIE YOU'VE SEEN:

BIG PROBLEM:

THE HAPPY ENDING:



THINK ABOUT IT

TALK ABOUT IT

Here's what's happening lately . . .

MY NEW MOTTO!



Take some time to talk to God about a not-so-easy-to-fix problem. It could be yours or someone else's.

Then repeat after me (out loud):
"Whatever happens, I still belong to Jesus."

Comfort



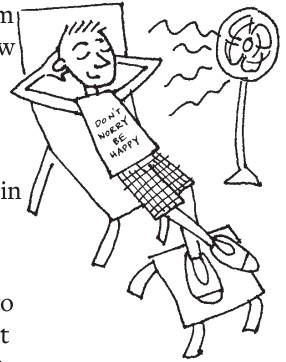
What is your only comfort as a Christian?

That I, body and soul, in life and in death, belong to Jesus Christ.

—Q&A 1

We all know the feeling—when summer vacation starts, when that long piano recital finally ends, when the dentist says, “No cavities!” It’s a feeling of freedom: release from teachers, flat notes, and dentists. It’s the feeling we know every night when we curl up in our warm bed—*comfort*.

The world has thousands of ways to make us comfortable. From air conditioning to Snugglies, massage chairs to ergonomic headphones, travel mugs to tag-free shirts. But in today’s Q&A we’re asked “What is your *only* comfort in life and in death?” You mean I have to pick just one?



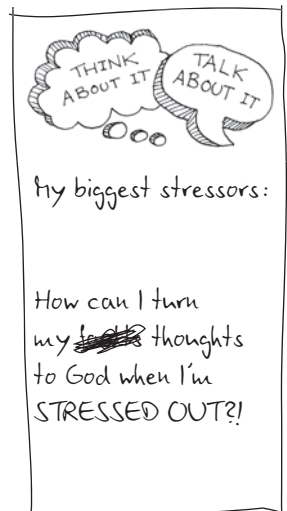
Paul and Silas, in Acts 16:16-25, were beaten and thrown into prison with their feet tied up because they sent an evil spirit out of a girl who was enslaved. They weren’t comfortable at all. But what did they do? They sang hymns to God.

It’s easy to focus on how comfortable we feel right now. But the comfort and relief we feel after completing tests and homework, or facing a piano recital or dentist appointment, only lasts for a short time. The comfort of knowing that we belong to Jesus Christ lasts for an eternity. It can even make going to the dentist seem like not such a big deal anymore!

I’M MOST COMFORTABLE
WHEN: _____



Think of a Christian song or hymn that you like. Or maybe a favorite verse. Make it the soundtrack to your day. When you start getting stressed out, turn on that song in your mind and see what happens.



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If you're a young teen, this book is for you. Whether you're reading this book on your own or as part of *Dive*, this book will help you grow in faith, connect with God's people, and live out God's story for your life.

Dive Devotions includes three interactive devotions per week based on selected Scripture passages and on the teachings of the church. Story symbols connect the readings to *Dive* curriculum sessions.

Go ahead. Dive a little deeper into God's Word and God's world. See for yourself what God is doing!

Bryan Keeley is the youth pastor at Third Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. His hobbies include road biking, guitar, vintage mopeds, and hunting. If you want to know more than that, you can find him on Facebook.

RELIGION / Christian Ministry / Youth

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