

THE PEACE AND PLENTY

*Journal of  
Well-Spent Moments*

SARAH BAN BREATHNACH

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*The*  
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*Well-Spent*  
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Sarah Ban Breathnach



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# Upon Creating a Journal of Well-Spent Moments

*You are discontented with the world because you  
just can't get the small things that suit your pleasure.*  
--George Eliot

Welcome to the *Peace and Plenty Journal of Well-Spent Moments*, your private numbered account, a compilation of wisdom and wealth that the world cannot take away.

The practice of Gratitude in our lives doesn't require us to stay stuck in misery, lack or denial. Instead, Gratitude asks us to know and accept the reality of our situation so that we can get our spiritual bearings. If you're experiencing difficult financial circumstances, whether this is sudden or new to you or has been going on for a long time, it's very possible that you believe you'll never smile again. Or sigh with relief. You're wrong my dearest Reader. But too often in this frenzied world, letting go of life's baffling circumstances in which we were hurt, betrayed, bamboozled or left holding the bag for someone else's dirty tricks is difficult, even impossible. We feel so mistreated, angry, wronged and helpless to defend ourselves. The idea of moving on to make positive choices and changes which bring about financial serenity and solvency seems beyond our strength and faith. Doesn't anyone understand? Yes, I do.

That is why distractions, encouragement and above all, cozy contentment, are all close at hand. Heaven, is too.

The 19th century New Zealand writer Katherine Mansfield reassures us: "Everything in life that we really accept undergoes a change." In my life, especially as I've been struggling financially, I have found this wisdom to be so true, it often seems miraculous. It isn't that acceptance immediately alters our conditions, punishes the bad guys and we win the lottery that night. (Although that wouldn't be a bad day, actually.) However, accepting the facts of our circumstances stops the exhausting struggle and fraught downward spirals that always hover while we attempt to find financial equilibrium. Gratitude in any form hushes the frantic

energies swirling about us; and we realize that at this moment, that we have a choice: to look for the blessings or continue to make ourselves sick with worry.

By seeking the blessings we can experience a few moments of peace that quiets down the wants and lets us reclaim all the good in our lives through palpable pleasures.

Do you know the *Serenity Prayer* by the American theologian and scholar Reinhold Niebhur (1891-1971)? It was made famous by members of Alcoholics Anonymous who adopted it in the 1950s, but only the first verse. According to Niebhur, who was asked about the prayer in an interview with the *New York Times* (July 12, 1942), it had been created as part of a sermon he gave during the Great Depression:

*God, give us Grace to accept with serenity  
the things that cannot be changed.  
Courage to change the things  
which should be changed  
and the Wisdom to distinguish  
the one from the other.*

*Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time.  
Trusting that You will make all things right.*

Notice that in the first sentence, acceptance is necessary before serenity and that enjoying one moment at a time is the secret to living one day at a time with calm and contentment. We're not just surviving, we're learning to thrive in a hostile environment, like a plant, and "to thrive" is the original meaning of the word "thrift." We can trigger this inner shift, when we begin to trust that Heaven will make all things right. When we keep calm and carry on. But we need to tend this secret garden, and prime the well of our parched soul and famished heart.

I know that peace, plenty and pleasure is the last thing you think you'll ever have again in your life, which is why keeping a *Well-Spent Moments Journal* helps you acknowledge the bounty of blessings that are waiting for us every day. After just a few weeks, you'll suddenly realize you have a different kind of wealth—well-being—that's simply abundant with the small things that protect and nurture your fragile sense of faith.

Over the coming year, I want to ask you to find or create just one well-spent moment a day. Here are some examples of well-spent moments from my own journal to give you an idea of the contentment that accrues interest. And remember, all I'm asking you to do is notice, create, enjoy or prepare for one simple pleasure a day. Now write it down!

- *Music reaches beyond the barriers of our conscious mind and is a powerful ally for inner work. Gradually building a personal collection of different music selections helps you collect your thoughts, calms you down, channels your creative energy, and calls forth both peace and the sensation of plenty.*
- *Listen to your favorite music, especially if you haven't listened to it for a while. Don't multi-task, don't read, just listen. Ask yourself why this music speaks to you on such a deep level. Does it make you dream, or cry, or feel energized?*
- *Keep the radio tuned to a classical station for an afternoon. See if you can note a new piece of music to add to your list of musical pleasures.*
- *Read yourself a wonderful bedtime story, tucked under the covers with a hot milky drink. If you don't have a bedtime story that you loved as a child, take a creative excursion to the Children's Section of your local library and revel in all the beautiful illustrated books. Pick out a few to bring home.*
- *Listen in bed to the stillness of a snowfall or the icy sound of sleet against the window panes while you're all snug like a bug in bed especially if your feet are on a hot water bottle covered in cozy fleece. (Look for one at the drugstore). Let Mother Nature snuggle you in with a bush. Open the curtains to let the moonlight cross the floor.*
- *Change the fabric of your bed sheets according to season. Flannel or jersey for winter, cotton for spring and fall, linen for summer. Look for flea market finds of crocheted blankets, chenille bedspreads, vintage quilt tops to pair with your blankets. The tactile experience of our hands on something soft doesn't end when we turn five.*

You get the idea. All I'm asking you to do is perform one kind, nurturing, simple gesture or pleasurable task that makes you smile and was a well-spent moment which increased your serenity—and record it in your *Well-Spent Moments Journal*. On most days as we journey towards financial solvency, nothing much seems to be happening, but gradually the smallest change, the tiniest effort, the most seemingly insignificant action tips the scales in our favor. “Our consciousness rarely registers the beginning of a growth within us any more than without us,” the

Victorian writer Mary Anne Evans, who wrote as George Eliot observed in *Silas Marner*. “There have been many circulations of the sap before we detect even the smallest sign of the bud.”

Keeping a *Well-Spent Moments Journal* is how we bring ourselves back to life, one kind gesture at a time, no matter how much money is in our bank account.

Now you will give it a try, won't you?

-----XO--SBB-----

# January



*And what does January hold?  
Clean account books. Bare diaries.  
Three hundred and sixty-five new days,  
neatly parceled into weeks, months, seasons.  
A chunk of time, of life ... those few first notes  
like an orchestra tuning up before the play begins.*

*--Phyllis Nicholson  
Country Bouquet (1947)*

# January

*Welcome the New Year with the delicious and traditional Southern supper of Hoppin' John: black-eyed peas (for luck), rice (for health), collard greens (for prosperity), baked ham, mini corn muffins and buttermilk biscuits.*

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*New Year's Day*

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*Are you planning your New Year with a calendar that you love? If you haven't chosen one yet, the first week of January finds big discounts on calendars and diaries.*

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# January

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*Create a ceremonial for organizing the year ahead making note of seasonal pleasures as well as monthly obligations, weekly tasks and specific dates you want to remember.*

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*"I am younger each year at the first snow when I see it, suddenly, in the air all little and white and moving; then I am in love again and very young and I believe everything."*

*--Anne Sexton,  
American poet  
(1928-1974)*

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