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A Promise Still Feeds the World

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A Promise Still Feeds the World

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Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

PSALM 25:4-5

In 1891, a son was born to Dutch immigrants in Michigan. They named him Martin.

He grew into a bright young man, graduating from the University of Illinois College of Medicine in 1914, where he began his work as a country doctor in Byron Center, Michigan.

Most of his days were spent making house calls, often in bitter weather, often to families with little to offer in return. He loved the work—especially those moments when quick decisions spared a life or eased suffering.

But the work took its toll.

During the devastating flu pandemic of 1918, Martin worked so tirelessly that for five days he never even removed his clothes to sleep. Though raised in a devout Christian home, exhaustion and constant pressure began to erode his spiritual footing. Over time, Martin developed what he later called “a stout appetite for alcohol.”

Then, in 1921, everything changed.

After a severe allergic reaction to an injection of horse serum, he hovered between life and death in a hospital in Grand Rapids. It was there, weak and trembling, that Martin cried out to God: “Spare my life and I’ll serve You.” He later wrote that he experienced a new birth—a turning back to the God he had drifted from.

Martin struggled for years to honor that vow. He sold his medical practice and entered ministry, though his health was fragile and life was often difficult. At age 45, he suffered his first heart attack. Yet, through every setback, he remembered the promise he made.

And then, God opened a door.

In 1938, Martin began teaching a Bible class—not in a church sanctuary, but on a humble 50-watt radio station. What started as a simple broadcast became something far greater than he could have imagined.

That small beginning grew into Our Daily Bread, a worldwide ministry now sharing over 60 million devotionals annually in more than 150 countries. I know that ministry well—because it reached me, too.

During my rebellious years, my mother sent me Our Daily Bread booklets in the mail. I threw them away—every one. But I could never quite forget them. Years later, God led my heart home, and today the Our Daily Bread app is a part of my daily walk. Its wisdom has guided me, softened me, and shaped me for decades. Finally, I learned to let go and trust in Psalm 25: 4-5: “Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”

Michael W. Smith expresses it beautifully in his song: “This is the air I breathe—Your holy presence living in me. This is my daily bread—Your very word spoken to me.”

A single promise made in a moment of surrender changed the world. Martin R. DeHaan couldn’t have imagined the generations who would be fed—spiritually nourished—because he chose obedience over comfort, faithfulness over ease.

And now the question gently comes to each of us: What is God asking you to do? It may seem small. It may feel uncertain. But in God’s hands, your “yes” can become a legacy—one that reaches far beyond your lifetime and into the hearts of those yet to come.

Sometimes God leads you where you need to be even if it's not where you expected to end up.

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