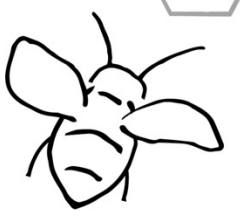
HOW SWEET ARE YOUR WORDS TO MY TASTE,
SWEETER THAN HONEY TO MY MOUTH!
PSALM 119:103

# Sweeter than HONEY

## A 365-DAY DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY

HOW SWEET ARE YOUR WORDS TO MY TASTE,
SWEETER THAN HONEY TO MY MOUTH!
PSALM 119:103



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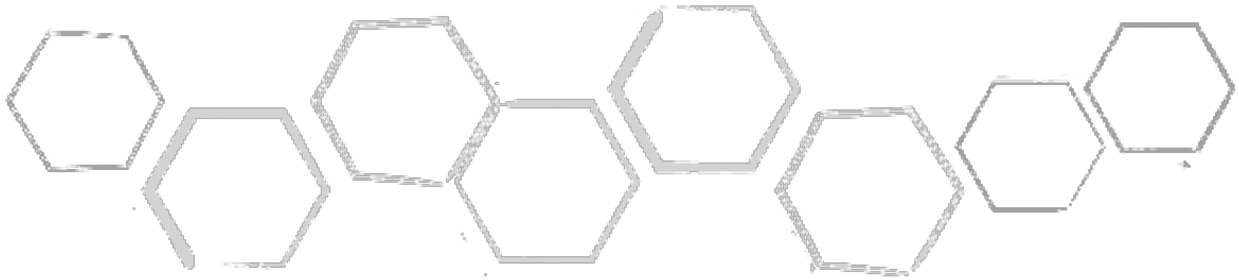
# Dedication

Growing up, my father told me time and time again that I could do anything I put my mind to. My father had a growth mindset mentality before growth mindset was even a thing. He firmly believed that ability could be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent were just the starting point. His confidence in me created a love for learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishments. Those words, "*You can do anything you put your mind to*" spoke truth and life into many dreams and have shaped me in a way that no other spoken words have. His faith in my abilities gave me courage and planted seeds of hope for the future.

When I was in elementary school, I was head-strong and stubborn. I was a handful for my dear parents. Bless their hearts! I was that child they write books about. I remember my mother's dread of parent-teacher conferences. I didn't like them much either. I recall one in particular where the teacher had written on the back of my report card that Patsy was stubborn. There was a discussion about that, and I can still hear my mother's voice today telling that teacher "*Stubbornness is good when you get it headed in the right direction*." That was life-changing for me! It was a true statement, and my mother would spend the next ten years trying to get that stubbornness headed in the right direction.

Dad, because you said, "*You can do anything you put your mind to*" and Mom, because you said, "*Stubbornness is good if you get it headed in the right direction*," *Sweeter Than Honey* is dedicated to you.



# Thank you

I pray that when people read *Sweeter Than Honey* they will see Jesus, and I have these fine people to thank for making that happen. Thank you to Harold Pulver for his careful work on dating the books of the Bible. Thank you to Michelle Jarrell and her co-worker at BJU Press for helping to set a style guide for references in *Sweeter Than Honey*. Thank you to an awesome editor, Amanda Baker. To all of you friends who assisted in these ways, your input has been invaluable! You have helped to make this book a treasure that will touch lives for years to come. Thank you!

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# Prologue

What if we spent a few quiet moments with God each morning? What if we were intentional about making time for it? What if we committed to doing that all year long and by the year's end we found that we had read the entire Bible!? How many times, on January 1, have you committed to reading the Bible from cover to cover in a year? I have made that commitment too many times to count, and I have failed too many times to admit. A few years ago though, I used a one-year, chronological order of book authorship, Bible reading itinerary. Did you know that Genesis was not the first book of the Bible to be written? While plans like this vary somewhat, because it is simply impossible to put an exact date on some books of the Bible, the plan I used begins with the book of Job. *Sweeter Than Honey* is patterned after that Bible reading Itinerary.

When I read God's Word each morning, I find inspiration and insight that keeps my day on track. Join me on this journey, friend. Let's settle in with His Word—it's His Love Letter to us. Did you know that? Let's read it like a Love Letter, expecting to glean something for our walk with Him every day. Let's look for peace in the chaos and strength for our weaknesses. The Bible is alive and relevant. Each book was written by men under divine inspiration from God. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*."

Each day, we'll read a passage of Scripture and a short devotional from that passage. By the end of the year we will have read through His entire Love Letter in chronological order of book authorship—the whole Bible! Even on our busiest days, we can carve out a few minutes to refocus on the important. Can't we? We may have to get up a little earlier, when the house is still and quiet, or stay up a few minutes after the others are tucked in for the night, but we can do this! I know we can!

You'll find encouragement on every page of this book—encouragement to seek God above all else. The strong, spiritual emphasis will challenge you to turn to God for daily direction and experience His presence in a whole new and intentional way. *Sweeter Than Honey* will become more to you than just another daily devotional, it will become a keepsake as you record prayers and participate in thought-provoking, practical exercises that touch every aspect of your life and draw you closer to our Creator.

Let's be intentional this year about focusing on God's Word and the truths found there. Let's let it inspire us to live out our faith each day in a way that causes those we come in contact with to want what we have found. I pray that each of these practical devotionals meets you right where you are with the life-giving Scripture you need for that day to guide you on your journey to know God better and become more like Him in the coming year. God sees you, friend. He knows you by name, He knows the number of hairs on your head (even though that's always changing, right?), and He cares about every detail of your daily existence. He wrote you a Love Letter. Let's dive in! Scan the QR code to join us over at the private, *Sweeter Than Honey* Facebook group and share your thoughts. Find like-minded friends and let's do this together. We're waiting for you!

# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT **JOHN**

The book of John is the 4th of 27 books in the New Testament

**Written by:** The Apostle John

**Written when:** AD 80 - 90

**Time period covering:** 7 BC - AD 26

**Noteworthy:** The book of John is well-known for being a springboard for new believers.

**Pivotal passage:** "*When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished,' and He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit.*" (John 19:30)

**Points to remember:**

- The Apostle John writes of miracles like Jesus' turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana and raising Lazarus from the dead in Bethany. He also writes of the seven "I AM" statements—Who Jesus says He is. John was passionate about explaining Who Jesus is.
- While John did not write of the Savior's birth, he reaches back to the beginning and begins his book with, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (1:1). In this statement and others in his book, John helps us see the picture of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- The Apostle John, along with his brother James, and Simon Peter, spent more time with Jesus during His earthly ministry than any of the other Apostles.

# JOHN 1-3: HIS ONLY SON

The Apostle John begins his book by telling us Who God is.

"*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it….*

*The true Light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth…. For from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, Who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known."* (John 1:1-18)

Probably the most famous verse in the Bible is found in chapter 3 of John. You see this verse written on billboards; you see people holding up posters with this verse on it at large sporting events and gatherings. It is the essence of the Gospel. John 3:16 literally spells out God's incredible love for the world and tells of the ultimate price and lengths He went to in order to redeem His undeserving creation—MERCY!

"*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."* (John 3:16-21)

His only Son! God sent His only Son into the world to die, to shed His blood as a payment for our sin so that we, deserving death, should not perish. Instead of death, He has offered us eternal life. That, my friend, is the greatest act of mercy ever performed!

If you've not received His gift of eternal life, please do so today. If you already have, please tell someone!

# JOHN 4-6: GOD IS ALWAYS WORKING

I love to read about the Samaritan woman. Her story is so much like my own. Her story is our story.

"*So He* [Jesus] *came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as He was from His journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.*

*A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' …The Samaritan woman said to Him, 'How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you Living Water.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that Living Water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.'*

*…So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 'Come, see a Man Who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?'*

*…Many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me all that I ever did.'*" (John 4:5-39)

The first thing that catches my attention about this story is the fact that it happened at Jacob's well. While Jacob's well is not specifically mentioned in the Old Testament, we read in Genesis 33:18–20 that Jacob bought land in Shechem. That passage goes on to tell us that he pitched his tent and erected an altar to God there. We can only assume, as many scholars do, that Jacob dug this well while living there. So, how is that significant? That is significant to me because I see God preparing a way to the Samaritan woman's heart even as far back as the digging of Jacob's well. God knew, when Jacob dug his well, that one day Jesus would have this encounter there with this woman. Just as God prepared a well for the Samaritan woman to meet Jesus at, He has also prepared the way for you and me to meet Jesus. My way started back when a neighborhood friend of my grandmother's invited her to a home Bible study. And actually, I'm sure it started long before that, I just don't know the details. Each of us has a story to tell of how God not only prepared the way of salvation but also the way it was presented to us. For some of us, we can look back generations and see how God has worked. God is always working even if we can't see it.

# december nineteen

## JOHN 7-9: FIVE POWERFUL STATEMENTS

In chapters 7-9 of John, John records Jesus' making five powerful statements. These statements are life-changing to those who believe! Let's look at these five statements today.

Rivers of Living Water: To those at the Feast of Booths, Jesus says, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*'" (John 7:37-38).

Go and Sin No More: To the woman caught in adultery, Jesus says, "*Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more*" (John 8:11).

I Am the Light of the World: To the Pharisees, Jesus says, "*I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life*" (John 8:12).

The Truth Will Set You Free: To the Jews, Jesus says, "*If you abide in My Word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" (John 8:31-32).

That Those Who Do Not See May See: Jesus says to the blind man, "*For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see*..." (John 9:40).

Jesus tells the feast-goers that if they believe in Him, rivers of Living Water will flow out of their hearts. When He speaks of this Living Water, He is talking of the Holy Spirit which was given to believers after Jesus left them for Heaven. This Holy Spirit is the Comforter, Intercessor, the very presence of God, and Spirit of Truth that you and I received when we believed in the One, true God—Jesus Christ.

Jesus tells the woman caught in adultery that He has not come into the world to condemn sinners. He has come to rescue, redeem, and save. He simply says to her, "*go, and from now on sin no more*."

Jesus tells the Pharisees that He is the Light of the World and the Light of life.

Jesus tells the Jews who believed in Him that the truth will set them free. There is so much truth found in God's Word, and in this truth is found freedom for the soul tethered to this sinful world! The Truth WILL set us free!

Jesus tells the man born blind that He came so "*that those who do not see may see*."

Five powerful statements. Five truths from the Gospel of John that pertain to our lives today just as they did to the feast-goers, woman caught in adultery, Pharisees, Jewish believers, and the blind man.

# december twenty

## JOHN 10-12: THE GOOD SHEPHERD

In John chapter 10, the Apostle John writes of the Good Shepherd. Jesus says, "*I am the Good Shepherd*" (10:11), and then He tells us what a good shepherd does for his flock of sheep.

*"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep*." (John 10:10-11)

*"I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep*." (John 10:14-15)

*"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father."* (John 10:17-18)

*"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.*" (John 10:27-28)

A shepherd's primary responsibility is the safety and welfare of the flock. The shepherd will feed the animals, herding them to areas of good forage, while keeping a watchful eye out for their protection. A good shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. But a hired hand, who is not a shepherd and doesn't own the sheep, when he sees a wolf coming, will leave the sheep and flee. This is not our Good Shepherd. Our Good Shepherd *"...has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"* (Hebrews 13:5)

The relationship between a shepherd and his sheep is a close one. The Bible tells us that the sheep, that's us, recognize the Shepherd's voice and that they follow the Good Shepherd. It is a well-known fact that animals instinctively recognize the voice of a familiar, trusted person. Is the Good Shepherd familiar and trusted to you? Do you recognize His voice today?

A funny thing about sheep is that just about any other domesticated animal can be returned to the wild and will stand a fighting chance of survival, but not sheep. If you put a sheep in the wild, you've pretty much just given it a death sentence and given nature a snack. Sheep are helpless creatures! Sheep without a shepherd are sheep in deep trouble. In fact, sheep without a shepherd are hopeless!

The Good Shepherd is good. He protects, He guides, He nurtures, and He lays down His life for us! These five characteristics of our Good Shepherd are proof to me that Jesus is a Shepherd that can be trusted. Jesus loves you. He is the Good Shepherd. He will never leave you. Live like you know that today!

# JOHN 13-15: A BRANCH AND A CHOSEN FRIEND

I love studying the "I Am" statements in the Bible. If you've never done that, you should! "I Am the True Vine" found here in John 15, is one of my favorites! This passage paints a vivid picture of Jesus as the vine and believers as branches. We, as believers, can do nothing apart from the Vine.

"*I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit…. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another*." (John 15:1-17)

God the Father is the Vinedresser. A vinedresser is a centuries-old profession and an important component of production. The vinedresser is intimately involved in the daily pruning and cultivation of the vines. Without daily pruning and proper cultivation, the vine will not bear fruit. John tells us here that even if we bear fruit, the Vinedresser will prune us. Pruning is necessary in order to bear more fruit. Verse 8 tells us that the Father is glorified when we bear fruit and that bearing fruit is proof that we are disciples of Jesus Christ. The passage goes on to say that by abiding in the Vine we will be filled with joy.

Then, my favorite part of this passage—Jesus calls us "*friends*" (15:14). "*You are My friends if you do what I command you*," He says. But wait! There's more! In verse 16, He calls us "*chosen*." "*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide*" (15:16). We are not just friends, we are chosen friends! I don't know about you, but I like being called a friend of God! I'm sure you do as well. Today, let's welcome the pruning to bear more fruit and respond to Him as the branch and chosen friend that we are.

# JOHN 16-18: JESUS INTERCEDES FOR YOU

John designates an entire chapter to the prayer Jesus prayed to the Father before His crucifixion. I feel it is important that we read His prayer. He is not only interceding for His earthly followers at that time, He is also interceding for us today, friend! See if you can find where Jesus intercedes to the Father for you.

"*He lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You, since You have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent. I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.*

*I have manifested Your name to the people whom You gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. Now they know that everything that You have given Me is from You. For I have given them the Words that You gave Me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom You have given me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are One. While I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given Me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.*

*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are One, I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know You, I know You, and these know that You have sent Me. I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them*." (John 17:1-26)

"*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word*" (17:20). That's us!

# JOHN 19-21: JESUS CALLED HER NAME

I love how, in these final chapters of his book, the Apostle John states the purpose of his writing:

*"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name*." (John 20:30-31)

It is impossible to read the details of the crucifixion, the death of Jesus, His side being pierced, and His burial without seeing my sin hanging there on that cross. It was for me He suffered, shed His blood, and died. It was for you too.

I am so glad that John also records the resurrection! I've often thought about, and wondered, what the three days between the crucifixion and the resurrection might have been like for the disciples and other believers. Certainly, it must have been a time of much sorrow and confusion that challenged their faith.

I find the fact that Jesus appeared first to a woman—Mary Magdalene—after the resurrection refreshing. Jesus cares about us, friend! He wants to make Himself known to us, just like He did to Mary Magdalene the day He arose from the grave. And just like He did with Mary Magdalene, He calls our name.

"*But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned and said to Him in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and Your Father, to My God and Your God.' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'—and that He had said these things to her*." (John 20:11-18)

Did you read that? He called her name! Mary Magdalene did not recognize our risen Savior. Then, "*Jesus said to her, 'Mary*.'" He called her name, and she clung to Him! This fills me with so much joy and hope!

Just as Jesus called Mary's name that day, He calls your name today. Will you cling to Him as Mary did? Not physically cling, as she did, but spiritually speaking. Will you cling to the risen Savior today in a spiritual sense? Meet with Him in prayer. Meet with Him as you read and meditate on His Word.

Let's listen for the risen Savior to call our name today, and then, let's cling!

*"You'll find encouragement on every page of this book—encouragement to seek God above all else. The strong, spiritual emphasis will challenge you to turn to God for daily direction and experience His presence in a whole new and intentional way. Sweeter Than Honey will become more to you than just another daily devotional. It will become a keepsake as you record prayers and participate in thought-provoking, practical exercises that touch every aspect of your life and draw you closer to our Creator."*

—from the Prologue

*Sweeter Than Honey* is a 365-day devotional journey centered on Psalm 119:103.

"*How sweet are Your Words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth*!"

It's a book written to help you find peace in the chaos and strength for your weakest moments as it encourages you in your daily walk with God. These 365 devotions will lead you gently through God's Word in chronological order of book authorship. When you read the accompanying passage for each day you will read through the entire Bible.

Hi friend, I hope you will join me on this journey!

I've been a Christian since the third grade. That's where the journey began for me. Throughout my life God has continued to pursue me for which I am grateful. No doubt, left to myself I would have made a great big mess of things! Maybe you feel the same.

I'm a daughter, wife, mother of four, and grandmother. I love coffee and dark chocolate more than the average person. I'm also a Christian lifestyle blogger and the content manager at www.InstaEncouragements.com. If you haven't visited us over at the blog, or on social media, I hope you will very soon. Stop by and say hello. I'd love to hear from you!

Join us over at the private, *Sweeter Than Honey* Facebook group and share your thoughts. Find like-minded friends and let's do this together. We're waiting for you!

Category: RELIGION | Christian Living | Spiritual Growth

Patsy

*#SweeterThanHoney*