

GOD'S KEEPING **POWER**

LEARNING TO PUT YOUR TRUST IN GOD
AS YOUR "KEEPER"

GRAHAM COOKE

AN INTERACTIVE JOURNAL

BOOK 7
BEING WITH GOD SERIES



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GRAHAM COOKE

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DEDICATION

This journal can only be dedicated to the Lord. He is the ultimate keeper. His love, generosity and kindness are the very foundation of our lives.

Unless we know Him as the One with power to save and keep us in the critical moments of life, we will never contend against the enemy, nor set foot on a battlefield where danger is present.

If we are to become more than conquerors we must be kept in a high place of confidence and faith.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Families are the bedrock of life. They supply the love, belief, laughter, determination and focus to enable each member to grow in confidence and take on seemingly impossible things. Wives, sons, daughters and grandchildren become the world that we look through along with our friends.

We work, persevere, build, persist and develop with them in mind. Their love, acceptance and support acts as a catalyst for all that we attempt. They lift us beyond measure into a place in Christ that contains more than we imagine.

Heather, Ben, Seth, Sophie and partners. Theresa, Alexis and Alyssa. Our wonderful grandchildren. All have contributed to the fullness of my ongoing life experience.

The brilliant friends that I have walked with for several decades. The amazing leaders and ministries that have graced my life. The Radiance Community in Santa Barbara, a grand company with whom to explore life and fullness in Jesus!

Finally, to the one in the coffee house who started this journey and the God who sustains it.

INTRODUCTION

One person with God is always in the majority. This statement is foreign to our democratically-tuned minds, but it is true. One person with God, has all of the power and authority. When things are tough, who would you rather be in friendship with? A thousand people who can't defeat one, or one who can defeat a thousand?

Who do you want standing next to you when everything goes pear-shaped? I want to stand next to my keeper—my best friend, the person who gave Himself for me, the one who wants me to succeed, the God whose joy it is for me to go further than I ever thought possible.

We cannot build a church without covenant friendships with God and man. We must drop the morality of the world and go for something deeper, better, and more profound in our relationships. When we accept God as our keeper, we no longer have to pray, "Lord, come to me," because He will have discovered us to be a people who He can't stay away from. God cannot deny Himself. When He sees people living together in unity, He cannot stay away. Acts 1:14 tells us that the disciples were in "*one accord*" when the Holy Spirit blew into the Upper Room and changed the world. Everything in God longs to be amongst a people of one accord.

If we truly intend to rise up and be the Church God has called us to be, we will face persecution and opposition. God loves those hurdles. He loves to stand with us in the battlefield

and be totally outnumbered. He laughs in the face of His enemies. "We'll just wait here," He tells the multitudes. "Why don't you go and get some reinforcements and come back. We'll still be here and we'll still beat you like an old drum."

One with God is always in the majority. It's a lesson of God's keeping power that we would be wise to learn.

Graham Cooke

GOD'S KEEPING
POWER

It was an ordinary evening in the wilderness for Jacob. The young man had spent the day traveling, as ancient nomads often did, before finding a place between Beersheba and Haran to camp for the night. Exhausted from his journey, Jacob fell asleep, using a large stone as a pillow.

This ordinary evening turned into an extraordinary experience with God. In his sleep, Jacob dreamed of a ladder between Heaven and Earth, with angels climbing up and down. At the very top, in Heaven itself, Jacob could see the Lord standing. *“I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants”* (Genesis 28:13), God told the young nomad. *“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you”* (Genesis 28:15).

Jacob awoke, stunned by what he had seen and heard. The Lord’s words resounded in his ears: *“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go.”* The God who had created the universe had committed to being Jacob’s keeper. Jacob couldn’t believe how fortunate he was. *“Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it,”* he said, shaking with holy fear. *“How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!”* God’s glory, grace and loyalty awed Jacob.

“A FAITHFUL FRIEND IS THE
MEDICINE OF LIFE.”
APOCRYPHA

In return, Jacob took his stone pillow, set it up as a pillar, and anointed it with oil. He renamed the spot Bethel—“House of God”—and made his own vow back to the Lord. Jacob said:

If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You. (Genesis 28:20–22)

This power encounter changed Jacob's life. God kept him all the days of his life, turning him into the father of the tribes of Israel.

When God is our keeper, we can rest. We never have to fear or fret, we can confidently put everything into His hands and trust Him. Understanding that God wants to keep us is a foundational principle of our spirituality. We must learn to rest in God's keeping power.

God doesn't slumber or sleep. He keeps us safe. He doesn't allow our foot to slip. He won't let you stumble. He never loses focus; He always pays attention. He protects us from the enemy, He keeps our soul safe. He guards us in every part of our journey.

Our rest flows out of our confidence in God and what He wants to be for us. When we worry, it's a sign that we don't fully trust God to keep us. Our low threshold of faith often takes us out of God's care because we think we have to do everything ourselves. We run all over creation trying to get help even though God Himself wants to keep us. He loves to protect us.

Instead of giving in to our soul—our mind, will and emotions—we must lean on His everlasting arms. The first place we should go when we're in trouble is the heart of God. When

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SARAH ELLIS,
BRITISH MISSIONARY

we live under that umbrella of His keeping power, we no longer have to pray for His presence to come. It's already with us.

We can have this same type of relationship with one another. Just as God has made a covenant to keep us, so we can be Christ-like in our friendships and keep oth-

ers. All too often, Christians have Kleenex relationships, using a person once or twice and then throwing them away. This was not the model Jesus taught. It cuts Him deeply when men and women use and abuse one another. We are not called to look for reasons not to love each other.

ANCIENT KEEPERS



The principle of keeping and being kept had great significance in Israel throughout the Bible. It was an important principle for a man to ask someone else to be a keeper over his life

and property. This idea was treated with reverence and care. Throughout Israel's history, one can read of keepers of the city gate, keepers of the king's forest, keepers of the house, keepers of the tabernacle, keepers of the door of entry, keepers of the sheep, keepers of the vineyard, and others.

Keepers were chosen for their courage, their integrity, and their skill. They were trustworthy individuals, proven in adversity. Keepers would not quit or back down in the face of opposition. They were incredibly loyal. A great keeper mirrored God's nature.

Because of the trust that flowed from a keeper being such a significant person, they were given responsibility for people and property that were very important or dear. It was a very personal thing to have a keeper.

David kept his father's sheep. Today, such a job sounds insignificant. But back then, livestock was a family's fortune and future. It represented all of Jesse's wealth. It was an honor for David to be trusted with the sheep. He defended them against raiders, bears, and lions. Before he went to enter his destiny in his unlikely victory over Goliath, Scripture records that he found another keeper to watch his father's sheep (1 Samuel 17:20). The scribe who recorded David's life knew that it was important to note how the future king cared for the things he was given to keep. David's subjects and

"LET ME LIVE IN A HOUSE
BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD
AND BE A FRIEND TO MAN."
SAM WALTER FOSS

descendants could be proud that even as a young man, he stood by his oath as a keeper.

Being a keeper is not a casual thing. David didn't just grab the first bloke he saw and turn over his father's wealth to him. He searched for the strongest, bravest, most integrity-filled person he could find. "Would you come and keep my father's sheep while I am away?" he asked. The new keeper knew what an honor and responsibility it was to be asked to do this task.

Keepers can also be described as armorbearers. An armorbearer acted as a bodyguard, as someone who literally kept the head of his charge safe. It was the ultimate keeping responsibility, for a man's life hung in your care.

The lives of three men—Saul, Jonathan, and David—were irrevocably intertwined by keeping covenants. Jonathan had his own armorbearer while David served as Saul's. In the midst of those two relationships, a deep, keeping friendship emerged between Jonathan—the familial heir to Saul's throne—and David—God's chosen to inherit the throne. The challenges, victories and defeats these three leaders faced profoundly illustrates the power of a keeping covenant.