



# For Goodness' Sake

A daily book of cheer for nurse's aides  
and others who care



by BETHANY KNIGHT CNA



10<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary  
Edition

FOR GOODNESS' SAKE

*A daily book of cheer for nurse's aides  
and others who care*

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## PREFACE

I'm a great believer in celebrations, in pausing to honor the passage of time or a special milestone. Hearing that a tenth anniversary edition of *For Goodness' Sake* was in the works delighted me.

My admiration for the women and men who inspired this book has only increased over the years. As our population continues to age, caregivers are more precious than ever.

In the preface to the first edition of *For Goodness' Sake*, I didn't tell the whole truth. Referencing the stories nursing assistants told during motivational workshops, I wrote, "Wishing to share these moments of greatness, I began to write this book, as a tribute to the world's most noble profession."

Left unsaid was that a powerful and vivid dream actually inspired me to sit down over a three-year period and write what I believe to be the first daily devotional published for nursing assistants.

I woke one morning in 1991 with a lovely warmth filling my chest. Later that week I told my spiritual director, Pastor Asa Sprague, that the dream left me with a feeling akin to the joy and wonder I felt years ago cuddling my newborn son. "I felt just as happy and excited, but I wasn't holding a baby; I was touching a manuscript. It was a tall stack of typed paper sitting in my roll-top desk."

"What was the title of the book?" Asa asked.

"I don't know; I didn't look."

"Bethany, have the dream again, and make sure you look at the title. Find out what you are supposed to write."

Two weeks later, the manuscript appeared in another dream. I read the cover sheet: *For Goodness' Sake: A Daily Book of Cheer for Nurse's Aides*. I told Asa; I also told him I could write that book—that I had fallen deeply in love with aides, and that I wanted to lift them up.

My husband, Thurmond Knight, would watch me writing the book and say, “You’re like Mozart—you just sit and write, each page is complete inside you.” He was right; my soul was full of love for caregivers, the tenders and befrienders of our loved ones.

Helen Kerschner of the Beverly Foundation suggested I contact Mark Hartman about publishing *For Goodness' Sake*. When I reached Mark, he said just a night or two before my call he had thought, “We should publish a devotional.”

Caregivers reading *For Goodness' Sake* say, “I have wished for a book like this! I needed it; it keeps me going.” Why am I not surprised? Writer, publisher and readers are all obeying that Inner Voice, the Voice that whispers, “Love one another.”

But, oh, how the world has changed since my dream met Mark’s idea. It seems that loving one another has become even harder.

In the West, we’re obsessed with terror and security. In the East, we’re seen as the “Haves” exploiting the “Have-Nots.”

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 firefighters, police officers and other public servants were celebrated for helping put the country back together again. The national disaster re-awakened us to the preciousness of life. News broadcasts were full of tributes to heroic individuals who put their lives on the line for strangers.

Very similar words can be applied to the selfless service rendered by millions of certified nursing assistants. Within your extraordinary brother- and sisterhood is a commitment to valuing every person regardless of circumstances. You civilize us.

Like other public servants, CNAs are typically underpaid and undervalued, taken for granted by neighbors too busy to notice or appreciate them. Only when a citizen faces an unexpected need for help does a new awareness set in: where would we be without caregivers and caretakers? A family faces a crisis and you hear, "You are so important, so worthy of our respect and admiration!"

Bless you and all you do! I salute your devotion to valuing life and making peace. Never diminish yourself or your tender loving calling.

Love one another. May peace prevail on Earth.

Bethany Knight

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[www.tenderlovingcalling.org](http://www.tenderlovingcalling.org)



## FOREWORD

I clearly remember the first time I met Bethany Knight. I was a newly-selected member of the Mississippi Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Leadership Council. We were having our organizational meeting in Jackson, Mississippi. Bethany was to be our guest speaker. I was issued a packet by our company's human resource manager in preparation for this meeting. Enclosed was a copy of *For Goodness' Sake*.

First, the beautiful cover caught my attention. As I examined the book, I noticed it was written by a CNA. I opened it and started to read. Every word seemed to leap off the page! It seemed to echo the words, thoughts and actions around me. My excitement grew at the thought of meeting the author. Little did I know that not only would I get to meet this lovely person, but that we would become prayer partners and close friends.

*For Goodness' Sake* could not have been published at a more appropriate time. It was first published in the mid-1990s—a time when caregivers sorely needed encouragement. This book seemed like the answer to our prayers. It became and remains an inspiration to many.

I truly believe that Bethany was led to write this book. She was like an angel of mercy sent to CNAs across the world to console them and start the healing process. I sensed this power strongly during a national CNA Leadership conference call. Participating CNAs were working in different places around the country, but all were carrying the same message and feeling the same pain.

Demands were being placed on CNAs from all sides. In addition to the mandates and new laws governing long-term



care facilities, we heard constant complaints about the quality of care. On the floor, we were dealing with high client-to-CNA ratios. We often encountered negative attitudes when, in fact, CNAs were doing their best, providing 85–90% of the overall resident care.

All of these factors made an already stressful situation even more difficult. When a nursing assistant feels she isn't being treated professionally, her self-esteem often suffers. And when an aide doesn't feel good about herself, staff conflicts arise and more CNAs leave. With high turnover, the already high client-to-CNA ratio becomes even more pronounced.

These were the conditions in my workplace when I first turned to *For Goodness' Sake*. In its pages, I found the hope and respect a CNA longs for—a calm in the midst of troubled waters.

I have been a certified nursing assistant for nearly 20 years. When I walk the halls today tending to my duties, I think of this book and feel a sense of inner peace because someone took the time to recognize the enormous commitment made daily by CNAs.

Every CNA should have, buy, or be given a copy of Bethany's books, especially *For Goodness' Sake* and its sequel, *Blessed are the Caregivers*. They make a difference.

Debra Medders, CNA

EUPORA, MS

JANUARY

JANUARY 1

YOU ARE ONE OF 1.5 MILLION NURSE'S AIDES BATHING, DRESSING, FEEDING AND LOVING RESIDENTS 24 HOURS A DAY IN NURSING HOMES ACROSS THIS COUNTRY.

Unfortunately we only read about you and your work when you make a mistake, as when Ora Lee got her name in the national news. The fifty-six-year-old nurse's aide from Mississippi hit a resident.

For more than two years, Diane, a nurse's aide in a northern Vermont nursing home, has been smuggling home-made baked beans to a resident. Seems the little old lady loves baked beans (her favorite food), but somebody decided they aren't good for her. Diane's sweet gesture will never hit the papers.

Praise yourself for the small, secret things that you do for residents, such as going shopping for their grandson's birthday, fixing their hair a special way, coming in on your day off, or giving away a favorite pin.

We won't read your name in the newspapers—just on your residents' faces.

*Today:* Praise yourself.

IN YOUR TOWN, SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE DRIVE BRAND NEW CARS THAT WOULD TAKE MORE THAN 250 OF YOUR WEEKLY PAYCHECKS TO BUY—ALMOST FIVE YEARS OF YOUR PAY.

One hour of the muffler installer's services costs you four hours of your pay. When your toilet breaks, you pay five times your hourly wage for help, parts not included.

Television tells you having money means you've made it. The more money you have, the more successful you are. Right?

Wrong! The real test of success is what happens between people, the loving kindnesses that we exchange.

How many people hear "I love you" from the people they work with? How many bankers get kisses and hugs from their customers?

Once you realize your heart is your bank, you'll never feel poor again.

*Today:* Be happy! You're rich!

JANUARY 3

MOST OF THE PEOPLE NEEDING YOUR CARE ARE POOR WOMEN OVER THE AGE OF 85. THEY HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THEIR BONES, BLADDER AND/OR BRAIN.

Like you, they never made enough money to save for old age, so the government pays for their care. But these tax dollars don't go far enough.

About 70 cents of every dollar spent in a nursing home is spent on staff wages and benefits. The other 30 cents pays for food, taxes, insurance, electricity, heat, phones, supplies, new furniture, roof repairs and so on.

Your employer is not paid enough by Medicaid and Medicare to pay you what you deserve. That is because this country has not discovered a way to pay for long-term health care.

So you are underpaid. And until the people of this country, and our government, decide to pay enough for taking care of old people, you will be underpaid.

Being underpaid does not mean it is fair or right. It means you are modern-day saints, willing to lovingly care for fragile old people who have no one else to turn to. Thank God for you.

*Today:* Realize you were born before your time.

BEING OLD IN AMERICA IS NOT MUCH TO LOOK FORWARD TO. WHILE WE ALL ARE AFRAID OF DEATH AND DON'T WANT TO DIE YOUNG, WE ALSO (STRANGELY ENOUGH) ARE AFRAID OF GETTING OLD.

Remember the beauty cream commercial? The actress, who looks about seventeen, is worried about wrinkles and says she is "going to fight aging every step of the way!"

Maybe she should kill herself and declare victory?

Let's not forget all the family members who don't come to visit your residents because they are so uncomfortable with seeing a loved one grow old.

Is it any surprise, then, that you, who have chosen to care for our old treasures, are as devalued as the elderly themselves?

People ask you, "How can you work there? Isn't it depressing? It smells so bad, and people are dying. You must be a special kind of person."

In a way these strangers are right. You are special because you have discovered an ancient truth: love comes in all sizes, shapes, ages and smells. And you get and give some every day.

*Today:* Looking in the mirror, say "I am special!"

JANUARY 5

TODAY, PICK UP A NEWSPAPER AND GO TO THE CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS AT THE BACK.

Now look under the personals column, all the people looking for love.

“Let us give your healthy, white, newborn baby a happy, secure home. Call us collect. Bill and Mary.”

“Single white male seeking attractive brunette, age 20-28, for fun, romance and possibly more. Write Bob.”

The Cupid Connection, Dating Exchange, Love Partners—everyone is thinking that, to be happy, they need to have their perfect picture of Mister or Miss or Baby Right. Healthy, slim, young. And they also think that, until they have these ideal relationships, their lives will be empty, without love, incomplete.

Invite them to visit you at work! Let them see that you get paid to love, and lead far from an empty life.

*Today:* Share the good news of your work.

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED THE POWER YOU HAVE?

Do you realize that most of the people you work with would not and could not exist without you? No kidding!

Lying in their beds, or slumped in their chairs, they await your arrival. Just going to the bathroom is something they cannot do without you.

They listen for your voice. Why, some know you're coming just by hearing your step! They ask about your family, your evening, your new haircut.

In their little, still lives, you are the scenery that goes by. You are the beautiful view. You are the proof that life goes on.

You, even when you feel overtired, underpaid, short-staffed, hung over, angry, depressed, sick or fed up, are just what they need. In your own way you are perfect.

*Today:* Live up to your greatness.



JANUARY 7

ON THOSE RARE OCCASIONS YOUR RESIDENT HAS A VISITOR, HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ANY OF THE CONVERSATION?

Usually the visitor talks a bit nervously about life “out there”—work, kids, school. Sometimes they mention how friends are, or stores that have closed. Pets and house renovations are reported upon too.

Often a little gift is brought, such as a plant, flowers, or chocolate. Those times when photographs are shared are especially happy.

After these pleasantries, your resident is asked: “Well, how are you, Mom?” Or Dad, or Gram, or whoever.

They usually say “OK” or “about the same.” And then the room gets quiet. It just seems hard to think of other things to say.

Until you enter the room. “Well here’s someone I want you to meet!” they say, reaching out for you. What comes next is news of your life, your kids, your dog, your luck.

*Today:* Count your best friends at work.