

The
**SECRET
GARDEN**
Devotional

A Chapter-by-Chapter Companion
to the Beloved Classic



Rachel Dodge

Praise for *The Secret Garden Devotional*

“With the skill of a master gardener and the gentle hand of a friend, Rachel guides us through Mary’s path and garden to show us the seeds of wisdom and wonder that have been planted there all along. She then sows these truths deep into our hearts with a special blend of biblical knowledge, purposeful prayer, and real-life application.”

— KERI WILT, motivational speaker, writer, and Heart Cultivator at www.TheWell-TendedLife.com and the great-great-granddaughter of Frances Hodgson Burnett, author of classics like *The Secret Garden*

“Each year we hold on to the hope that the sun will shine after the darkness of winter, in order for new life to burst forth from the gardens we cultivate. Rachel Dodge has given us such an eloquent reminder in *The Secret Garden Devotional* that no matter how bleak our surroundings might look, new life is stirring just below the surface to be revealed at the most opportune time—God’s perfect time! We can each do ourselves a favor by spending some intentional moments with this book to cultivate the garden in our hearts.”

— JEN SMITH, book collector, photographer, and curator of Storybook Style (@storybookstyle)

“This devotional beautifully teases out the story of God’s love, faithfulness, and redemption quietly woven throughout the pages of a beloved classic. You’ll find encouragement and personal insight as you reread Mary Mary Quite Contrary’s story, this time through the lens of God’s redemptive love.”

— JULIE FISK, co-author of five devotionals, including *The One Year Daily Acts of Friendship Devotional* and *One Good Word A Day: 365 Invitations to Encourage, Deepen, and Refine Your Faith*

“*The Secret Garden Devotional* pulls themes from the novel that touch our hearts and nurture our souls, so we can relish the garden as a place of hope, recognize seasons of change, and above all, remember that spring will come again soon. It reminds us that there’s a bigger picture and offers hope that we will grow and blossom again in time. Rachel’s choice of encouraging verses for each devotional entry, alongside the prayers she wrote, remind us that we’re never alone, God is for us, God protects and shelters us, and God sings over us. The illustrations are enchanting as well.”

— DEB GRUELLE, bestselling author of *Ten Little Night Stars* (Zonderkidz) and *Aching for a Child* (David C. Cook)

“In sixth grade, I got a toy padlock and key from the prize box at the dentist’s office and pretended it was my key to the secret garden. That’s how in love I was with the story. But it wasn’t until adulthood that I truly appreciated the beauty of *The Secret Garden*. Rachel Dodge’s devotional takes that beauty to an even deeper level by uncovering what it can teach us about hope, renewal, friendship, and our ultimate healing through Christ. Thank you, Rachel, for bringing this favorite classic to life in a new way.”

— JEANETTE HANSCOME, multi-published author and speaker

“*The Secret Garden* was the first book I ever fell in love with, and it has become my children’s favorite read-aloud. Having read it nearly every year since I turned ten, Mary, Dickon, Colin, Ben, and Martha have become cherished friends, and they often call me to lose myself in a world where blossoms and children are hidden behind locked doors. Rachel’s devotional is the perfect companion to this beloved classic. She gently pulls lessons from each chapter and grows them with the tenderness of a gardener. *The Secret Garden Devotional* is meant to be read aloud, children delighting over the charming illustrations and teenagers discovering connections between a beloved story and spiritual truths.”

— KIMBERLY DUFFY, author of *Every Word Unsaid* and
The Weight of Air (February 2023)



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Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.

*To my dear family for their love and support.
And for my grandmother Delores Beckman who
gave me my first copy of The Secret Garden
and inspired me to become an author like her.*



*“It was the sweetest, most mysterious-
looking place anyone could imagine.”*

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT,
The Secret Garden

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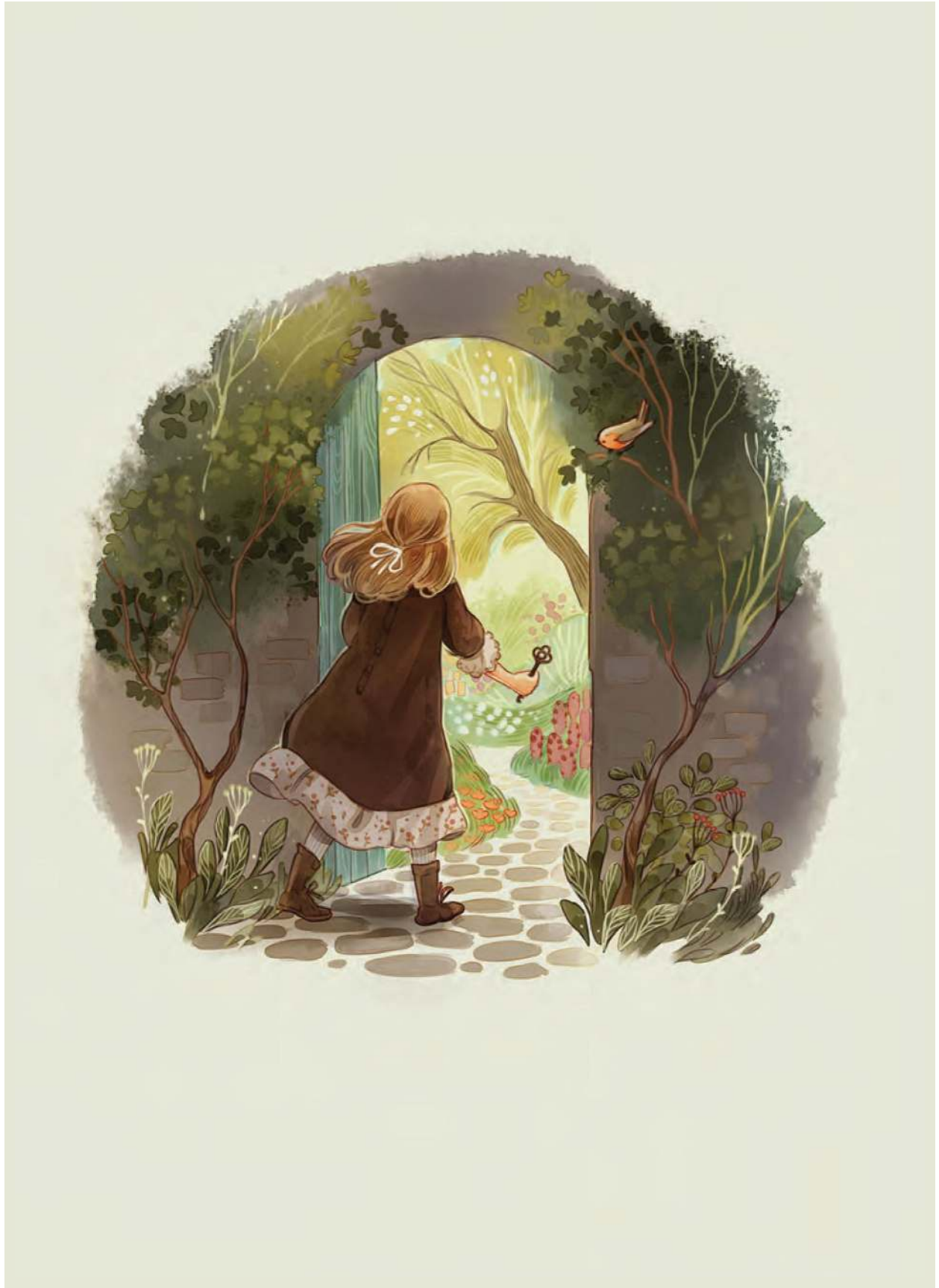
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About the Author



A
SECRET GARDEN
WELCOME

“The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.”

ISAIAH 58:11 NLT

My grandmother mailed a beautifully illustrated edition of *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett to me when I was in the fourth grade. Inside, she wrote these words: *Welcome to the sweetest, most mysterious-looking place anyone could imagine.* As I read the first few pages, I fell in love immediately.

That was the first day of a lifetime of wonderful memories “in the garden” and through the long corridors and winding passages of Misselthwaite Manor. *The Secret Garden* is a novel I read on repeat as I was growing up, and I still keep coming back to it as an adult. I love to lose myself in the magic and mystery of that hidden garden, a place where I can slip away, quiet my heart, and find peace. It reminds me that healing, restoration, and new life are always possible—no matter how trying the circumstances or how difficult the situation.

In a profusion of aching sweetness, *The Secret Garden* also bursts with themes and motifs that can teach us deep spiritual truths when we look at them through the lens of faith. Like the garden itself, our hearts must be carefully tended and cultivated. When we neglect the care and

keeping of our souls, metaphorical weeds choke out new growth and thorny branches go unpruned. Seeds of bitterness take root, the soil of our hearts becomes hard, and life falls into a state of disrepair. In contrast, our lives bloom when we consistently sow to the spirit.

If we think of God as a wise and gentle gardener, we see how He faithfully tends to our hearts and carefully pulls up weeds, trims away tangles, and prunes back dry branches. As we invite Him into our everyday moments, He clears space for tender shoots of hope and joy to take root. He waters and fertilizes the places that are wilting and undernourished. He revives and replenishes our dry spots and causes them to flourish and bear fruit.

The Secret Garden also offers meaningful symbols we can examine from a biblical perspective. There is a “robin who showed the way,” a door that leads into the garden, and a key that unlocks the door. Mary Lennox’s continual search for the way into the garden reminds us to seek after God with all our heart. The buried key and the hidden door to the garden are reminiscent of the steps of faith we take on the road to knowing Christ—the way, the truth, the life (John 14:6). There is one door that leads to the remission of sins and eternal life with God. The key to that door is faith in Jesus Christ.

Mary’s fictional story also provides rare insights into God’s faithfulness in every season. There is an ebb and flow in the different stages of life and a season for everything under the sun (Ecclesiastes 3:1). There are summer seasons of harvest and bounty, autumn months of pruning and planning, and winter seasons of digging and waiting.

Best of all, *The Secret Garden* reminds us that spring *is* coming! No matter how dry or barren things might look, our lives can and will blossom again under the gentle care of our Lord. He can bring order out of chaos, restore that which was lost, and cause His people to flourish—even after a long winter season. He plants seeds of revival, bringing to life things that look dead. By His power, our lives and relationships can burst into full and glorious

bloom once more because Jesus is in the business of making all things new (Revelation 21:5)!

Are you in need of personal revival? Have you experienced a long winter season or an extended drought? *The Secret Garden Devotional* is designed to fill you to overflowing with the faith, hope, and courage you need to thrive in your daily walk with Jesus. God is ready and waiting to meet with you and encourage your heart as you sit down with Him each day to read, pray, and soak up His Word.

Inside this book, you'll find inspiration and practical tools for tending the garden of your heart. This book contains one devotional entry for every corresponding chapter of *The Secret Garden*, plus three bonus chapters, giving you a 30-day journey with Jesus. Each entry includes quotes, themes, and lessons from that chapter of the novel, thoughts for personal reflection, key Bible verses and scripture application, and a short prayer.

When you sit down to read, have your Bible, a notebook, and a pen handy. You may want to keep your favorite copy of *The Secret Garden* close by as well. Open your time with prayer and ask Jesus to speak to your heart in a personal way. Ask Him to restore your soul and spark a renewed passion for His Word. Invite Him to water the dry places of your heart, plant new seeds of faith, and usher in a fresh wind of revival.

Are you longing to blossom and bloom in your faith? If you're ready to experience a season of renewal and a deeper walk with Jesus, the journey begins now!

DAY 1
Never Alone



*“The Lord himself goes before you
and will be with you; he will never
leave you nor forsake you. Do not
be afraid; do not be discouraged.”*

DEUTERONOMY 31:8 NIV





*“Why was I forgotten?” Mary said,
stamping her foot. “Why does nobody come?”*

(CHAPTER I)



In the opening scenes of *The Secret Garden*, cholera “in its most fatal form” sweeps through Mary Lennox’s home in India. Her parents—who are much too interested in parties, finery, and their own selfish lives to ever have spent much time with Mary—both die in the outbreak. Even the servants, who were Mary’s caretakers, all die or run away in fear. In the “confusion and bewilderment” of the outbreak, Mary hides away in the nursery and is “forgotten” by everyone: “Nobody thought of her, nobody wanted her. . .”

When Mary wakes up to silence on the third day, the house is “perfectly still” with “neither voices nor footsteps.” Two British officers come through the deserted bungalow and find Mary standing in the nursery all alone. Shocked at her presence, having assumed “the child no one ever saw” had died, one officer says, “She has actually been forgotten!” Mary stamps her foot and asks, “Why does nobody come?” The other officer blinks, as if to “wink tears away,” and explains to Mary the sad truth: “There is nobody left to come.”

It’s in this “strange and sudden way” that Mary finds out she has “neither father nor mother left.” She’s never really known her parents, but now she finds herself utterly alone. It’s as though the ground has shifted under Mary’s feet; nothing is as it should be. And though Mary will later be transplanted to a new home where

she will grow and flourish, put down deep roots, and be made whole again, all she can see in this moment is what she's lost.

In the midst of painful trials, it's hard to see what possible good God could bring from it. We often feel like Mary Lennox—bewildered and alone. But take heart: Your heavenly Father knows the plans He has for you, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11 niv). He is able, “through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20 nlt). He can bring beauty from the ashes of our deepest losses (Isaiah 61:3).

In the Bible, Ruth's story of love and redemption was actually set in motion by tragedy. When her husband died, life as she knew it in Moab ceased. And though she could have stayed in Moab with her family where it was familiar and safe, Ruth bravely chose to go with Naomi to Judah and follow the one true God (Ruth 1). Ruth trusted God with her future, and God protected her and provided for her (Ruth 4). He blessed her with a new husband and a child—and even gave her an honored place in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5)!

*He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my refuge; I will not be shaken.*

PSALM 62:6 NASB

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Are you facing a painful ending? Do you feel uprooted or alone? Be assured of this: God has not forgotten or abandoned you. “I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:15–16 niv). He goes before you, He is with you,

and He will *never* leave you or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:8). You are His forever.

Life is full of changes and uncertainties, trials and turmoil, but you can be firmly rooted and grounded in the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17). God's "unfailing love for you will not be shaken" (Isaiah 54:10 niv). His faithful love endures *forever* (Psalm 136:1). Take this time now to pray and ask Jesus to be your rock and your firm foundation. Trust in Him "with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5–6 niv).

PRAYER FOR TODAY:

Dearest Jesus, thank You for loving me and for taking care of me. Thank You for reminding me that my story is not finished and that You have good plans for me. Help me stand firm in my faith and remain rooted and grounded in Your love in the midst of my circumstances. In the areas where I feel alone, I ask for Your comfort and encouragement. Please reveal Your plans and purposes for my life and give me a glimpse of the bigger picture You have in mind for this area of my life: [your prayer]. In Jesus' name, amen.

"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

ISAIAH 54:10 NIV

DAY 2

Shelter in the Storm



*You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from
trouble and surround me with
songs of deliverance.*

PSALM 32:7 NIV