



August 10, 2026

Faith Matters: A Buechner Routine

I'm aware that for many of my friends and relatives, a morning routine is dictated by necessity rather than choice. Caring for children, preparing for work or school, maintaining a household, or following an intense training regimen are activities that would take precedence over anything like the relaxing first hour of my morning.

I'm an early riser, even in retirement, although occasionally I don't get up quite early enough for our Bordoodle, Stanley. Stanley is eager for a brief outing and his morning meal, but then he goes back to bed, and I am free to make my coffee, open my computer, and 1) look for Beth Olin's daily photograph and Bible verse, and 2) play Keyword, Wordle, Mini Crossword, Spelling Bee, Connections, and Letter Boxed, in that order.

Before reading (too much!) news and opinion, I then look in my email for the "Frederick Buechner Quote of the Day," and it's this daily email, if you don't already receive it, that I'd like to recommend as a possible addition to your own morning routine.

If you haven't read Buechner before, the daily emails might serve as an excellent introduction. Many of you know much more about Frederick Buechner than I do, and you've read several of his books. Even so, you might enjoy reminders of what you read decades ago or what might seem even more relevant to you now. Buechner's

nonfiction writing is eminently quotable and easily excerpted, especially since some of his books are organized as ABCs. Many of his essays or passages from them are included in more than one book.

If Frederick Buechner had lived four more years, he would have been 100 years old on July 11 this year. He was educated at Lawrenceville and Princeton, where he was readily identified as having “a way with words” (*The Sacred Journey* 90). His verbal ability and imagination earned him early success with his first novel, *A Long Day’s Dying*, but his second novel was less successful. He wasn’t particularly a churchgoer, but spending a year in New York, he began attending a church because it was nearby and he had heard of the preacher, Rev. George Buttrick. It was Buttrick himself who drove Buechner to Union Theological Seminary, where Buechner enrolled in the fall, as he mentions at the end of *The Sacred Journey*. He was chaplain and teacher for several years at Phillips Exeter Academy, but most of us know him as the author of 39 books.

Check the seven-paragraph “Quote of the Day” from July 17, 2026, simply entitled “Lot,” which was first published as part of Buechner’s *Peculiar Treasures* (1979). The Biblical text is Genesis 19:1-29. Buechner’s close reading is evident, but you’ll notice a sense of humor, conversational style, and skepticism about Lot’s character. Buechner acknowledges that God identified Lot as a person worth saving from Sodom, though Buechner seems wryly mystified as to what Lot’s positive qualities might have been. Lot does show hospitality to the angels, but when people pound on the door asking for the angels/men, Lot offers to send out his unmarried daughters instead and suggests that the crowd could have its way with his daughters. Lot never seems very concerned about the “Imminent liquidation of all his fellow citizens,” and he tries to negotiate with the angels rather than follow directions. According to Buechner, Lot wants to relocate to a small city because he dislikes “wilderness camping,” doing without indoor plumbing, etc. Finally, Buechner suggests that maybe when Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt, that might at least have been preferable to continued life as Lot’s wife.

Perhaps a more typical example is “Life,” “Quote of the Day” just several days earlier, July 12, 2026, and first published in *Wishful Thinking* (1973). Buechner suggests that we’re tempted to reduce life to clichés, such as “a bowl of cherries” or “a rat race.” Then he says that a theologian who had been discussing miracles was asked for an example of a miracle. He paused and said, “There is only one miracle. . . It is life.” Then Buechner asks the reader a series of

questions and says if the answer is no to all or several questions, “chances are that you’re dead.”

Just as surely as M follows L, “Miracle” follows “Life,” and the Buechner “Quote of the Day” for August 5, 2026, is entitled “Miracle.” In this short excerpt, Buechner is quoted from *Beyond Words*: “Faith in God is less apt to proceed from miracles than miracles from faith in God.” We need not only react to God’s miracles; our faith could (maybe?) produce miracles!

The titles are sequenced alphabetically, and they appear again periodically. The same excerpt “Miracle” had also been the Quote of the Day back on November 17, 2025.

If “Miracle” makes you think of immortality, you can look back in your emails, if you’ve subscribed, for “Immortality,” the Quote of the Day for June 2, 2026. (Or see Resources and “Quote of the Day” on the Buechner Center website, and while you’re there, check out *The Buechner Review* and the *100th Birthday Edition*, which includes readers’ essays.) Here, Buechner is quoted as probing at some length the idea of immortality. He explores the assumption by many Christians that the body dies but the soul lives on. You’d have to consider Buechner’s whole five-point argument, but he says the human body was created by God as a “good and glorious invention,” and the Bible speaks of the resurrection of the body. Finally, “The idea of the immortality of the soul is based on the experience of humanity’s indomitable spirit. The idea of the resurrection of the body is based on the experience of God’s unspeakable [“extravagant”?] love.” Good news to contemplate as part of one’s morning routine!

Works Cited:

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