

Everything We Need

Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6).

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Song: “Enough for Me”

I visited a rural, mountain village of Guatemala, where families have little to call their own. Yet they don't care about all that they don't have. They are happy simply to have food for their stomachs and clothes for their backs each day. Amid the tin roofs, cement floors, and dirt streets, some people even emanate a mysterious joy because they received the greatest treasure of all: a relationship with Jesus Christ.

It's easy to get caught up believing that security is found in possessions or money. But the more we strive for security that way, the more it seems out of reach. We need to work harder, earn more, have more, be more. Satisfaction becomes a vapor, and greed quickly takes shape. It doesn't take long for dishonorable desires and deeds to follow.

When we love and revere God more than anything else, that cycle of striving ceases. We understand that He who gives us life, breath, and provisions will continue to care for us. Our assurance of an eternal home with Him brings us peace and rest. We live only to serve Him, for we come to realize that we need nothing else but Him. He is our greatest treasure—our greatest gain in this life and the one to come.

Father, help me rely on the greatest treasure that leads to perfect contentment: knowing You. In Jesus' name, amen.

August 2–8. **Tricia Kline** lives in central Pennsylvania. A journalist and author, she enjoys reading, teaching, and spending time with her family and pets.

Holy Living

God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7

Song: “Make Me Like You”

Benedict of Nursia (c. AD 480–547) knew the struggle of living among an ungodly society. He decided to separate from society to become a monk and established a set of rules for living in response to the paganism he saw firsthand in Rome.

Every human being is born with a sin nature and into a fallen world. We all feel the ongoing tug to submit to ungodly desires. The pressure can lead to destructive patterns of behavior. Even Christians can succumb and adopt the ways of secular culture so much that we might not look or act much differently than the world around us. But believers have help to live holy lives even while we are in an ungodly society that we are sent to serve (John 17:18).

Living a holy life requires a daily, diligent dependence on the Lord’s sanctifying power in our lives. As we strive to please Him in every word and deed, He gives us strength to overcome. Through His strength, we can abide with God and live in His will. As we do, we will receive the joy and peace that comes only through holy living that pleases our Father.

Father, I want to please You by living a holy life to reflect Your light and truth to the people around me. Help me to daily submit to Your ways to the honor and glory of Your great name. In Jesus’ name, amen.

His Promises Never Fail

“Afterward they will come out of that country [they served as slaves] and worship me in this place” (Acts 7:7).

Scripture: Acts 7:2-7

Song: “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus”

My friend has had her share of workplace disappointments. After being overlooked for several promotions, it seemed nothing would change, and that God was absent. To overcome negative thoughts, she decided to memorize Scripture—and credited God with giving her both the desire and ability to do so. She memorized promises that sustained her in a season of waiting. She also discovered how her most recent rejection led to something better. Her doubting turned to trust and thankfulness for God’s promises.

God told Abraham that his descendants would possess the land on which he was standing and that they would worship Him there after years of slavery. It was a fantastic promise at the time, for Abraham had no children! What is more, God said it would be hundreds of years before the promise was fulfilled. However, no matter how difficult or distant, His promise would not fail.

We might have a hard time trusting God’s Word, especially when our circumstances seem hopeless to us. Our human expectations can blind us to God’s timing, sovereignty, and graciousness in the lives of His children. Even when it seems impossible, God always does what He says He will do. Whether we live to see the fulfillment or not, our only right response is to worship Him for His continued love and faithfulness.

Father, give me strength to trust Your promises, even when they seem impossible or distant. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Earnest Faith

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

Scripture: Hebrews 11:4-7, 17-27

Song: “My Reward”

In *Power Through Prayer*, E. M. Bounds provides numerous examples of men who devoted hours each day to communion with God. Excitement flooded their hearts as they approached His throne with confidence. Prayer fueled their urgency and empowerment for following Christ’s mission. They advanced the kingdom in ways impossible without regular, deep connection with God.

Many have understood the power of seeking God. Enoch walked with God (Genesis 5:24) and so pleased Him that he escaped death! Abel offered a pleasing sacrifice to God. Noah feared God enough to build an ark and warn the world of a coming judgment. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son and was rewarded with the blessing of future generations. And when it came time for God to release His people from bondage, Moses obeyed knowing that the Lord’s plan would lead to true and everlasting life.

We can seek money, success, power, or influence, but any reward will be inadequate and temporary. Or we can set aside worldly pursuits and earnestly seek God. We please Him when we trust Him completely with our lives, and we can be confident that we will secure an abiding, eternal reward.

Father, I want to earnestly seek after You and Your will. Intimacy with You is the greatest reward, and I know that one day my seeking will be complete when I am standing in Your presence. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Our Constant Guide

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Scripture: Hebrews 13:1-9, 17-19

Song: “Yesterday, Today, Forever”

A retired military officer once told me that his dream to see the world was birthed in the rural area where he grew up. His family had little money, so he figured the only way to achieve this dream was to join the military. He jumped at every opportunity to travel. His expertise in explosive ordnance disposal took him not only to other countries but also deep into secret missions involving weapons of mass destruction. As with many who live the military life, he was constantly moving.

Such a transient and unpredictable lifestyle could be very overwhelming! Our daily demands to fulfill regular responsibilities might be overwhelming enough. Add to that the pressure of media and culture telling us how to think and act. As Christians, we strive to remember that Christ is our enduring standard and the Holy Spirit our strength. When difficult change comes, we cling to this unchanging truth more than ever.

Examples in the Bible and church history and, hopefully, from our own family and friends reveal God’s faithfulness to those who trust in Him. God has never forsaken His people. Our contentment is found in His constant presence and promise never to leave. He offers ever-present protection and guidance as the changes come.

Father, I often get overwhelmed with the changes and pressures of life. Help me to remember that Jesus Christ—the one I follow—will never change, and that You will always be with me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Temporary Sacrifices

Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come (Hebrews 13:14).

Scripture: Hebrews 13:10-16

Song: “We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise”

When Nik Ripken was called out of his comfortable Kentucky home and to the overseas mission field, he was deeply affected and challenged by the lives of persecuted Christians around the world who refused to denounce their faith—even if it meant they would be put to death. In *The Insanity of God*, he challenges believers to assess whether their lives are based on the centrality of Christ.

Jesus urged people to count the cost before turning onto the narrow way. He warned that if He was persecuted, His disciples would be too. He often calls us out of comfort and onto the path of a sojourner. Just as Christ offered up His life as a sacrifice outside the city of Jerusalem, His followers may also be called to go where life is rife with suffering.

What is it, then, that draws people to such a dangerous discipleship journey? It's not the temporary tribulation but, rather, the enduring hope of eternity with Jesus. Jesus was disgraced in order to bring salvation to the world. We may also endure suffering for His name, but we never go alone, and it will only be for a time. The perfect city awaits, where we will find peace forever!

Father, help me to forsake comfort in this life in order to serve You and make You known to the world. Keep my eyes focused on the eternal city to come. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Certain Faith

By faith . . . Sarah . . . considered [God] faithful who had made the promise (Hebrews 11:11).

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Song: “While I Wait”

After my now-husband and I were dating for a while, we began seriously considering marriage. My husband even encouraged me to peruse bridal magazines for wedding ideas. He promised that the formal engagement would come, but I didn’t know when. Until he got down on one knee and slipped the beautiful ring on my finger, I lived in expectation and hope that the day would come.

How much more could the people of faith commended in Hebrews 11 be certain of the promises of the sovereign God? Take Abraham, who believed God’s promise of a permanent home when he was a wanderer (Hebrews 11:8), and Sarah who believed God would be faithful to His promise for a child (v. 11). Both of them, and others, died still believing in the future promises of God that would not be visible until they entered eternity.

Today we too are called to a life of faith in God’s future promises of an eternal home in Heaven for all who trust in Christ. We can be certain that such hope does not disappoint. Christ will one day return and set all things right. We know that better, eternal things are coming for those who trust the infinite God whose plans and purposes, so full of love and compassion, will always prevail.

Father, I want to live a life of perseverance, obeying and believing all that You have said. One day I know my faith will be sight. In Jesus’ name, amen.