

Like Stars at Night

I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name (Isaiah 45:3).

Scripture: Isaiah 45:1-10

Song: “In the Secret”

Darkness came early that time of year, so there was no light except a dim street lamp when I tossed a large bag of clothing into the Salvation Army drop box. I realized too late that the car keys in my hand had also sailed into the bin! After I berated myself, then prayed for wisdom, I did the only thing that came to mind. I hoisted my son into the dark bin. When my 4-year-old landed, his hand set down on top of the keys.

One hundred and fifty years before King Cyrus was born, Isaiah testified of the man to whom God would give a name, a purpose, and a promise. It was the promise of treasures and riches. But they were hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, in darkness, that God’s glory might be revealed when He bestowed them.

There will be times of darkness in every Christian’s life—times when we feel tossed into a hidden place, times when we feel like a child groping in the dark. But we can continue trusting God to bestow spiritual blessings that, like stars, shine most brightly in the night sky.

Father, when I feel alone in the darkness, help me trust that You are still with me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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March 1–6. **Sandra Vosburgh** lives in upstate South Carolina. She is a Bible teacher, director of women’s ministry, pastor’s wife, and grandmother.

A Course in Contentment

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation (Philippians 4:11-12).

Scripture: Philippians 4:10-19

Song: “Day by Day and with Each Passing Moment”

The ladies in our church once hosted a luncheon themed “Hats on Parade.” We considered the many “hats,” or roles, a woman may take on over the course of her life. A daughter may be a sister, wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, widow. As our roles and circumstances change, we may find that for us to wear any given hat well, we need a refresher course in contentment.

The apostle Paul learned to be content, whatever state he was in. Flogged, stoned, or destitute, he remained steady. In perils, persecutions, and imprisonments he testified of satisfaction. How could one in such a state be content? Paul himself answers the question in Philippians 4:13: “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” Through the strength Paul found in Jesus Christ, he endured every hardship.

We too can endure the most challenging of circumstances—the most uncomfortable of hats—with grace and courage, knowing our trials are part of our Father’s sovereign plan. As we trust in His infinite wisdom and rely on His strength, we can each wear well the hat we’re wearing today.

Father, thank You for the strength You give each day, moment by moment, enabling Your children not only to endure hardship but also to endure with contentment. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What Are You Looking At?

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom (Isaiah 40:28).

Scripture: Isaiah 40:12-15, 21-31

Song: “Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus”

It’s been said, “Look at others, and be distressed. Look at yourself, and be depressed. Look at God, and be blessed.” The Jewish captives coming out of Babylon would likely testify to the practical theology in this statement. They saw Jerusalem in ruins, and trembled at the fierceness of the nations around them. Aware of their own poverty and weakness, they likely wondered how they would manage to rebuild their lives in Israel.

The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, urged His people to turn their gaze on Him. Had they not heard—He created the heavens and the earth and would create a way in their wilderness? Did they not know—His understanding is infinite, that He was fully aware of their condition and their position?

Our Father works and moves in our lives with complete understanding. “The Lord knows those who are his” (2 Timothy 2:19). Our Father knows why we feel, respond, and think the way we do. He understands our hurts and knows how to heal them. He knows our weakness and promises strength. So also He knows what lessons we need to learn and how best to teach them.

Father, as we place our hope in You, renew our strength. Turn our eyes to You, and cause us to mount up with wings and soar like eagles. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Essential Integrity

Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor (1 Peter 2:17).

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:13-17

Song: “Give of Your Best to the Master”

Donald Grey Barnhouse, a Christian minister from 1927 until his death in 1960, told of a time he witnessed a car accident. The driver quickly changed seats with the passenger. When police arrived, the passenger claimed to have been the driver. When Barnhouse stated the truth to the officer, he was met with sneers and jeers from the people who had gathered at the scene. Integrity and respect for authority were absent from culprits and onlookers alike.

Today’s passage instructs Christians to honor those in authority over them. The apostle Peter outlines the who, when, how, and why of submission to authority. He reminds readers that our ultimate and overarching authority is God. And because we fear Him and desire to honor Him in our conduct, we will respond to all earthly authority with respect and will conduct ourselves with moral and ethical behavior that is above reproach.

There may be times when the dictates of human authority and the dictates of our conscience collide—times when we may need to stand firm on the Word of God at great personal cost. But even at such times, we will bring glory to God if we are careful to show proper respect and demonstrate a lifestyle of integrity.

Father, we ask You to grant wisdom and insight to all who are in authority over us today. Help us submit to them in an attitude of respect as unto You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Just for the Unjust

The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad. . . . Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne (Psalm 97:1-2).

Scripture: Psalm 97

Song: “Rejoice, the Lord Is King”

A drunk driver crossed the center line and hit head-on the son of a local pastor. The driver then left the young man to die alone. There was outrage in the community because the driver was not charged as justly as he would have been if his mother hadn't been employed in the sheriff's office. We can feel helpless against the wrong we see and experience, but our God is not helpless and He does not wink at injustice.

What a blessed truth we can rejoice in today: our sovereign Lord reigns, and He will one day judge the world in righteousness and absolute holiness! His decrees will issue from a throne uncorrupted. His sentences will be just and without partiality. Whatever injustice we may suffer now, we find consolation in knowing it is our Father's loving hand that holds the true scales.

Jesus Christ suffered the greatest injustice ever perpetrated against another. He could have taken immediate revenge but did not. He knew His Father's plan had a far greater purpose beyond the cross. We cannot know all the plans He has for us or why injustice comes our way, but as His disciples we can look to Jesus and trust the answer to this question: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25).

Father, help us to place in Your hands the injustices we experience. We trust You for the greater purpose. In Jesus' name, amen.

Whosoever Will May Go

“Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them” (Ezra 1:3).

Scripture: Ezra 1:1-8, 11; 2:64-70

Song: “Who Is on the Lord’s Side?”

Someone once joked that pastors may need a degree in dentistry since getting people to go, give, and serve could be like pulling teeth. Every day, God’s people are called to leave the comfortable and live the challenge, to step out of their routines and step into the trenches.

After 70 years of captivity in a foreign land, the time had come for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. King Cyrus, under the direction and authority of the Lord, not only freed them to leave but also urged them to go so that they could once again offer sacrifices and worship their God, the Lord God of Israel.

Many did not go. Perhaps they were reluctant to divest themselves of their property, or they considered the hardships too great, or perhaps the opposition they would surely face in Judah deterred them. But those whose hearts God had stirred stepped out. To them the temple was their heritage and privilege, the place where they could again meet with God. Those who responded did not respond to an option or an opportunity, but to a calling.

Father, please stir our hearts to go, to give, and to serve regardless of personal cost. Help us joyfully answer our calling to honor You. In Jesus’ name, amen.