

Faraway Land

The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you” (Genesis 12:1).

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-9

Song: “Where He Leads Me”

In 2010, I believed the Lord was leading my family to move to Thailand. At that time, my three children were all elementary school-aged, and we were living comfortably near extended family. Life was relatively stable and smooth until the door opened for us to move abroad. The move turned our world upside down, but the blessings God gave us during that journey far outweighed the initial upheaval.

God’s call to Abram (later renamed Abraham) did not just involve leaving a place and people that were familiar. It also involved going to an unknown destination. Abram’s willingness to move without knowing precisely where he was going required remarkable trust in God. Yet when God told Abram to go, God also gave him a tremendous promise of blessing, and Abram went because he believed that God would do what He had promised.

Over the previous 75 years of Abram’s life, it seems clear that he had come to trust God’s faithfulness in keeping His word. In our own lives, we can grow to trust God just as Abraham did so many centuries ago.

Father, as I continue to grow in my understanding of Your faithfulness, I will seek to trust You today as Abram did. In Jesus’ name, amen.

October 23–29. **Troy D. Stuart** is married and has three sons. He has worked at a university in the United States and at a Christian school in Thailand.

Golden Faith

[Trials] have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Peter 1:7).

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-12

Song: “Unsearchable Riches”

In 2021, the average selling price of one troy ounce of gold was \$1,798.14. In other words, a pound of gold would have cost about \$26,000. For much of human history, people have put a tremendous financial value on this decorative metal. Worldwide demand for gold by consumers in 2021 reached 2,123 metric tons.

One might wonder what in this world is of greater worth than gold. The apostle Peter tells Christians that genuine faith in Christ is far more valuable than this precious metal. He was writing to believers who were undergoing persecution and suffering all kinds of difficulties. He helped them look beyond the moment by calling their attention to the eternal inheritance waiting for them through Christ’s resurrection.

Temporary things will always try to draw us away from the eternal. It could be something we suffer, or it could be the allure of material goods or pleasure. Peter’s words challenge us to keep our eyes on the eternal, because what God offers is worth more than all the world’s treasure. Peter understood that our relationship with God is the only thing that will not perish.

Father, thank You for reminding me today that my genuine faith in You is more valuable than anything on earth—including the gold the world craves. I rejoice today in the eternal riches that are mine through Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Treasure in the Trash

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (James 2:5).

Scripture: James 2:1-7

Song: “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief”

There is treasure of incalculable worth in Egypt. No, I am not referring to the pyramids, the Great Sphinx, or any of the once-buried treasures of ancient Pharaohs. Egypt's greatest treasure is located in an area of Cairo known as Garbage City. The humble garbage gatherers who live amid the city's refuse are people of profound faith who've established one of the most dynamic Christian congregations in the Middle East, meeting in a church that can seat up to 20,000 people.

“Don't show favoritism!” is the message James presses upon his readers. His words go to the heart of human nature. We have a tendency to be biased toward superficial things, such as the appearance of wealth. It is a natural instinct for people to favor those who might be able to favor them in the future. James implores God's people to have nothing to do with this type of thinking and behavior.

God's grace and love extend to people of every cultural, economic, racial, and geographic background on the planet. May we have eyes to see others the way our Father sees them and to bestow the same dignity and respect that Jesus would.

Father, thank You for the honor of being called Your child. I will seek to treat everyone I encounter with the same goodness You've shown me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our Only Refuge

Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips. LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure (Psalm 16:4-5).

Scripture: Psalm 16

Song: “Thou Shalt Have No More Gods but Me”

The most heartbreaking aspect of working in Thailand is seeing how fear keeps people entrenched in a religious system that offers no hope. Every morning as monks walk down the street, people kneel and give offerings to gain merit. People put spirit houses in front of their homes and businesses, and they engage in superstitious practices that are meant to ward off evil spirits.

Idol worship, superstitions, and alternative religions have been around since the early days of humanity. The psalmist is emphatic in his proclamation that his trust is in the Lord alone. He knows that it is only God who makes him secure. It is the Lord in whom he can find refuge.

There are legitimate things to fear in this world. We are not exempt from facing difficult or harmful circumstances. However, the word of comfort for us in this psalm is that we can find security and refuge in God. While other religions, ideologies, and idols of every kind will always try to sell us their false benefits, we can turn them down because our confidence is in the Lord.

Father, I praise You for being my true rock and refuge in all circumstances. Thank You that I can live securely, knowing I am in Your hands. In Jesus' name, amen.

Renewing Rain

Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants (Deuteronomy 32:2).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:1-14

Song: “Ho, Everyone That Is Thirsty”

Southeast Asia is a beautiful area of the world. Lush forests, green hills, and spectacular beaches adorn this region of the planet. However, there are seasons of the year in which the lack of rain combined with the burning of fields makes the air quality unbearable. At times, the sky smells like a campfire and is so thick with smoke that you cannot even see nearby mountains. Asking God for rain is one of the most common prayers during these months.

Today’s Scripture captures some of Moses’ last words to the Israelites. The metaphor of God’s teaching and commands being like rain would have contained vivid imagery for a community who had wandered in the desert for nearly 40 years. As God was on the verge of leading His people into the long-awaited land of promise, Moses reminded them repeatedly that their key response must be faithful adherence to the Lord’s instruction if they were to thrive in their new home.

Renewal. Refreshing. Regeneration. These terms capture a deep longing in our weary souls. Sometimes we feel burned-out, stressed, and exhausted. God’s teaching offers the road to renewal. Today, as you slowly drink in the words of this passage, may they refresh the parched places of your soul like rain on tender, young plants.

Father, I need Your refreshing and renewal as I engage with Your Word. I will receive and follow Your instruction with gladness today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Sky's the Limit

[Abraham] was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10).

Scripture: Hebrews 11:8-19

Song: “The City of Light”

Skyscrapers are a marvel of the modern world. Hong Kong has more than 500 buildings that are over 490 feet tall. Milad Tower in Tehran reaches a mind-blowing height of 1,427 feet. That is more than a quarter mile! The engineering prowess required to safely build structures of this magnitude is truly remarkable.

Abraham, like many of God's people we read about in Scripture, never made this world his home. Our forebearers of the faith provide a great example to us. They looked beyond the transitory nature of this life and saw that God had something better and more permanent in store. Although they could not clearly see this other place, they knew by faith that an eternal city built by the hand of God must be glorious.

As Christians, we must accept the fact that we are not always going to fit in. The world around us is often going to be set in polar opposition to the things we believe and the ways we want to live. We can take great encouragement from the incredible examples of the men and women of faith who have gone before us and who lived with their eyes fixed on the better country where God has built a city for His people.

Father, thank You for making a place for me to enjoy with You for eternity. May the longing of my heart always be for the eternal city You have built for for Your people. In Jesus' name, amen.

Abundant Riches

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir (Galatians 4:6-7).

Scripture: Galatians 3:23–4:7

Song: “A Child of the King”

Receiving an inheritance can be a life-changing event. Even receiving a relatively modest sum of money can make a big difference during economically challenging times. According to some estimates, over the next 30 years in the United States alone, heirs stand to inherit \$36 trillion from their relatives.

In God’s economy, there is a far greater gift than money. His gift to us in Christ is redemption from slavery and adoption as His sons and daughters. Today’s passage captures the heart of the gospel message. Once, we were under the law and were in bondage to sin and our fallen condition. In Christ, God not only freed us but made us a part of His family. We can have an intimate parent-child relationship with the Creator of the universe.

People who inherit financial gifts must wait for someone to die. The inheritance God has for us is available now because Christ has already died and has risen. Today, enjoy contemplating the goodness of God, knowing that He allows us to call Him our Father and that He delights in calling us His children.

Father, the overflow of Your goodness and love for me is overwhelming. Thank You for allowing me to call You my Father. Thank You for adopting me as Your child. In Jesus’ name, amen.