

## Imperishable Hope

**Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope** (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Song:** “Blessed Assurance”

In 1991, my husband and I had twins who were stillborn. Obviously, it was a deeply painful time for us, but one thing that gave me comfort then—and continues to comfort my heart three decades later—is some perspective our pastor gave us. He said the pain of our terrible loss would, from this point on, make Heaven feel closer, and that one day we will be with our children there.

Jesus died and was resurrected so that we can have eternal life. We can know for sure what is on the other side of death: a greater union with God and our spiritual family. What an incredible, joyful hope that is!

That hope does not merely sustain us in death, however. It also has the power to transform our everyday lives. Our souls can be filled with the promise that life now is but a shadow of what is to come. Sometimes life is full of grief and pain, and sometimes it’s just simply mundane, but as followers of Jesus, we have the joy of an imperishable hope every single day.

**Father,** thank You for sending Your Son so that I might have the sure hope of eternal life with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

---

July 29–August 4. **Jane Keller** lives in Colorado with her husband. She is passionate about loving others with the love of God.

## Our High Priest

**Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful** (Hebrews 10:23).

**Scripture:** Hebrews 10:19-25

**Song:** “Faithful”

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we heard stories of loved ones who were separated because of strict regulations. There was a family, for example, in which grandparents were finally able to hug their two-year-old grandchild for the very first time. While we can be thankful for online communication and other ways of keeping in touch, these just aren't the same as being together in the flesh.

Before Jesus' earthly ministry, the only way to approach God was through the designated priests from Aaron's descendants. But through Jesus, God made a way for us to have immediate access to Him. Jesus came in the flesh, lived among us, and atoned for our sin through His death, burial, and resurrection. Now those who trust in Him can approach God freely at all times. Now that we belong to Him, His Spirit is alive in us, and we have become God's temple (2 Corinthians 6:16). What a staggering truth! Jesus, our high priest, is always with us, making His home in us.

Whatever our days may bring—whether difficulty, pain, and sadness or beauty, joy, and abundance—we have full assurance that God is and always will be faithful to His promises to save us, bring us peace, and never leave us.

**Father**, thank You that You are my high priest—but not a distant one. You never leave me or forsake me. Remind me to come to You with everything in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Walking Together

**The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place** (2 Chronicles 30:27).

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 30:21-27

**Song:** “This Is Our God”

Growing up in the Bible Belt, I knew revivals to be a regular part of church culture. I loved going to church night after night for a week of music and impassioned pleas from the preacher to “get right with God” before it was too late. I’m not sure whether I was drawn more to those things or to the community of believers gathered there. I would sit with all my friends, and we’d inevitably end up hugging and crying together. Emotionalism, maybe, but it was a genuine experience for me, and I loved it all.

We are the body of Christ, and a big part of that means coming together in community. Throughout Scripture we are admonished to meet together to worship God, to pray, and to encourage one another in Christ. Meeting together benefits all believers (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Walking out our journey of faith with grace and love, while enduring all that life hands us, is challenging at best and often overwhelming. The Holy Spirit in us is all we need, but when God’s Spirit bears witness within our hearts as we gather together (Romans 8:16), we are emboldened in our faith. Being together in community is one of the great blessings of being a Christian.

**Father,** thank You that You have given me others to be in fellowship with along this path. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Don't Go It Alone

**Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up** (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 4:7-12

**Song:** “Bind Us Together”

My mom made it her mission in life to ensure that no one within her community would ever be lonely. I have gone with her on many visits to check on friends, church members, and even people she barely knew. She always brought homemade bread, always stayed to talk, and was never in a hurry. All over my hometown there are people—some I've never met—who know all about me and my family from my mom's engaging visits with them.

Jesus arrived on earth from a place of perfect community in Heaven. And while on earth, He surrounded himself with community: the Twelve, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and others. He modeled the importance of engaging meaningfully with others.

The days we're living in can be isolating. There is much to pull our time and attention away from investing in community-building. But we were made by God to be in fellowship with others, especially with other believers. We are happier, healthier, and stronger when we are in good relationships. So let's be wise in seeking out and engaging in healthy, nurturing connections for our own sake and also for the sake of others.

**Father,** thank You for the gift of others in my life, for those with whom I can share mutual fellowship in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Looking Beyond

**Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up** (Galatians 6:9).

**Scripture:** Galatians 6:1-10

**Song:** “Don’t Grow Weary”

Though you’re reading this devotional in summer, I’m writing it in the dead of winter. It’s just four degrees Fahrenheit (-15 Celsius) outside, and a thick covering of snow is on the ground. These cold, dark days feel like they will stretch on forever. But I know it won’t be long until the snow will melt, and warmer, longer days will arrive (like the ones you’re experiencing now). I can look beyond this season, knowing what lies ahead.

As Christians we are instructed by God’s Word to press on in our faith. We’re called to run the race set before us (Hebrew 12:1), to be strong in the Lord (Ephesians 6:10), and to endure hardship as God’s loving discipline (Hebrews 12:7). In today’s passage, the apostle Paul encourages us to not grow weary . . . timely words for these days we’re living in.

I can’t recall a time in my life when so many Christians have expressed feeling worn down. It seems a lot of us are ready to just hunker down and spend our remaining days enduring what feels like a long spiritual winter. And yet the harvest Paul speaks of is still ripe for the reaping. He assures us that we will indeed reap it when the time comes. Be encouraged! Don’t give up! Let’s continue to persevere in hope!

**Father**, I trust You to give me the strength I need to finish the race that has been set before me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Looking to God

**I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth** (Psalm 121:1-2).

**Scripture:** Psalm 121

**Song:** “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”

The woman who sat across the table from me was about my age, yet she seemed lightyears ahead of me in faith. As I listened to her tell me about her husband, who had been in prison, and the years she'd spent raising her daughter alone in poverty, I was in awe. She recalled time after time when the Lord had provided for her small family in miraculous ways. She knew God would never fail her.

Each verse of Psalm 121 is filled with the promise of God never failing us. He is our protector and our provider. He promises to keep us on solid ground. He never sleeps, and He never stops watching over us. He is our ever-present help.

There are people we can look to for help. Our family, friends, ministers, and other professionals can be wonderful resources for us when we are in need. Yet, each one of these is limited in their ability to provide support. Only our God, maker of Heaven and earth, is capable of ensuring that all our deepest needs are met. Let's trust Him each day, each moment, to be exactly who and what we need.

**Father,** You are perfect in all Your ways. As I place my trust in You and look to You as my protector and provider, my faith grows stronger. In Jesus' name, amen.

## The True Story

**We also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13).**

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 2:13—3:5

**Song:** “Wonderful Words of Life”

“Obsessed by a fairy tale, we spend our lives searching for a magic door and a lost kingdom of peace.” This quote from American playwright Eugene O’Neil (1888–1953) shines a light on the human longing for something more than what this life offers. And it may also provide a clue to the existence of legends and mythologies in cultures worldwide. Perhaps we tend to gravitate toward myth and story because of the human yearning for intervention in our lives by someone greater than ourselves.

The good news for humanity is that God’s Word is not a myth, legend, or fairytale. It’s true and trustworthy. Hebrews 4:12 tells us it’s “alive and active.” It is, in fact, the only solid and sure foundation on which we can build our lives.

As believers in Christ Jesus, not only do we know the reality of God’s intervention in our world, but we are invited to participate in it as well. We have become God’s messengers, bringing the true and amazing news of God’s reconciling gift of salvation that brings peace to all who will receive it.

**Father,** thank You for Your Word that is actively at work in this world and for its message of peace through Your reconciling love. In Jesus’ name, amen.