

## Confident Focus

**Do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded** (Hebrews 10:35).

**Scripture:** Hebrews 10:26-35

**Song:** “Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus”

Without safety equipment, Charles Blondin (1824–1897) was the first man to walk across Niagara Falls on a 1,100-foot cable. To avoid falling into the raging water some 160 feet below, Blondin needed complete focus and diligence with each careful step forward, keeping his eyes on the goal at the other side. He had so much confidence in his ability that he even invited the added weight of carrying someone on his back. Not surprisingly, there were no takers on his offer.

Persevering with our eyes on Christ takes much focus and endurance, one step at a time. Sin is a sure way for us to lose our focus and fall away from God. However, having full assurance not in our own efforts but in God’s faithfulness, we as believers can have complete confidence that we can finish what God has called us to do. Paul realized this through suffering and hardships as he focused on God’s promises. His certainty brought glory to God, and he was fully rewarded.

Daily keeping a confident focus on God’s grace—even when things are difficult and we are suffering—means we can be assured that He is our unwavering safety net. God will carry us to the goal. All His promises are sure and will be fulfilled.

**Father**, help me keep my focus on You so that each step of the way I am seeing Your promises and resting in Your assurances to receive the reward. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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September 30–October 6. **Julia Taves** works as the principal of an international school in the Dominican Republic. She enjoys time with her family and seven grandchildren.

## “I Was Wrong”

**Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death (2 Corinthians 7:10).**

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 7:5-11

**Song:** “Amazing Grace”

*I'm sorry.* When we have a conflict or a misunderstanding, these two little words can be tough to say. And even when they are offered, they may be spoken indignantly or contemptuously with a sarcastic or resentful tone. Have you ever given or received an apology like that? What if instead of “I’m sorry,” we owned our part and said, “I was wrong”? These three words, when spoken from a contrite heart, are powerful in bringing about reconciliation.

Today’s passage demonstrates that conflict happens even among believers. However, godly sorrow leads to sincere repentance before God and others. It brings about restored relationships, refreshed spirits, and renewed devotion. And, just as Paul indicates in his letter to the Corinthian church, this kind of restoration provides comfort and eases regret.

David wrote in Psalm 51:17, “A broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” Just as we come to God with broken and contrite hearts to seek and receive His forgiveness, similarly we must come to one another with humility when seeking reconciliation. So the next time you respond poorly in a relationship, consider owning your part and sincerely saying to the other person, “I was wrong.” Then when followed with, “I’m sorry,” your genuine apology can open the door for the relationship to be restored.

**Father,** thank You for Your forgiveness. In my relationships with others, help me give and receive forgiveness with a humble heart. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Admitting the Problem

**Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy** (Proverbs 28:13).

**Scripture:** Proverbs 28:4-18

**Song:** “And Can It Be that I Should Gain?”

Driving home from a busy day at work, I heard a siren and saw flashing lights in my rearview mirror. I'd been daydreaming. A moment later I realized the siren was for me! Pulling over, I felt deeply defeated. I rolled down my window, and the officer asked, “Do you know how fast you were driving, ma'am?” I apologized for daydreaming, thinking I must have been exceeding the speed limit to an unsafe degree. The officer was gracious and replied, “Actually, you weren't going *that* fast, but thank you for admitting the problem.” He then gave me a warning instead of a ticket and let me go on my way. I was filled with relief to receive his mercy.

Today's passage reminds us that we are blessed when we soften our hearts and do not persist in sinful ways. God calls us to be discerning and to have a right view of His holiness and to walk in His ways. Yet on our own, we cannot keep our way blameless. When we sin, however, we can confess and renounce what we've done and be met with God's mercy. What a relief!

Even something like being pulled over for a speeding violation can turn into a reminder about the wisdom of God's Word. In fact, God is faithful to remind us continually to walk in His life-giving ways.

**Father,** help me confess my sin and find relief in Your mercy. In Jesus' name, amen.

## A Right Relationship

**In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 11:1).**

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-24

**Song:** "Seek Ye First"

To be a king or queen is a great honor. With that honor comes much responsibility. A monarch is expected to see to the protection of the kingdom and provide justice for the people. Generally, it is the king or queen who must see to the overall well-being of the realm. That's a big job!

David had been king for many years. He knew the gravity of his responsibility, with so many important things to do and decisions to make. Yet the decision he made to stay back from the battle one spring seems to have shifted his focus from taking care of kingdom matters to pursuing his own priorities. David's weak moment turned into a spiral of sin that had dire consequences for his family, Bathsheba, and the entire kingdom. David's sins took a huge toll. However, when confronted, he confessed his sin, trusted God's sovereignty, and sought forgiveness and right relationship with the Lord.

Coming to God openly when we sin shows a heart that longs for relationship with Him. Because He's a king who takes care of His kingdom with compassion and wisdom, God will forgive and guide us.

**Father,** help me seek You daily in all I do. Guide me so that my life will honor You. In Jesus' name, amen.

## A Cry for Mercy

**Restore us to yourself, LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old** (Lamentations 5:21).

**Scripture:** Lamentations 5:1-3, 15-22

**Song:** “Surely Goodness and Mercy”

Things are changing in our world today. Take a moment to consider whether you are being drawn to God or drawn away from God. Now think about history. What has happened to nations that have been slowly drawn away from God?

Jeremiah was pleading with God to have compassion on His people—a people who had been drawn away from God into the idolatry of the nations around them. As a result of their sin, they were disgraced when God allowed the Babylonians to invade their land. The people of Judah must have felt deserted by God as they were taken into captivity to Babylon. With their joy and confidence depleted, they were desolate (Psalm 137:1-6). In today’s passage, Jeremiah was humbly seeking God on their behalf for forgiveness and renewal. Renewal did eventually come after a 70-year captivity, when God, in His faithful love, restored His people, bringing back a remnant to their homeland.

It is a privilege to be called by God to humbly pray and seek His face, as Jeremiah did for the people of Judah. Not only can we seek God for restoration and renewal of our own hearts, but also, like Jeremiah prayed for restoration of Judah, we can pray for the restoration of our families, communities, and countries.

**Father,** I cry out to You, the sovereign God, to forgive, heal, and restore my heart. I want to fully follow You, remaining prayerful that others might also seek You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Do You Love Me?

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15).

**Scripture:** John 21:15-19

**Song:** “Make Me a Blessing”

*Who is God? How do you know if someone is truly good? Why do I struggle with bad thoughts?* Working at an international school, I serve students who come from many different cultures and backgrounds, and many of them have questions like these. To pursue answers to such questions and to help students seek truth in a deeper way, we started a one-on-one discipleship program. Only a few joined initially, but after six months we had 62 students who were being mentored weekly. These young people are receiving personal guidance and care through the counsel of God’s Word.

Peter was confused about Jesus’ question, “Do you love me?” Why would He ask Peter that? Jesus pointed out to Peter that to show Him love, Peter should be feeding His sheep—His followers. Sheep, like children (and also like new believers), need guidance, care, protection, and love. Sheep include those who need someone to walk with them for support through the hills and valleys of life. Committing time to doing this kind of care demonstrates to our own Good Shepherd that we love Him.

Whether it is a child, new believer, or friend, we can take the time to feed others the real food of God’s Word. This valuable time together of caring, listening, and sharing truth not only sustains and guides these precious lambs of God, but it also tells Jesus that we love Him.

**Father,** help me to look for ways to feed Your sheep and show You that I love You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## An Unusual Shower

**Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow** (Psalm 51:7).

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:1-13, 16-17

**Song:** “Praise for the Fountain Opened”

The heat and humidity were smothering. Everyone was weary. Then finally the cloudburst came, and a steady rain poured down. With no running water available inside their homes, children and moms alike came out of their small makeshift houses with soap, enjoying the rain as it washed off layers of sweat and dirt. I joined the fun, as sounds of laughter and joy filled the air. This was the scene when I was visiting a barrio in the Dominican Republic. The seasonal rain brought a chance for cleansing and freshness to people in a broken situation. We all felt revived by it.

Just as stepping out into that downpour brought cleansing to a village, David reminds us in today's psalm of God's unfailing love and compassion to revive us and cleanse us of our sins when we step out and cry to God for mercy. Our sin is always before us, yet God provides a way for us, through Jesus, to wash away our iniquities (Ephesians 1:7). Our standing in Jesus creates gladness of heart and a restored spirit.

Weariness can come through oppressive burdens of sin. What a joy it is to experience God's renewal when we come to Him to be washed from our sin. Stepping out in faith and humility to receive His cleansing brings inner joy that sustains us day to day.

**Father,** thank You for Your grace that cleanses and restores me daily. In Jesus' name, amen.