

Discovering Faith

As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more (Psalm 71:14).

Scripture: Psalm 71:12–24

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

The beginning of the early modern era was marked by groundbreaking world explorations. Amerigo Vespucci (1451–1512), a well-known voyager born in Florence, set sail expecting to reach Asia; instead, he reached South America. Convinced that this indeed was a New World, he dedicated the rest of his life to preparing for and guiding others in additional explorations. The Americas were named after him.

The writer of Psalm 71 was so convinced that God is faithful and would save him that he was able to press forward in hope and trust, even amid threats. The psalmist was confident because God had proven His character time and time again. And just as Vespucci was certain that there was much more to be explored in the New World, so the psalmist was convinced that his faith journey was sure to uncover new wonders of God’s mercy and goodness.

When we have seen God’s faithfulness, our future can be grounded in trust and pursued with abandon. We can know that God is good and fully trust in Him to demonstrate His goodness over and over again. Wherever life may take us, we know He is already there and will remain with us.

Father, because You are trustworthy and faithful, I can face the future with purpose and hope. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Best Path

We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away (Hebrews 2:1).

Scripture: Hebrews 2:1–13

Song: “Follow the Path of Jesus”

In the mid-1800s, many American pioneers headed west in hope of securing a better life. The Oregon Trail became a well-worn path across the country’s heartland. The approximate six-month journey was arduous, and it was fraught with dangers that could get travelers off course. But the earliest pioneers, such as Samuel Barlow (1795–1867), were integral to marking out the safest path for all who would make the journey after them. What became known as the “Barlow Road” offered weary travelers an alternative to the dangerous fording of the Columbia River, and it increasingly became the most popular path.

The Bible speaks of the importance of not only knowing where we are going but of staying on the right path that will safely lead us there. The author of Hebrews warns readers to believe the teaching of the true gospel and never to stray from it. The truth will keep us from drifting away and facing needless harm.

Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He has marked out a clear path for us, so we do not have to face fear, confusion, or danger. He went before us and left us His Word to guide us along our way. If we follow Him, we will reach our Heavenly destination in victorious celebration.

Father, thank You for keeping me on the path You’ve laid out for me. By Your Spirit, strengthen me to obey and follow Christ all the way home. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Testing Our Trust

Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide (Genesis 22:14).

Scripture: Genesis 22:1–14

Song: “God Always Keeps His Promises”

Several years ago, I traveled to Eastern Europe to meet with students at a Christian university and to hear their stories of faith amid persecution. One girl, from central Asia, spoke of being ostracized by her family when she dedicated her life to Christ and decided to attend the university. Having no other support and relying solely on a scholarship once she arrived, she boarded a bus all alone and endured a grueling six-day, 2,000-mile journey to get there.

The biblical account of Abraham reveals his willingness to go wherever and do whatever God told him. Abraham journeyed far from home, lived as a nomad, and trusted God’s promise to give him many descendants, though his wife was barren. Abraham even trusted when God told him to sacrifice his only son—the miracle child, Isaac. He was ready to obey because he had faith in God’s unchanging Word and in His ability to do the impossible (Hebrews 11:17–19).

Such sacrifices at anyone’s request except God’s would be unthinkable. When God asks, however, we know we will be secure within His perfect will. His compassion never fails, and His purposes are for our ultimate good. When we trust and obey, especially in the most difficult times, God’s glory shines brightly through us to the world.

Father, help me not to hold so tightly to earthly things and to obey You always, even when it requires great sacrifice. In the end, I know it will be worth it all. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Meal with a Message

[Jesus said,] “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

Scripture: Matthew 26:17–30

Song: “Come and Dine”

On March 6, 1865, President Lincoln’s second inaugural ball included a 250-foot-long buffet table filled with a most extravagant array of foods: oysters, roast beef, veal, turkey, venison, smoked ham, lobster salad, and an excess of desserts. The guests, with their fancy garments and fashionable hairstyles, danced the night away. The entire affair was cutting-edge, intended to create an atmosphere of awe and celebration as the country entered a new era.

The Passover meal in the upper room that Jesus shared with His disciples was, by contrast, a quiet, somber, and serious affair, as the partakers remembered how God had rescued His people and led them out of slavery to the promised land. As Jesus shared the ceremonial bread and wine with His disciples, He instructed them about a new era. It would be His last Passover meal on earth, but He alluded to a greater future meal they would share together in the new kingdom He was inaugurating.

The church has been instructed to regularly reenact that last meal, recalling Jesus’ atoning work and His resurrection, which gives us assurance of His return (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). It is a humble meal for humble hearts, one that provides us with the faith-sustenance we need as we await the lavish feast we will share with Him one glorious day in Heaven.

Father, thank You for the concrete picture of the Lord’s Supper to help me remember Your eternal promise until Christ comes again. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Breaking Down Barriers

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51).

Scripture: Matthew 27:39–40, 45–54

Song: “The Veil Is Rent, Lo! Jesus Stands”

For several decades, the Berlin Wall symbolized the efforts of a controlling political party in East Germany to keep its residents from defecting to West Germany, which was run by a much different government. Apparently, West Germany’s way of life was attractive enough for large crowds from East Germany to scale and break through the wall *en masse* when they were finally given legal freedom to cross the border at will.

When Jesus breathed His last on the cross, God broke the symbolic barrier in the temple that separated mankind from His holy presence. For centuries, that curtain was a reminder that humans were woefully sinful and not fit to approach God. Only the high priest, through proper sacrifices, cleansing rituals, and incense offerings, could go beyond that curtain, and only once a year, to atone for the sins of the people and restore the divine-human relationship.

Jesus is our great High Priest, the once-for-all sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:10). That curtain no longer separates us from God’s presence; we have access to an infinitely better life in the grace provided by Christ. He covers us with *His* holiness so we can cross freely into God’s presence with confidence and gratitude (Hebrews 4:14–16). God welcomes us as we present our petitions and worship in the power of Jesus’ name.

Father, thank You for the access into Your holy and loving presence that You’ve so graciously provided. In Jesus’ name, amen.

True Wealth

No one can redeem the life of another (Psalm 49:7).

Scripture: Psalm 49:1–15

Song: “Unsearchable Riches”

Despite social disadvantages, William the Conqueror (c. 1028–1087) went on to achieve amazing success. With military strength, he eventually ascended to England’s throne, and his efforts were continually bent toward expanding his territory and increasing his wealth. Even in victory, though, he was never at rest from squashing rebellions and fighting enemies. While he was still alive, he divided his kingdom between his sons, and in the end, William the Conqueror took nothing with him when he succumbed to the one enemy he could never defeat: death.

The writer of Psalm 49 saw the big picture. He knew that no matter how much wealth or power someone on earth might gather, it’s all temporary. Rich and poor alike end up in the grave. Not even the prosperous and powerful can, by their own means, achieve what matters more than anything: redemption of the soul. The only thing ultimately worth gaining in this life is rescue from eternal destruction—something only God can provide.

Humility allows us to see how weak we really are when it comes to preserving our security, much less our lives. We are only truly wealthy when we can let go of striving for control and recognize that our lives are ultimately in the hands of God, who is all-powerful and gracious to give life beyond the grave to those who will trust in Him.

Father, thank You for Your Word that gives me right perspective to live with my eyes always on eternity. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Reminder of Hope

The angel said to the women, “. . . He is not here; he has risen, just as he said” (Matthew 28:5–6).

Scripture: Matthew 28:1–10

Song: “The Son Has Risen”

In communities devastated by the Hawaiian wildfires in 2023, anyone would have expected to find broken, hopeless spirits. Instead, there were signs of resolve, fortitude, and thankfulness among the residents for what they still had. Their positive attitudes were upheld by a flow of donations to keep them going as they sought to rebuild. When tragedy struck, constant reassurances of life, hope, and compassion upheld the spirits of the suffering.

In today’s passage, the devastated women expected to find Jesus still in the tomb. It took a mighty, angelic revelation to remind them of what Jesus told them previously: that He would rise from the dead. In the women’s overwhelm, God not only gave them instruction through an angelic messenger at the tomb, but Jesus appeared to them as well, reassuring them and repeating the message they were to relay to the disciples (Matthew 28:10).

The Lord understands how forgetful we can be when it comes to His promises. He knows that we can become overwhelmed in life’s circumstance and are often limited in our understanding of how He is at work in our lives. That is why, in His Word, He so graciously and patiently reminds us of His plan and His unfailing love. He gives us much reassurance that we might faithfully serve Him and watch expectantly for His soon return.

Father, remind me to always have faith and expectation that You will fulfill all Your amazing promises. In Jesus’ name, amen.