



Watch the Conductor

David C. McCasland

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. [Hebrews 12:1–2](#)

Read: [Hebrews 12:1–3](#)

Bible in a Year: [Proverbs 30–31](#); [2 Corinthians 11:1–15](#)

World-renowned violinist, Joshua Bell, has an unusual way of leading the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, a forty-four-member chamber orchestra. Instead of waving a baton he directs while playing his Stradivarius with the other violinists. Bell told Colorado Public Radio, “Even while I’m playing I can give them all kinds of direction and signals that I think only they would understand at this point. They know by every little dip in my violin, or raise in my eyebrow, or the way I draw the bow. They know the sound I’m looking for from the entire orchestra.”

Just as the orchestra members watch Joshua Bell, the Bible instructs us to keep our eyes on Jesus our Lord. After listing many heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11, the writer says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith” (Heb. 12:1–2).

Jesus promised, “I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Because He is, we have the amazing privilege of keeping our eyes on Him while He conducts the music of our lives.

Lord, our eyes look to You this day so we may follow Your direction and live in harmony with You.

Let us keep our eyes on Jesus our Savior as He directs our lives.



The Best Portion of All

James Banks

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. [Philippians 4:12](#)

Read: [Psalm 73:21–28](#)

Bible in a Year: [Ecclesiastes 1–3](#); [2 Corinthians 11:16–33](#)

“His piece is bigger than mine!”

When I was a boy my brothers and I would sometimes bicker about the size of the piece of homemade pie mom served us. One day Dad observed our antics with a lifted eyebrow, and smiled at Mom as he lifted his plate: “Please just give me a piece as big as your heart.” My brothers and I watched in stunned silence as Mom laughed and offered him the largest portion of all.

If we focus on others’ possessions, jealousy too often results. Yet God’s Word lifts our eyes to something of far greater worth than earthly possessions. The psalmist writes, “You are my portion, Lord; I have promised to obey your words. I have sought your face with all my heart” (Ps. 119:57–58). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the writer conveyed the truth that nothing matters more than closeness to God.

What better portion could we have than our loving and limitless Creator? Nothing on earth can compare with Him, and nothing can take Him away from us. Human longing is an expansive void; one may have “everything” in the world and still be miserable. But when God is our source of happiness, we are truly content. There’s a space within us only God can fill. He alone can give us the peace that matches our hearts.

Loving Lord, thank You that nothing and no one can meet my every need like You can.

When we are His, He is ours, forever.

You have made us for yourself, Lord. Our hearts are restless until they can find rest in You. Augustine of Hippo



Let's Finish the Race

Poh Fang Chia

Two are better than one If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.
Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

Read: [Ecclesiastes 4:9–12](#)

Bible in a Year: [Ecclesiastes 4–6; 2 Corinthians 12](#)

In the 2016 Rio Olympics, two athletes in the 5,000-meter race caught the world's attention. About 3,200 meters into the race, New Zealander Nikki Hamblin and American Abbey D'Agostino collided and fell. Abbey was quickly up on her feet, but stopped to help Nikki. Moments after the two athletes had started running again, Abbey began faltering, her right leg injured as a result of the fall. It was now Nikki's turn to stop and encourage her fellow athlete to finish the race. When Abbey eventually stumbled across the finish line, Nikki was waiting to embrace her. What a beautiful picture of mutual encouragement!

It reminds me of a passage in the Bible: "Two are better than one 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" (Eccl. 4:9–10). As runners in a spiritual race, we need one another—perhaps even more so, for we are not racing in competition with each other but as members of the same team. There'll be moments where we falter and need someone to pick us up; at other times, someone may need our encouragement through our prayers or presence.

The spiritual race is not to be run alone. Is God leading you to be a Nikki or Abbey in someone's life? Respond to His prompting today, and let's finish the race!

Dear Lord, thank You for the encouragement of fellow believers to help me on my journey. Help me to look for ways to encourage others.

We need each other to get where God wants us to go.



The Daily Prayer

Cindy Hess Kasper

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. [Ephesians 6:18](#)

Read: [Ephesians 6:18–19](#)

Bible in a Year: [Ecclesiastes 7–9](#); [2 Corinthians 13](#)

Singer/songwriter Robert Hamlet wrote “Lady Who Prays for Me” as a tribute to his mother who made a point of praying for her boys each morning before they went to the bus stop. After a young mom heard Hamlet sing his song, she committed to praying with her own little boy. The result was heartwarming! Just before her son went out the door, his mother prayed for him. Five minutes later he returned—bringing kids from the bus stop with him! His mom was taken aback and asked what was going on. The boy responded, “Their moms didn’t pray with them.”

In the book of Ephesians, Paul urges us to pray “on all occasions with all kinds of prayers” (6:18). Demonstrating our daily dependence on God is essential in a family since many children first learn to trust God as they observe genuine faith in the people closest to them (2 Tim. 1:5). There is no better way to teach the utmost importance of prayer than by praying *for* and *with* our children. It is one of the ways they begin to sense a compelling need to reach out personally to God in faith.

When we “start children off” by modeling a “sincere faith” in God (Prov. 22:6; 2 Tim. 1:5), we give them a special gift, an assurance that God is an ever-present part of our lives—continually loving, guiding, and protecting us.

Help me to depend more fully on You in every moment of the day and to rest in the assurance that You are always with me.

Daily prayers lessen daily worries.



Sweet and Sour

Xochitl Dixon

Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble? [Job 2:10](#)

Read: [Job 2:1–10](#)

Bible in a Year: [Ecclesiastes 10–12](#); [Galatians 1](#)

When our toddler first bit into a lemon wedge, he wrinkled his nose, stuck out his tongue, and squeezed his eyes shut. “Sow-wah,” he said (*sour*).

I chuckled as I reached for the piece of fruit, intending to toss it into the trash.

“No!” Xavier scampered across the kitchen to get away from me. “Moe-wah!” (*more*). His lips puckered with every juice-squirting bite. I winced when he finally handed me the rind and walked away.

My taste buds accurately reflect my partiality to the sweet moments in life. My preference for avoiding all things bitter reminds me of Job’s wife, who seems to have shared my aversion to the sourness of suffering.

Job surely didn’t delight in hardship or trouble, yet he honored God through heart-wrenching circumstances (Job 1:1–22). When painful sores afflicted Job’s body, he endured the agony (2:7–8). His wife told him to give up on God (v. 9), but Job responded by trusting the Lord through suffering and afflictions (v. 10).

It’s natural to prefer avoiding the bitter bites in life. We can even be tempted to lash out at God when we’re hurting. But the Lord uses trials, teaching us how to trust Him, depend on Him, and surrender to Him as He enables us to persevere through difficult times. And like Job, we don’t have to enjoy suffering to learn to savor the unexpected sweetness of sour moments—the divine strengthening of our faith.

Thank You for assuring us that suffering is never wasted when we place our confidence in who You are, what You’ve done, and what You’re capable of doing.

God uses suffering to strengthen our faith.
