

the GOOD LIFE



A 5-DAY
GENEROSITY
DEVOTIONAL



Presbyterian Church in America
FOUNDATION

The content of this devotional was created by Andy Jones, a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America and the founder of Roundtree, an agency serving faith-based organizations.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The PCA Foundation hereby grants permission for this book to be reproduced in any form so long as it is reproduced in its entirety, without modification and with attribution to the PCA Foundation. Moreover, reproductions must be distributed at no cost to recipients. The content of this devotional is also available at www.pcafoundation.com/devotional. You can contact our office for free copies to use with your church or small group.



Presbyterian Church in America
FOUNDATION

As the leader of the PCA Foundation, I have the unusual job of stewarding money that is not my own! My calling is to preserve it, grow it, and give it away. My professional work as the leader of our church's foundation is also true for every Christian. We are all managing someone else's money. Everything we have is a gift from God. Our calling is to protect it, grow it, and use it for his purposes in his glorious kingdom. This is important, gratifying work for each of us.

At the PCA Foundation, we help people maximize their giving. We then invest their gifts to grow, and ultimately give them away as and when the donors recommend to support kingdom ministry. Whether it is cash or more complex gifts such as real estate and business ownership interests, we have the honor of facilitating gifts for ultimate donation to churches and kingdom-advancing ministries.

For the fourth straight year, we are providing a 5-day devotional designed for churches, small groups, and individuals who want to view wealth and giving through the lens of God's Word. Our prayer is that this will be a simple tool to give Christians a biblical perspective on their resources and move them toward fuller, truer worship as well as greater levels of giving. May God bless you and your church as you seek to live and teach the good life of soul-satisfying communion with and joyful service to him, who alone is worthy.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Townsend". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Tim Townsend
President

what's inside:

DAY 1: Rethinking the Good Life	5
DAY 2: God is Good	9
DAY 3: The Good News	13
DAY 4: Good Gifts	17
DAY 5: The Goodness of Eternity	21

Rethinking the Good Life



READ

Truly God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled,
my steps had nearly slipped.
For I was envious of the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Psalm 73:1-3

CONSIDER

What do you want? What's your vision of the good life? We all daydream about things we think will bring us happiness. Your vision of the good life can take many forms.

- **Relational: We think people will bring us happiness.**
- **Vocational: We think work will bring us happiness.**
- **Financial: We think money will bring us happiness.**
- **Physical: We think bodily fitness will bring us happiness.**

...and the list goes on. People, work, money, and fitness are all good things created by God. However, they are all cursed by God and diminished by sin, and even at their best were never meant to take the role of God in our lives.

In Psalm 73, Asaph was not experiencing the good life. In fact,

he felt like the worst people were experiencing the best life. He watched as godless people were thriving physically, financially, and socially. Asaph began doubting everything he'd been taught about God.

We all have moments like Asaph. Here's the question we all have to consider at some point: ***Is God the path or the obstacle to the good life?***

Wicked people can lead apparently happy lives. Like Asaph, we find ourselves wishing our lives were like their Instagram stories. Their arms are toned and their abs are flat. They take relaxing vacations and enjoy exquisite dinners. Their kids are on the travel team and go to the best schools. From all appearances, they are living their best life now.

If the good life is about personal pleasure and material prosperity, then many people are experiencing the good life. That's the vision of the good life presented in America's consumer-driven culture and resonating in our hearts. We are enticed by our own desires to believe that more money, experiences, and pleasures will bring us happiness. It was the same vision enticing Asaph. If the good life is about personal pleasure and material prosperity, then it is natural to see God as an obstacle or at best treat him as a celestial Santa Claus who merely exists to fulfill your material wishes.

Even Paul makes this point, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile." (1 Cor. 15:17). If our goal is to experience as much pleasure and prosperity as possible in this life, then the Christian life is the worst choice we could make. According to Paul, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." (1 Cor. 15:19).

The Bible serves as corrective lenses when it comes to our vision of the good life. God is not out to rob us of personal pleasure

and material prosperity. He is out to convince us those things can never bring us lasting happiness.

Instead, the Bible offers a very different vision of the good life: to live in fellowship with God forever. This is what Asaph ultimately realized,

But when I thought how to understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome task,
until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then I discerned their end. (vs. 16-17)

As Asaph drew near to God, he realized he was measuring life by the wrong standards. He was reminded that to know God is to know the one who is “good to Israel.” God is not the obstacle to the good life. He is the good life. To know him is to know lasting happiness.

Like Asaph, when we compare ourselves with others we are tempted to believe the good life comes through personal pleasure and material prosperity. God reminds us those things are “slippery” and will be “swept away.” (vs. 18-19). They are fragile and must eventually cease. God and his goodness are eternal.

As Asaph came to realize, “It is good to be near God.” (vs. 28).

The good life is defined by God instead of those around us. Like us and Asaph, Jesus was tempted to create an alternative vision of the good life. While in the wilderness, Christ was tempted to seize power over the world and bypass the cross. (Matthew 4:8-9). Christ resisted because he knew his Father was the good life, not the obstacle to it.

APPLY

1. Be honest with yourself. What's your vision of the good life? In what ways do you find yourself enticed to pursue happiness apart from God?
2. Asaph reminds us "it is good to be near God." Pray to God and ask him to draw near to you. Even more, ask him to help you see the many ways he is good to you.

PRAY

Father, I want to know your goodness and be near to you. Grant me forgiveness on account of Christ when I pursue worthless things, and grant me the faith to believe "it is good to be near God." Like Asaph, draw me into your holy place and give me a sanctified outlook on the world by the corrective power of your Holy Spirit.



God is Good



READ

The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.

Nahum 1:7

CONSIDER

God is good. God is not keeping you from your best life. God is not a divine curmudgeon.

God is good. What do Christians mean when we say that? According to Nahum, it is in God's very nature to be good and to do good things. "The Lord *is* good." Think about that. God doesn't have to do anything contradictory to his nature to be good. He doesn't have to work himself into a particular mood, in order to be favorable toward us. Rather, he is inherently and completely good.

How much would it change your relationship with someone if you were certain they would always be good to you?

- **You would enjoy their presence and seek more opportunities to spend time with them.**
- **You would be more likely to ask them for help when you need it.**
- **You wouldn't fear that they will reject you or ignore you.**

It is in God's nature to be good, do good, and give good things. If you believe God is good, then the good life is one lived in fellowship with him.

The first commandment is, "You shall have no other gods before me." (Ex. 20:3). According to Martin Luther, "To have a god means this: You expect to receive all good things from it and turn to it in every time of trouble." God doesn't want us to look to anything or anyone else for goodness outside of him. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cannot and will not be rivaled when it comes to goodness.

In a consumer-driven culture, we often make "other gods" out of possessions and pleasures. If you visit parts of the world where Christianity is growing fastest (Asia, Latin America, and Africa), the Christians are often materially poor. The places where Christianity is declining are more affluent countries such as those in Western Europe and the United States. Why? Because we replace God with things he's given us, exchanging the Creator for created things. Instead of looking to God to enjoy goodness, we look to money and pleasure.

The primary technique of Satan has been to convince us that God is not of himself good, and that God is actually withholding good things from us because he doesn't want us to have them.

It was the technique he used when tempting Eve. "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" (Gen. 3:4-5). Eve was tempted to believe that God was withholding good from her.

It was the technique Satan used when tempting Christ. "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'"

(Matt. 4:8-9). Christ was tempted to believe he could attain good apart from the cross.

Jesus knows what it is like to hold firmly to promises of God's goodness in the face of suffering. Jesus was obedient unto death because he believed God is good. He went to the cross believing it. We can know God is good even in the face of our own suffering because Jesus is risen from the dead.

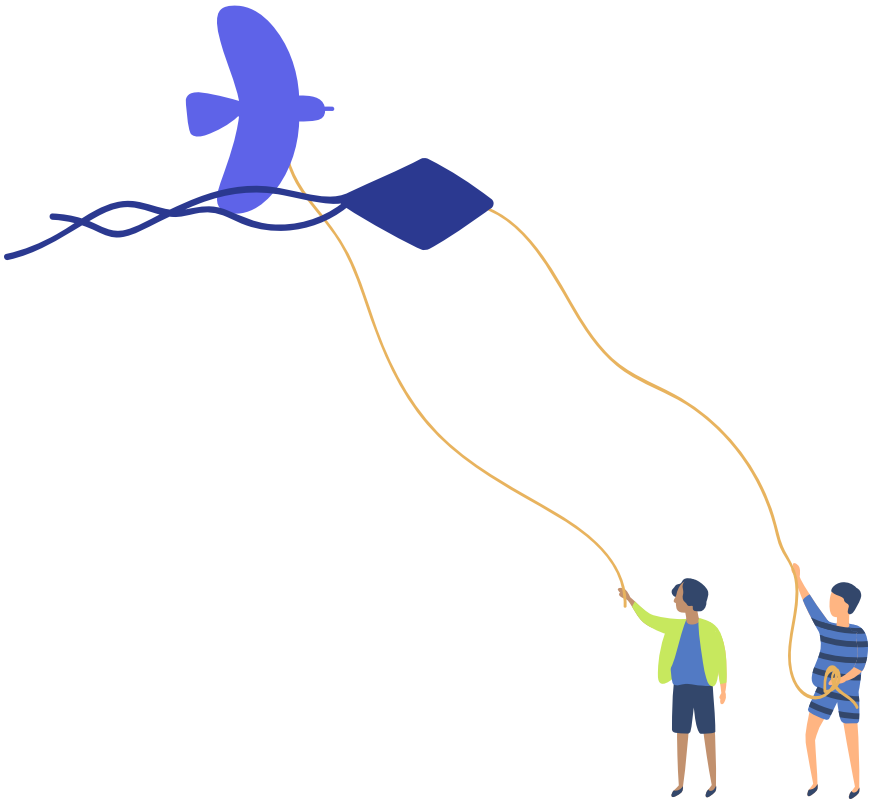
The good life is living in fellowship with God, who is good by his very nature. According to Charles Spurgeon, "We must never tolerate an instant's unbelief as to the goodness of the Lord: whatever else may be questioned, this is absolutely certain, that Jehovah is good; his dispensations may vary, but his nature is always the same."

APPLY

1. Complete this sentence: *God, I know you are good because you _____*. Fill in the blank with an example of God's goodness you've witnessed in your own life, someone else's, or in the Bible.
2. Do you believe God is good when it comes to your finances? Think back on the last year. Identify one way God has been good to you when it comes to money and thank him for it.

PRAY

Gracious God, you are good! Praise be to you that you can never be other than the way you are. Because you are good and you are eternal, you will forever and always be good! Help me on the best days and worst days to believe you are good! Thank you for the gift of your Son and Spirit. Let me today take refuge in you and know your goodness.



The Good News



READ

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. [Jesus] unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 4:17-19

CONSIDER

In 1825, Robert Owen bought an entire city called Harmony in the southwest corner of Indiana, and renamed it New Harmony. Owen’s goal was to build a new city that would be a perfect utopia where justice and peace would reign, there would be no poor, and no one would be oppressed. He was a Welsh businessman who observed the harsh living conditions of mill workers first-hand. He concluded that the only way to bring about the drastic reformation society needed was building a city from scratch.

Owen laid out the laws of the city that he believed would ensure a peaceful and well-ordered society. In the spring of 1825, people began moving to the city, and close to 1,000 people took up residence in the span of a few months. However, by 1827, only two years later, Owen was forced to admit his city was a failure, and he returned to Europe.

It is quite understandable why people dream of a new society. Even personally, we want a future with more things that bring us joy and less things that cause us anxiety. We know the current world is not what it should be. There is poverty, oppression, and neglect. Human trafficking, sexual abuse, and the misuse of authority are daily headlines. Something within us abhors these injustices. God abhors them as well.

Jesus came into the world with good news: he has come to set things right. Jesus has come to set people free, give them sight, and pour out God's goodness on them. As you read Jesus' application to himself of the words first penned by Isaiah, think about what it means:

- **It means God is familiar with all that is wrong with the world. He is not a God who is so far removed from the world that he is unaware of what is wrong. He sees and sympathizes with people who are suffering from their own sin and the sin of others.**
- **It means Christ has the power to bring an end to our sin and its consequences. It is one thing for God to be aware of what is wrong and another to be able to undo it. Christ proclaims that he has the power to cancel sin, slavery, and suffering – that he is God.**
- **It means Christ has come to rescue sinners and pour out God's goodness on them. Jesus delivers the poor and oppressed, and the righteousness of God flourishes**

wherever he is. Jesus comes so the world can experience God's goodness.

Jesus didn't come to secure our vision of the good life. Jesus came to introduce us to a good life we were not envisioning, a life of freedom and understanding. Instead of centering our lives on pleasure and material prosperity, Jesus says the good life is living in fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit. Christ's call to the first disciples was "follow me." His call is to leave behind our efforts to build the American dream and to seek first his kingdom.

God is not interested in being part of our New Harmony. He calls us to leave our personal vision of utopia and center our thoughts and lives on his kingdom and its priorities. In his kingdom, the guilt of sin is cancelled, we are liberated from our vain selfishness and turned to God and others. And we gain a sure hope for the end of suffering at his right hand, where there are pleasures forevermore.

The good life means believing in the good news of Jesus. Because of God's Son, God welcomes us into his family and promises to treat us as his children for all eternity. As his children, we take on the characteristics of our Father. We seek after righteousness and counter injustice. We walk with those who suffer. Instead of frantically consuming, we give. The good life is not found in our net worth or next vacation. Rather, the good life is found in Christ and his kingdom.

APPLY

1. Jesus came to free you. What do you need freedom from today? Name those things. Be specific and ask Christ to liberate you.

2. Jesus came to set things right. Who around you is experiencing suffering, poverty, or injustice? As Christ's agent, think of things you can do within your power to help set things right whether it is as simple as making a meal or connecting them with the deacons at your church for financial assistance. Consider who God has brought into your life and the ways you can be Christ's agent of reconciliation.

PRAY

Praise be to you Lord Jesus Christ! You are risen from the dead and rule at the Father's right hand. May your kingdom come and your will be done because you bring freedom and forgiveness. Increase my faith to believe in your victorious life, death, and resurrection. Enable me today to obey you and honor you as King!



Good Gifts



READ

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

1 Timothy 4:4-5

CONSIDER

Addiction is dangerous. Why? Because when we fail to limit our consumption, it leads to destruction. Too much food, too much wine, and even too much fitness can be dangerous. These things by themselves are not dangerous. However, they can be life-threatening when they become the center of our existence.

God gives us good things: food, work, sex, money, athletics, and the list goes on. We should be thankful for these things. They are good! In fact, we are wrong not to enjoy what God has given us. He wants us to enjoy his gifts. Remember, God is not against the material world – he created it! He wants us to enjoy scenic vacations, long runs, and festive dinners insomuch as these things are a celebration of his goodness to us.

There is nothing wrong with consuming God's good gifts. However, there is something wrong with these things consuming us, when they move from temporary means of enjoyment to ultimate

forms of fulfillment.

More wealth does not satisfy us. God wants us to receive with thanksgiving the wealth and possessions he gives and enjoy them. Wealth is not inherently evil (Prov 3:10). However, wealth by itself cannot bring joy. Only God gives joy; in fact, only God can enable us even to enjoy wealth according to Ecclesiastes 5:19, “When God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them...this is a gift of God.”

Paul tells Timothy to receive God’s gifts with gratitude. The danger is when we come to worship God’s gifts instead of God himself. The human heart has no restrictor plate. It always wants more, believing a little more will be enough. Instead of satisfying us, having more only leaves us craving more.

More wealth does not secure us. Stockpiling money won’t free you from financial concerns. It will make you worry about your stockpiles. As the preacher observes in Ecclesiastes 5:12, “The abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.”

More material possessions come with more worry, not less.

- **Having more money in the stock market means you have to worry about the market’s performance.**
- **Having more money in real estate means you have to worry about the value of property.**
- **Having your own business means you have to worry about finding your next customer.**

Money is the just consequence and by-product of work, but work is itself a gift from God, and perhaps the greater gift. We shouldn’t set our hearts on possessing more wealth but rather on applying ourselves with diligence and gratitude to whatever God calls us to do. If our diligence is rewarded with great material wealth, our joy consists not in the wealth, but of giving thanks to

God and sharing it generously.

More wealth does not make us more human. Money is not the measure of who we are but simply a by-product of what we do. God calls us to a vocation and the measure of our success – and of us – is not how much wealth we earn from it, but how faithfully we do what God created us to do.

Our worth derives from God, not the gifts he gives us.

- **My worth is not found in my paycheck.**
- **My worth is not found in the square footage of my house.**
- **My worth is not found in my brand of clothing.**

My worth is found in my relationship to God. He has crafted me and called me to a particular type of work through which I serve him and my neighbor.

The question we ask ourselves is “will I have enough tomorrow” when the question should be, “has God given me enough for joy today,” and the answer should be a confident “yes.” Jealousy and greed work in us so that we are always wanting but never able to enjoy God’s good gifts.

The good life is a life of appreciation and moderation. The good news is that you have been purchased and no longer need to make yourself a slave to anything, including the master of materialism. Material goods can be and should be enjoyed but we must always remember they cannot bring us eternal happiness.

APPLY

1. God gives us work through which we provide for ourselves and our families. What skills has God given you? Those are gifts from God. Name them, give thanks to God for them, and think about the ways he’s even blessed others through them.

2. Do your finances reflect gratitude to God? If someone else saw your spending habits, would they reflect a life of appreciation and moderation? If not, what practical steps can you take to move in the right direction?

PRAY

Blessed Father, you are a God of abundance. You are not sparing in your generosity. Thanks for the gifts in my life that come in so many forms. Help me to see and celebrate them all. I'm especially grateful for the gift of work. Help me to use my skills to bless others and glorify you!



The Goodness of Eternity



READ

And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7:14-17

CONSIDER

Prior to the 16th century, Spanish coins were imprinted with the phrase “Non Plus Ultra,” meaning nothing more beyond, a reference to Spain’s position as the most western country at the end of the known world beyond which no ship should go. This was the case until Christopher Columbus became persuaded that there was something beyond and discovered the new world. Thereafter, Spain removed the “nothing” and adopted “More Beyond” (“Plus Ultra”) as its motto. The discovery of the new world changed everything for Spain.

The Bible tells us there is more beyond what we currently see. The Bible commonly refers to God’s throne room as heaven, where he is surrounded by the angelic hosts and saints who have entered into their eternal rest. As Christians, the reality of heaven influences the way we live on earth. Knowing there is “more beyond” gives us hope amidst suffering and a new perspective on our present experience.

When the apostle John was given a vision of heaven, he used the word “throne” more than any to describe what he was seeing. (Rev. 7: 9, 10, 11, 15, 17). The center of attention in heaven is the throne, where the Lamb sits surrounded by the heavenly throng. The multitude is fixated by his presence and voices their continual praise. Though Christ is the center of attention, his presence leads to all sorts of goodness.

- **In heaven, we will be *sinless*. The same Lamb whose blood frees us from the penalty of sin will free us from the presence of sin.**
- **In heaven, we will be *needless*. We will have no want nor desire for anything (“they shall hunger and thirst no more”). Our shepherd will supply our needs.**
- **In heaven, we will be *tearless*. We will be tearless because we will be freed from those things that cause sorrow. Death,**

sin, and suffering will be finally vanquished.

- **In heaven, we will be *endless*. Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God.**

Because God is good and heaven is his throne room, heaven is a place overflowing with his goodness. When we lose sight of this, we try to create our own heaven on earth. But when we keep sight of our heavenly destiny, we donate our wealth to bring God's kingdom and to do God's will on earth as it is in heaven. We give to see the establishment of Christ's throne in human hearts and his reign manifested over sin, poverty, and suffering. In God's presence, before his throne, is fullness of joy.

Though heaven is a future reality for us, it changes the way we think and live in the present age:

- **Heaven changes the way we think about the Christian community. As Christians, we may be an oppressed minority divided on earth by denomination. In heaven, we will be a gloriously diverse people united by our common desire to exalt Christ.**
- **Heaven changes our view of the present world. It is meaningful but it is not ultimate.**
- **Heaven changes our view of evangelism and missions. The goal of our witness is to call the nations to join with us to worship the risen Lamb.**
- **Heaven changes our view of our present condition. We suffer tribulation but we believe that Christ and the saints are keeping vigilant watch over us. Because Christ has prevailed over suffering and death, we can be confident we also will be more than conquerors.**

The good life is keeping the goodness of eternity with God in view. Distance makes the heart grow fonder. Hopefully, this statement is true of our relationship with our risen Savior. We long to be with him, where he is. We long to be like him. As

God's children, we long to be gathered into the presence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is no wonder that the early Christians prayed, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

APPLY

1. How is the reality of eternity shaping the way you live your life now? Identify two things that should be less important than they currently are and two things that should be more important than they currently are.
2. What are things in your life or community that you long to see fully restored? Name them and pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

PRAY

Holy Spirit, we groan as we wait to see all things made new! You are the giver of life, and we long to see our lives and our world free from sin and suffering. Until that day, grant us faith to persevere with our eyes set on heaven. Give us the mindset that to live is Christ and to die is gain. May the reality of eternity change how we live today for the glory of your name!



Give Smarter



Donor-Advised Funds + Complex Gifts

Generosity is a way of life for God's people. Everything is a gift from God. We are all temporary custodians. As a foundation, we help donors give a variety of assets to advance Christ's kingdom and alleviate their tax burden. We have the expertise to facilitate all types of gifts, whether you want to donate your bonus or your business.

Learn more at pcafoundation.com.



Presbyterian Church in America
FOUNDATION

*Facilitating Generosity
To Advance God's Kingdom*

MAILING ADDRESS

PCA Foundation, Inc.
1700 North Brown Road, Suite 103
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

CONTACT INFORMATION

Toll Free: (800) 700-3221

Local: (678) 825-1040

Fax: (678) 825-1041

pcaf@pcanet.org

pcafoundation.com

