

Trust-fund Christians

By [Kate Murphy](#)

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The world barely noticed when Casey Johnson [died](#). The 30-year-old heiress's death wasn't news; it was a foregone conclusion.

A recovering addict, Johnson had lost custody of her daughter and was awaiting trial on charges of burglarizing an ex-girlfriend's home. Her parents had shut off her trust fund. Her death didn't surprise or even interest most of us; if anything, there was a grim satisfaction among "ordinary people." We won't say so out loud, but when an insanely wealthy person self-destructs, it feels a little like justice.

Few people survive being born with an inheritance as large as Casey Johnson's. They have every advantage. They can do anything they like and have whatever they want. No matter what happens, they know they will always be secure. Yet these hyper-privileged children, who should become the most joyful people, almost never do.

There are undeniable similarities between these trust-fund babies and cradle Christians. John Calvin taught that as Christians we are "rich before we are born." When we present infants for baptism, we initiate them into a large inheritance of faith. We grow up with the priceless knowledge of God's grace, knowing that no matter what we do God will love us, that the good shepherd will never allow one of his lambs to be eternally lost.

But this blessed knowledge can become a curse if, as children of grace, we grow indifferent to the practice of our faith. Sometimes we ask ourselves, why worship God each week? Why bother cultivating the fruits of the spirit? These requirements are so difficult, and our failures so discouraging—and God loves us no matter what! We decide that since we don't have to earn our salvation, we'll live as we please.

But living as we please inevitably destroys us.

This doesn't have to happen—God provides a way for us to live healthily with our spiritual wealth. In this week's [Old Testament reading](#), Joshua finally leads the weary wilderness people into the promised land. They look around, eyes dazzled by the long-anticipated beauty of the place. They put aside bland manna and begin to feast on the land's rich produce. They are home at last and will never have to worry again.

Immediately God speaks to the people through Joshua, telling them they must harvest the first fruits and gather for worship. They must stand together, make an offering of their wealth to God and [say aloud who they are](#).

God knows that the promised land will destroy the people if its security lulls them into forgetting how to live as God's people, so God provides the antidote: gratitude, memory, worship.

Gratitude, memory and worship: if knowing God's love for us inspires us to grow in faith and love for God, then we will lead lives rich with holiness. Lent is the time to remember who we are and to rediscover our true wealth in Christ.