

AN UNCHANGING WORD IN A CHANGING WORLD

When it comes to life there are really only two ways to live it. We can follow God's **WORD** or we can follow the **WORLD!** The WORD OF GOD is distinct, specific and narrow in its focus. It contains within its pages principles and boundaries that we are to place around our lives to protect us from self destructive behavior. Some in our world today would describe it as being close-minded because it does not give us license or freedom to explore life outside of God's boundaries without calling it sin . Others would call it old fashioned or outdated and something that we should no longer consider a viable way to live our lives. And then there is the way of the **WORLD** which offers a lot of different approaches and philosophies on how to live your life. It gives us the freedom to explore and pursue whatever our heart may desire. It is void of boundaries and in fact, encourages us to live without any restrictions.

Welcome to **Week 1 of KINGS AND KINGDOMS** as we begin our 4th section of our Through The Bible Series. We have been following God's Redemptive Plan as He has revealed it through His chosen people Israel and we have now entered the period in Israel's history where they will be ruled by a series of Kings and due to division and territorial disputes within the nation they will be divided into two kingdoms. **By the time we are through with this section we are going to see why it is that God was hesitant to set a king over His people in the first place.** In fact, God's desire has been all along that Israel would look to Him as their king. And by the time we are through with this section and our next section, Israel will be longing for a Savior to deliver them from their oppression, all of which will be the consequences of a people who turned away from God and trusted in their own wisdom. And what makes this so relevant to us today is that you and I can be just like Israel. So as we prepare to enter this next section that we are calling **KINGS AND KINGDOMS I want to remind us that everyday you and I have a choice to make as to what we will follow just like Israel and the kings who led them had: WILL WE follow the WORD or WILL WE follow the WORLD?** As we are considering these two options before us I want us to be aware of the results that each of these choices offer us so that you and I can make an informed decision as to which one we will choose. So if you will turn to **Psalm 1** (Located in the middle of your Bible) I am going to **PRAY** for us and then we will **BEGIN.**

The Book of Psalms is considered to be THE HEBREW HYMNBOOK. A collection that contains 150 songs most of which have noted human authors attached to them. However, there are two of the Psalms which have no human author ascribed to them at all and it just so happens that both of them are Psalm 1 and 2. This is only fitting when we consider that the **LAW** is the focus of Psalm 1 while **PROPHECY** is the focus of Psalm 2. God Himself is setting the tone for the themes we are going to find in all the rest of the Psalms just as we do in all the rest of the scriptures. The **LAW** being God's moral code of conduct by which God's people are to live their lives. While **PROPHECY** is the revelation regarding things to come. Much of the reading that we will do in this portion of our reading plan is going to deal with the consequences of what happens when God's people choose not to order their life according to the scriptures. So as we look at Psalm 1 I want you to see the **TWO** options for **LIVING** and the **TWO** outcomes associated with each **CHOICE.**

First of all, NOTICE the TWO Options for LIVING highlighted for us in the first two verses:

PSALM 1:1-2 (NIV) 1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, The word for “BLESSED” in Hebrew is always used in reference to humanity and is often used to describe someone who ENJOYS a relationship with God.

"Blessed" means a joyful mental state of contentment [in God], a joy [in God], a condition of comfort and security [in God] for which a person is to be admired."

Why is he blessed? Because he makes the choice to avoid the way of the world which leads to the opposite of blessing (which is to be cursed) and instead finds his delight in the Lord. **2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.**

Verse 1 highlights for us **THE WAY OF THE WORLD** which begins when we try to **WALK in step with the WICKED**. The idea here is to listen to or consult the counsel of those who walk opposite of God. This is where we seek their advice and are considering it as a viable option for our life. This would be the equivalent of having to make an important life decision or trying to solve a problem where we seek out worldly wisdom or the counsel of one who does not have faith in God. For example, asking my unbelieving co-worker for advice on how to resolve conflict with my wife when he is known for cheating on his own wife. When we walk in step with the wicked it impacts our THINKING!

Once we have sought after the counsel of the ungodly or listened to their advice we then we can find ourselves trying to **STAND with SINNERS**. The idea here is we progress from listening to or seeking ungodly counsel to now actually participating in ungodly behavior. This does not mean that we should not try to engage with sinners or develop relationships with them. We should seek to build relationships with those who don't follow Jesus so that we can introduce them to Jesus. However, what we are talking about here means that we should not participate in their sinful behavior alongside them. This would be the equivalent of you and I allowing a friend of ours who doesn't have a relationship with Jesus to influence us into participating in sinful behavior. When we find ourselves standing with sinners this impacts our BEHAVIOR!

Once we begin to participate in sinful behavior and we allow it to define our life the last step is we begin to **SIT in the COMPANY of MOCKERS**. The idea here is that we allow the one who rejects God to erode and discredit our faith to the point where we begin to believe as they believe. We sit with the mocker giving them access to our mind and because we do not have the wisdom to stand up against such an onslaught of our faith we give into their mockery of God. This is what often happens to our children when they go off to college without strong convictions and a firm faith. When we sit in the company of mockers it begins to impact who we BELONG to!

I want you to notice the progression. It begins with ungodly COUNSEL. It progresses from there to ungodly BEHAVIOR. And then it ultimately culminates with a complete REBELLION and REJECTION of God altogether. This is a snapshot of the WORLD and what it does to our lives and our faith if we allow it to influence us. But there is another option! Rather than follow the world we can follow GOD'S WORD!! And that option is highlighted for us by **Verse 2**. Notice **THE WAY OF THE WORD!**

First of all, **They take DELIGHT in GOD'S WORD.** God's word should not be a drudgery or something you tolerate because it just happens to be good for you, like eating your vegetables is good for you. It should be a delight. Something that brings you joy and makes life sweeter. Not something you must tolerate. Ultimately you find delight in it because it is God's love letter to you. And because it is God's love letter and the principles found in it are designed to help us have unhindered fellowship with the God who loves us, we should find great delight in it. There is nothing better than unhindered fellowship with God and God's word shows us how we can obtain unhindered fellowship through forgiveness of sin and how we maintain that fellowship by becoming doers of His word.

Secondly, **They MEDITATE on GOD'S WORD day and night.** In order to gain the full benefit of God's word we must allow it to transform the way we think about God, the way we think about ourselves, and the way we think about others.

Romans 12:2 (NIV) 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The only way to do that is to meditate on it day and night. We have to allow God's word to have our full attention. This is where we deliberately engage our conscious mind with the truth of God's word. We read it with the intention to know God's will and with the desire to apply it to our lives by being willing to do what it says.

If you remember when we started the reading plan back in February we encouraged everyone to not just read the WORD and jack the box that you have done so, but to MEDITATE on it by using the HEAR Method. (Btw, not too late to start reading if you haven't. Pick back up if you have gotten slack. Start journaling if you haven't been doing it)

H - Highlight (what scripture stood out to you?)

E - Explain (establish the context, who is speaking, who is listening, where are they, what is the situational context of the passage? And what does it mean for us in 2022)

A - Apply

1. What does this tell me about the CHARACTER of God
2. Is there something He is trying to TELL me in this passage?
3. Is there a sin that I need to confess as a result of this passage?
4. Is there an action I need to take as a result of this passage?

R - Respond (use this to journal your prayer as a result of your "Apply" assessment, formatting your prayer in the following way: **ACTS** - **Acknowledge** the goodness and righteousness of God, **Confess** your sins, **Thankfulness** for all that He has done, is doing, and in anticipation for what He will do, **Supplication** where you pray for others and their needs, Holy Ghost Hit Lis, etc .t)

God's Word is a handbook for how to live or life and we should find delight in it and thus seek to meditate on it daily!

Notice the TWO OUTCOMES of our CHOICES in the remaining verses: First, notice the BENEFITS for the one who chooses God's Word:

PSALM 1:3 (NIV) 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

They never LACK what they need for LIFE and VITALITY. They are like a tree planted by streams of water. Their roots are deep and healthy. They have what they need to sustain life.

John 4:7-14 (NIV) When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" **8** (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) **9** The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) **10** Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." **11** "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" **12** Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" **13** Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

They have a life that is FRUITFUL. Their life has meaning and purpose. They are a blessing to others

John 15:5 (NIV) 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

They will not WITHER when things get tough

Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NIV) "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. **8** They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

Whatever they do PROSPERS. This is a state of being not based on material possessions or circumstances. It all flows as a result of their relationship with God (their proximity to the living water)

Secondly, notice the CONSEQUENCES for the one who WALKS according to the WORLD:

PSALM 1:4-6 (NIV)

4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Chaff was the remaining portion of the wheat harvest after the kernel of wheat was gleaned from the wheat stalk. They would take everything useful out, and what was left on the threshing floor was called 'chaff'.

"Chaff" is the fibrous outer portion of the wheat seed, indigestible by humans, which is so useless, this is often left to be blown away by the wind. What isn't 'blown away' is collected to be burnt for heat to cook their food or keep them warm.

The person who orders his life according to the world is like chaff. **They are powerless against the forces of life** as they are blown around by LIFE and its circumstances. They are not very stable or useful! Not only that, but notice what else it says,

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous..

They are not only powerless against the forces of life but they are also **powerless as they stand before God's JUDGMENT**. **Dr. John Phillips** says this about the one who invests in the things of this world rather than investing in God's word. *"He will be summoned to the great white throne there to find heaven and earth have fled away. Everything familiar will be gone. Everything he has sought to build, everything in which he has invested his time and talents - gone! He has nowhere to stand. He has built his house upon the sand and the judgment has swept it all away."*

The only thing that can help us at this point is Jesus! Jesus came so that we would not have to face God's judgment. But if you don't have Jesus, you have nothing!

6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction

Finally they are powerless against an eternity separated from God. There is the way of the cross which leads to life everlasting but it is narrow and very few find it. These are the ones that the Lord watches over. They are righteous because they have chosen to accept the righteousness of Christ. And then there is the way of death and destruction that is popular and many travel that way. The only way to avoid this path is to trust in JESUS because He is the only one who holds power over sin and death! But if we reject Jesus there is nothing that can spare us as we will perish with the ungodly for we have made our choice.

Worship Comes Back Up

Invitation:

SO it basically comes down to this for all of us. Which will you choose? The WORD or the WORLD? The WORD made FLESH or your OWN WAY?

If you are following Jesus will your attitude be the same as Captain America when it comes to the pressures of this world pulling at you from all angles,



Amazing Spider-Man 537

Or will we give in like Israel and rather than PLANT ourselves beside the river of TRUTH, we allow ourselves to be influenced by the world by **walking in step with the wicked** where it impacts our thinking? Will we **stand in the way that sinners take** where it impacts our behavior? Or will we **sit in the company of mockers** and allow it to change who we belong to?

The choice is yours! Which will you choose?