



Praying the Word Series Week 6 - Psalm 1

April 28, 2024 - Pastor Rafael Aristy

The book of Psalms is Israel's book of songs and helps us grow in our language of prayer, praise, and worship.

The word "Psalms" in Greek means to strum a string instrument that accompanies lyrics, and in Hebrew is just the other way around. It means POETRY accompanied by music.

Some facts about Psalms:

The book of Psalms (Psalter) is divided into 5 books: Book 1 (Psalm 1-41), Book 2 (42-72), Book 3 (73-89), Book 4 (90-106), Book 5 (107 - 150). Each book in Psalms ends with a **doxology** (Greek words **doxa** and **logos**). **Doxa** means glory, splendor, or grandeur, while **logos** means word or speaking. Doxology thus means to speak of God's glory, splendor, and grandeur. An expression of praise to God.

An example is at the end of book 1 (Psalm 41) doxology: **Psalm 41:13 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen."**

There were different contributors to the book of Psalms. 100 of the 150 Psalms identify their author with an introduction: 73 by King David, 12 by Asaph, 11 by the Sons of Korah; Solomon wrote Psalm 72 and Psalm 127, Ethan wrote Psalm 89, Heman wrote Psalm 88, Moses wrote Psalm 90, and 50 Psalms were written by anonymous writers.

Today we will look at Psalm 1, written anonymously. Hebrew tradition says that Psalms 1 & 2 were written as one, but for our purposes today, we will look only at Psalm 1.

Psalm 1:1-6 NIV 1 "Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers, 2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. 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. 4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the

judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.”

There's a contrast in this Psalm, an opposing parallelism that is often employed in Hebrew poetry. The wicked and the righteous...the wise and the fool... The writer provides us with TWO LIFESTYLES. One to be **avoided** and one to be **emulated**.

v1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers

Pastor Rafael's personal opinion: If you post anything about this message online, PLEASE DO NOT type #Blessed... It has been abused and we have lessened the meaning of the word. We don't fully understand or value the word.

Blessed - Esher: happiness, blessedness - Word comes from Hebrew word **Ashar:** to go straight, go on, advance. The original readers of this verse, the Jews, understood this BLESSING as coming from heaven. This is not the happiness that you feel when you buy a new car, get a promotion, or get that person you've been going after harder than you've been going after Jesus -says they'd go on a date with you... You will receive happiness/joy that's not of this world; you will go straight and advance outside of the actual circumstances you may be in.

Check out [this link](#) from the Bible Project Podcast for deeper thoughts on the word "blessed"

Who is blessed? The person who does not: walk in the counsel of the wicked, stands with sinners, sits with mockers. There's a **progression** starting with pursuing and receiving counsel from the wicked and starting to walk in it. **Then** that counsel moves you to stand with sinners in agreement, thought, and way of life. And then you sit (TAKE A POSITION) with mockers (those who mock the things of God, complain and grumble about God and His ways).

This is why it's SO important to NOT receive counsel from just anybody...This has the potential to lead you down a path you don't want to go down. "**Bad company corrupts good character.**" 1 Corinthians 15:33

It is not your job to stay with these people to "save" them. That is the Holy Spirit's job. You need to guard against who is speaking into and influencing your perspective and actions in life.

- Who are you giving your ear to?

Every one of us knows someone who is not walking the same path we are walking. Every one of us must fight the temptation to allow the flesh (our sinful desires) to dominate us and cause us to disobey the word of God.

But, HOW DO WE DO THAT?

v2 "but whose delight is in **the law of the Lord**, and who **meditates** on his law day and night."

Just like when the apostle Paul writes to the churches to tell them, "Don't do this, but instead do this...", here also is a "don't do this, but instead..." Don't walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand with sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers, BUT INSTEAD *delight in the LAW OF THE LORD* (known in Hebrew as the Torah) and meditate on it...

The noun **torah** comes from the verb, **yarah**, which means to throw something so that it hits its mark. Imagine axe throwing...you throw the axe and as it spins forward, the aim is for it to hit the wood, stick to it, and hit the bullseye (the mark). We are the bullseye and His Word, *the law of YAHWEH*, is the axe that hits its mark and needs to stick and become a part of us. It becomes a part of us by meditating on His law, His word. Meditating is simply muttering, repeating, ruminating on (chew the cud), praying the word of God so that what comes up is Him, His ways, His Word.

Jesus said blessings come from **doing** what the word of God says: **Luke 11:28 NIV** "He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'" Hearing alone does nothing. We must do it.

- Can you share an example from your life of the difference between hearing and doing the word of God?

Example of Prayer- verses 1&2:

Father, thank you for the blessings you've bestowed upon me. Thank you that I don't walk by the counsel of the wicked, but it is your Spirit who is my counselor. Thank you for placing righteous men in my life to model what it means to delight in your word. Father, help me to meditate on your word that I may receive direction, instruction, and rebuke. Your word is good, it's right, and it is my benefit! Thank you Father, in Jesus name, amen!

The writer of Psalm 1 paints a beautiful picture of what that blessed person looks like...

v3 "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.*"

A tree PLANTED by streams of water means this tree didn't just happen to get lucky and grow in an environment that aided its growth. It was intentionally planted in a place it could grow! It is a picture of how *God cares for us and plants us in an environment beneficial for our growth*. Perhaps you're NOT here at Good News by COINCIDENCE, but actually on purpose? Perhaps God has planted you here in this season of life because He knows what's best...

- How have you seen God's intention in where you have been planted?

This tree bears fruit which is a sign of health and a tree that has been taken care of, but do you want to bear fruit? **Remain** IN Jesus!

A tree *planted* by streams of water... was *intentionally* planted in a place it could *grow*!

John 15:5- 8 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. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

Pastor Rafael challenge: I'm going to be a little blunt here. It's not to offend you, but because I care. Some of you come to church for a while and may even get involved. You begin growing in your love for Jesus and His people and begin to show signs that fruit will SOON be coming. BUT you UPROOT yourself...you STOP what God has begun in your life and your leaves wither, and eventually they fall...REMAIN IN JESUS. You may think you don't need church to remain in Him, but YOU DO! How has doing it "by yourself" been treating you? Furthermore, the church does not need each of us. We each need the church.

- Process this challenge and how you have experienced it to be true.

Leaves wither due to environmental stress (drought, extreme heat), root failure, soil deficiencies and toxicity. All and any of these happen in our spiritual lives when we are not planted by the "streams of water." Wherever you are planted, that's the fruit you're going to grow...PLANT yourself in Netflix...CNN/Fox News...Clubbing...

- Where are you planted?

- What is feeding you?

Book: Lead With Prayer, Chapter 6 (p82) covers two methods of prayer - Imaginative Prayer & Lectio Divina (Divine reading):

"Imagination often feels like the realm of children and eccentrics, but the God-given gift of imagination offers fertile ground in which to grow our connection with Jesus. The idea of imaginative prayer dates to Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), who championed the power of using imagination when praying or reading scripture. Ignatius proposes:

1. Pick a story out of scripture. Become familiar with the characters, facts, and scenes by reading the passage slowly.
2. Imagine standing right there, watching the story unfold. Ask questions like, "Who and what else are there? What noises are in the background? What smells penetrate the air? What is the weather like?"
3. Now begin to picture the scene. Who is in it? What conversation takes place? What is the mood: Tense? Joyful? Confused? Angry?

Pastor had never really done this in prayer, but decided to practice this with Psalm 1.

- Have you tried this before? Why or why not? Share your experience. Consider trying it now and journal what you see. God made us with senses. They have a place in our faith journey with God.

Example of Prayer - Verse 3:

Father, you are so incredibly gracious and faithful to me. Thank you for planting me here...thank you that you've planted me so I can grow spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. Help me to never uproot myself. Help me to allow you to provide the nutrients I need to continue to bear fruit, so that you may be glorified. In Jesus name, amen!

The writer then moves from what a blessed person is to the **contrast of the wicked.**

v4 "Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away."

The wicked, those who have decided not to delight in the word of God, those who have decided they don't need this God are dry, empty/hollow, easily blown away...

- Think about the contrast of a beautiful, healthy, strong tree, full of fruit, with a useless, dried up, rootless chaff... Which one would you rather be and why?

v5 "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous."

Here again, the writer brings back the wicked/the sinner from verse 2. They once again stand in contrast with the righteous. Some say this does not refer to the final judgment, but to the wicked/sinner not being part of the community's meeting ("assembly of the righteous" who resolved conflict). Others say this is the final

judgment where Jesus judges all humankind. Either way, the wicked/the sinner can't be there; they will have no access.

v6 "For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction."

Here is another contrast between the LIFESTYLE a person chooses...the RIGHTEOUS versus the WICKED. YAHWEH (God) watches over the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. This says He watches over the way of the righteous.

The verb the NIV translates as "**watches over**" is yd' ("know"). "**Knowing**" in Hebrew is not simply intellectual knowledge of information about something or someone. Rather, *knowledge is the end result of experience and relationship*. Thus, the "way of the righteous" is one that God knows well from experience because He has traveled it before and knows all its twists and turns. *He is the great pathfinder who has blazed the safe and secure trail for those who come behind*. By contrast, the way of the wicked seeks to explore territory in which God is absent and consequently will lead to separation from God and destruction. --The NIV Application Commentary

YAHWEH has traveled the road He has asked you to take. He knows every turn, He knows every danger, He knows every detour...**He WATCHES over your path!** *The wicked CHOOSES the path God is not on...they refuse to go where God leads*

- *How has God knowing every detail of your journey give you confidence in your life?*

Example of Prayer - Verse 5 & 6:

Thank you Father that you call me righteous! Thank you for Jesus' sacrifice that restored my relationship with you. Thank you that you've already been where I'm going. You watch over the path that I'm taking and your Spirit leads me so may not stumble. May you, oh Lord, bring conviction to the hearts of friends and family members who are right now numbered amount the wicked. May you, by your mighty hand, rescue them. May you save them form the destructive lifestyle they have chosen, so that they may be able to stand on the day of judgment. In Jesus name, amen!

- YOU, Good News Family, are this tree. You have been planted where you can grow and bear fruit. Do you believe it? What do you need to wrestle out a bit? What needs to change?

- What is God saying to you through this Psalm? How is He challenging you?

- What do you see about God's care of us through the visual of this tree in Psalm 1?

- List the contrasts you see between the godly and the wicked. Are there things in your life you need to tweak so that you live as the godly in this passage?

- Look below at the Lectio Divina and consider trying it this week.

LECTIO DIVINA (divine reading)

One method of Lectio Divina is to read a passage four times, focusing each reading on one of the four steps outlined by Guigo, a twentieth-century monk who elaborated on the sixth-century practice St. Benedict introduced. In Latin, Guigo's divine reading steps are: Lectio (reading), Meditatio (meditation), Oratio (prayer), Contemplatio (contemplation).

Three Questions in Lectio Divina

1. One Word : What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you? In silence, meditate on that.
2. Feelings : What do you feel? What specific situation in your life today relates? Write down a prayer, or pray quietly.
3. Invitation : What is God's personal invitation to you from the scripture? You can write down what the Lord may be saying to you or a prayer of thanks. Or simply rest quietly in the Spirit's presence.