



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N8 February 23, 2025

PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

"Psalm 1"

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Single-Mindedness
I focus on God and his
priorities for my life.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
Matthew 6:33



Q?

How do I live
an enviable
life?



Meditation on God's Word keeps disciples' eyes focused on God and his priorities for their lives. Psalm 1 is another example of a text that relates to more than one Core Competency. In addition to Single-Mindedness, it relates to the Central Belief, Authority of the Bible, and the Central Practice, Bible Study, which are related.

Bible study is the number one practice that the Spirit uses to transform us. Psalm 1 says as much, and research confirms it! Recent research looked at four stages in what it called "the spiritual growth continuum" and analysed more than 50 factors thought to have an impact on personal spiritual growth. One goal of the research was to identify those factors, called "catalysts," most responsible for moving people from one stage to the next—from "growing in Christ" to "Close to Christ" for example. Four kinds of catalysts were identified: (1) spiritual beliefs and attitudes, (2) organized church activities, (3) personal spiritual practices, and (4) spiritual activities with others. Here's what the researchers reported regarding Bible study: "Reflection on Scripture," which is related to meditation, is *the number one factor* across all three movements. But that's only part of the story. When we statistically compare the power of these factors, "Reflection on Scripture" ("I reflect on the meaning of Scripture in my life") is much more influential than any other personal spiritual practice. In fact, for the most advanced segments—Close to Christ and Christ-Centered—it's twice as catalytic as any other factor" (Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Follow Me: What's Next for You?*, 41).

The kind of Bible study that matters to spiritual formation is what the researchers call "reflective," in other words, Bible study

that is *active* rather than *passive*—Bible *study*, not Bible *listening*. Too much so-called "Bible study" involves gifted teachers lecturing *passive* listeners. And while lecture may be an efficient way to disseminate information, it's hardly the most effective way to teach the Bible. People need to encounter God through their own personal reading of God's Word. They need to *look closely* at its details, *answer interpretive questions* that will lead to recognition of its meaning, and *reflect carefully* on implications of its message for them personally. They need to do this individually first and then together with others in community.

This kind of "reflective" Bible study provides occasion for Scripture memory and meditation. On the value and practice of these two disciplines one author writes. "Memorization allows us to choose words and images that shape our minds and hearts. It gives the mind somewhere to go when all the media is turned off. Furthermore, memorizing God's Word allows us to access divinely inspired thought and wisdom. And it works in us even when we are not conscious of its doing so . . . To meditate on Scripture choose a verse, chapter or book of the Bible. Don't hurry. Listen to the Scripture. Write down your questions. Use your imagination. You may wish to memorize a short part of the text to keep it clearly before you. Like a cow chewing the cud, keep returning to your text with your mind and heart. When you are distracted, gently return to your text. Express once again your desire to pay attention. The impact of meditating on Scripture can show up later in our interactions with others" (Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 177, 173). To "tune out" the media so you can memorize and meditate, go for a quiet walk.

Read Psalm 1:1-6

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,

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.

Read another translation

1 *How blessed is the one who does not follow the ad-*

vice of the wicked,

or stand in the pathway with sinners,

or sit in the assembly of scoffers.

2 *Instead he finds pleasure in obeying the LORD's com-*
mands;

he meditates on his commands day and night.

3 *He is like a tree planted by flowing streams;*

it yields its fruit at the proper time,

and its leaves never fall off.

He succeeds in everything he attempts.

4 *Not so with the wicked!*

Instead they are like wind-driven chaff.

5 *For this reason the wicked cannot with-*
stand judgment,

nor can sinners join the assembly of the godly.

6 *Certainly the LORD guards the way of the godly,*

but the way of the wicked ends in destruction. (NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "blessed" in v. 1.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 2, 6.
- Underline "walk," "stand," and "sit" in v. 1.
- Double-underline "wicked," "sinners," and "company" v. 1.
- Underline "delight" and "meditates" in v. 2.
- Double-underline "law of the LORD" and "his law" in v. 2.
- Box "like" indicating *comparison* in vv. 3, 4.
- Box "not so" indicating *contrast* in v. 4.
- Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 5.
- Underline "wicked" and "sinners" in v. 5.
- Double-underline "the judgment" and "the assembly" in v. 5.
- Box "For" indicating *reason* in v. 6.
- Circle "the way" (2x) in v. 6.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Psalm 1:1 describes a truly happy person. Put the psalmist's threefold *negative* description in your own words.

 2. What kind of parallelism do you see in verse 1—*synonymous*, *antithetical*, or *synthetic*? Explain.

 3. Explain the *contrast* in verse 2.

 4. How can anyone meditate on God's law day and night? Explain.

 5. Explain the *comparison* in verse 3.

 6. Verse 3 doesn't guarantee that *every single thing* this person does will be *profitable*, does it? So what does it guarantee, if anything?

 7. Explain the *comparison* in verse 4.

 8. To what "judgment" does verse 5 refer?

 9. Explain the *contrast* in verse 6.

 10. **Discussion:** Talk about the secret to finding happiness revealed in this psalm.
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Commentary On The Text

Most commentators think that Psalm 1 functions as an introduction to the entire book. One writes, “It seems likely that this psalm was specially composed [or selected] as an introduction to the whole Psalter. Certainly it stands here as a faithful doorkeeper, confronting those who would be in ‘the congregation of the righteous’ (5) with the basic choice that alone gives reality to worship; with the divine truth (2) that must inform it; and with the ultimate judgment (5, 6) that looms up beyond it” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-71*, TOTC, 64). The psalm certainly sets the tone for the whole Psalter. By strongly contrasting the happy condition of the godly with the sad state of the wicked and by strongly implying that their happy condition results from them delighting in the law of the LORD, it invites readers to heed the instruction of the psalms that follow and to meditate on them.

Psalm 1 describes two ways: the way of the righteous that delight in the law of the LORD, and the way of the wicked that scoff at his law preferring to delight in their own counsel. Verses 1-3 describe the way that prospers. Verses 4-5 describe the way that doesn’t. Verse 6 describes the parting of the ways for both. Ultimately, “the two ways, and there is no third, part for ever” (Kidner, 66).

“O the happiness of the one,” exclaims the psalmist, who refuses to *think* like the ungodly. He doesn’t “walk in step with the wicked.” Neither does he *act* like the ungodly. He doesn’t “stand in the way that sinners take.” Nor does he hang out with the ungodly. He doesn’t “sit in the company of mockers.” The main point of this threefold picture is to show that the one who is blessed does not follow the godless way of life. *Instead*, he delights in the law of the LORD so much so that he “meditates” on it all the time—it’s always on his mind. The Hebrew verb is interesting. It means literally to “mutter.” “This same verb *h-g-h* is used of a young lion growling over his prey (Isa. 31:4), of the moaning of a dove (Isa. 38:14), and as a synonym of ‘to speak’ (37:30; 71:24). ‘He meditates’ may mean in our context ‘he reads to himself [or recites to himself] in a low tone’, and the purpose of this activity is clear from Jos. 1:8: ‘. . . you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous . . .’ So this ‘mediation’ is not merely an intellectual exercise but, above all, it is a study of the will of God for the purpose of doing it” (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 1:60). As a result, he is “like a tree planted” or

“transplanted” by “streams of water” (lit., “irrigation channels”) that provide a reliable source of life-giving water in an arid environment. The same imagery is used by Jeremiah to describe those who trust in the LORD. “But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. 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” (Jer 17:7-8). The word “transplanted” in Ps 1:3 suggests that what the man does prospers not because of fortuitous circumstances but because of God.

“Not so the wicked!” declares the psalmist. In stark *contrast* to the godly person whose life has substance, worth, gravitas, if you will, the ungodly person has none of these. The ungodly are like “chaff” carried away by the wind in contrast to the lush tree that no wind can uproot. Therefore, in the judgment they haven’t a leg to stand on and are denied access to “the assembly of the righteous.” They don’t belong with God’s people in God’s presence either now or in the future.

“The LORD watches over” the righteous but not the wicked, and so they are destined to part company. “The only mention of divine action in this psalm is withheld until the last verse. On the surface, the fates of the righteous and the wicked have appeared to be determined by natural law: the former go the way of a tree planted by streams of water, and the latter the way of chaff. But the process is not automatic. The enigmatic word choice in verse 3 may hint that the mysterious ‘transplanter’ and ‘irrigator’ is revealed now in verse 6” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 43). The LORD acts on behalf of the righteous, but he lets the wicked perish. Life lived apart from the LORD and his law is doomed.

The following captures the point of the psalmist. “In this wisdom psalm the author advises his audience to reject the lifestyle of the wicked and to be loyal to God. The psalmist contrasts the destiny of the wicked with that of the righteous, emphasizing that the wicked are eventually destroyed while the godly prosper under the Lord’s protective care” (NET Bible, note 1sn on Psalm 1).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 **blessed** Lit., “O the happiness of the man,” or “How blessed is the one” (NET; cf., NASB). The word ‘happy’ is a good rendition of ‘blessed’ provided one keeps in mind that the condition of ‘bliss’ is not merely a feeling. Even when the righteous do not feel happy, they are still considered ‘blessed’ from God’s perspective. He bestows the gift on them. Neither negative feelings nor adverse conditions can take away his blessing” (Willem A. VanGemen, *Psalms*, TEBC, rev. ed., 5:78, 79). Other possible paraphrases include: “Better off is the one,” “To be envied is the one,” and “How rewarding is the life of the one” (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 1:58).

v. 1 **walk, stand, sit** “We should not read a progression into this verse, as some do. Rather, the poetic parallelism sets up a mirror image, where the second line is more specific than the first. Paralleling the general category of ‘wicked’ are the more particular categories of ‘sinners,’ the same group but viewed religiously, and of ‘mockers,’ the same group but focusing on their speech. Paralleling the activity of ‘walking’ are the polar postures of ‘standing’ and ‘sitting.’ Paralleling the ‘counsel’ or beliefs of the wicked are their ‘way’ or behavior and their ‘seat’ or company” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 42).

v. 1 **step, way, company** “Counsel, way and seat [NIV©1984] (or ‘assembly,’ or ‘dwelling’) draw attention to the realms of thinking, behaving, and belonging, in which a person’s fundamental choice of allegiance is made and carried through . . . the three complete phrases show three aspects, indeed three degrees, of departure from God, by portraying conformity to this world at three different levels: accepting its advice, being party to it ways, and adopting the most fatal of its attitudes—for the *scoffers*, if not the most scandalous of sinners, are the farthest from repentance (Prov. 3:34)” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-71*, TOTC, 64).

v. 1 **mockers** Or “scoffers” (NASB, ESV, NET); cf., “cynics” (NJB) and “those who have no use for God” (TEV). “The Hebrew word refers to arrogant individuals (Prov 21:24) who love conflict (Prov 22:10) and vociferously reject wisdom and correction (Prov 1:22; 9:7-8; 13:1; 15:12). To ‘sit in the assembly’ of such people means to completely identify with them in their proud, sinful plans and behavior” (NET Bible, 9^{tn} on Ps 1:1).

v. 2 **delight** “The positive portrayal of the blessed defines that person by what ‘turns him on’ (his delight) and by what preoccupies him (he meditates day and night)—in other words, by what he truly values” (Broyles, 42).

v. 2 **law of the LORD** “‘Law’ in the broad sense refers to any ‘instruction’ flowing from the revelation of God as the basis for life and action” (220). Here ‘law’ certainly refers to the Pentateuch and likely by extension to the entire Old Testament and to the book of Psalms, in particular, since Psalm 1 serves as its introduction (Broyles, 41, 42). The term is nearly synonymous with the “word of God” (Leupold, 35).

v. 2 **meditates** One writer comments, “Meditation is not the setting apart of a special time for personal devotions, whether morning or evening, but is reflection of the word of God in the course of daily activities (Josh. 1:8). Regardless of the time of day or the context, the godly respond to life in accordance with God’s word” (VanGemen, 80).

v. 3 **like a tree** “This tree is able to sustain its greenness and shade even through the dry season of the Middle East because it is **planted** (lit. ‘transplanted’) by streams (lit. ‘[irrigation] channels’) **of water**. This word choice implies that the tree is able to transcend natural circumstances, but not because of its natural or inherent abilities” [cf., v.6] (Broyles, 43).

v. 4 **like chaff** “The metaphor of chaff reveals both the uselessness of the wicked and the ease with which God will deal with them. Even as the winnower casts the chaff to the afternoon breeze, so the Lord will drive away the wicked. No one will remember their place” (VanGemen, 82).

v. 5 **the judgment** The next line suggests this does not refer to final judgment and admission to heaven but to “judgment taking place when one seeks entry into the temple (e.g., ‘Who may stand in his holy place?’ 24:3) and admission to the worshiping congregation (74:2; 11:1)” (Broyles, 43). It states the wicked, i.e., “sinners,” are denied access to the “assembly of the righteous,” which is “composed of those who have a relationship with God and enjoy his presence. They will experience his presence both now and in the life to come” (VanGemen, 83).

v. 6 **watches over** Lit., “knows” (cf. NASB, ESV, NKJV). “The knowledge of God involves not only an objective knowledge about the righteous but also a subjective relationship with them, assuring them that he cares for his own, protects them, and will reward them (cf. 31:8; 37:18; 144:3)” (VanGemen, 83; cf., Anderson, 1:63). The verse can have two slightly different nuances depending on whether “way” is taken to refer to the behavior of the righteous or their course of life, their destiny: 1) “the LORD rewards the behavior of the godly” or 2) “the LORD watches over the destiny of the godly” (the NET Bible, 28^{tn} on v. 6).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL POINT OF THE LESSON

Delight yourself in the word of God—meditate on it and heed its counsel—if you want to prosper and want God to watch over you.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

What do you think of when you hear the word *meditation*? When I ask kids this question, they always drop cross-legged to the floor, put the back of their hands on their knees and start humming. It takes some reshaping of their thoughts when I explain that meditation isn't exclusive to Eastern religions. It's almost mind-blowing when I explain that followers of Christ are encouraged to meditate as a spiritual discipline. Biblical meditation is the process of focusing your mind on His Word. A lost discipline in our busy culture, meditation requires we slow down and spend time in God's presence. It's a way to focus our mind and heart on scripture. I recently caught an Instagram reel by Justin Whitmel Early going through the process of meditative breathing that encompasses Scripture memorization. The example he offered was so simple. As you inhale a deep breath, think or say, "the Lord is my Shepherd...", and as you exhale, think or say, "I lack nothing." I was able to apply this technique recently using my favorite verse, Psalm 31:3, when I had a decision to make. Deep breath in, "For the sake of Your name," slow exhale, "lead and guide me." My whole mindset was different after a few minutes of meditating on God's Word. I was more focused, calm, settled and eager to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance. Parents, what a tender way to calm anxiety in your preteen or refocus your toddler in moments of discipline! And the bonus of memorizing Scripture is always a win. Joshua 1:8 encourages us to meditate on God's law day and night. How will you implement this in your family?

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Introduction to the Psalms.

1. What does the righteous person avoid?
2. What does the righteous person delight in?
3. What is the righteous person compared to?

What Do You Think?

Explain how the Lord deals differently with the righteous and the wicked.

What Do You Do?

Plant a tree or flower this week. Be sure to give it all it needs to flourish and become what God meant it to be. How does God give you what you need to flourish?

CORE COMPETENCY: Single-Mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 19:14

*"May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."*

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.