

SUMMER IN THE PSALMS: Psalm 1

The Realities of Life

In many ways, it seems like summer is almost over. School starts back in a couple of weeks and for many of us work will ramp up again, as well. New rhythms are headed our way. Do you feel like an opportunity to slow down and enjoy life has come and gone without being able to fully embrace it? Or was this the year that you made the most of vacation days and extra time with your family?

We are a month into our Summer in the Psalms series. Maybe this tool has helped you and strengthened your relationship with Jesus. Or maybe you're feeling just as disconnected from God as you did when we started. Unfortunately, the realities of life, whether good or bad, can impact our time with Jesus in a negative way. We must fight the drift to isolation and away from God's presence! And the best way to do so is to experience Him through His word.

If we slow down to think about God, most of us will confess that we struggle with a "head-heart" disconnect. How many times have you heard yourself, or someone else, say, "I believe God loves me in my head, but I don't experience His love in my heart." More times than not, our experience of God does not match with what we know to be true about God. We think God has given up on us because we are not experiencing Him like we want, we have failed to keep up with commitments we have made to Him, or we believe He is going to give up on us if we cannot get it together.

You Are Created to Know and Experience God.

Following Jesus can seem overwhelming at times with all that life throws our way. But the good news is that Jesus is our Good News. He came to live our life yet without sin so that He could be the perfect sacrifice that would reconcile us to God. More than that, so that we could live with God in right relationship, walk with Him daily, and experience His grace, mercy, and goodness each and every day. Every time we walk with Him in obedience, step out in faith, and trust Him to be all that we need, we experience Him more fully.

It is often hard for us to believe that God would and is pursuing us but He has and He is! God knows you and wants you to know Him the way sheep know their shepherd. He wants to be your place of rest, provision, and protection, and delights in your knowing Him. You are known and you are loved!

What reality is pressing down on you? Honestly describe how are you experiencing your relationship with God.

Experiencing God through His Word

God's time-tested way of deepening your relational experience with Him is through receiving, praying, and living out His word by the power of His Spirit.

God's word gives us new life and is implanted in our hearts (James 1:18, 21). God invites you to hunger and thirst for His righteousness (Jesus Christ) AND promises to satisfy you (Matthew 5:6). Only God's Spirit can calm your heart, lift your eyes to Christ, and restore our soul.

Every Christian needs to learn how to draw near to God and experience His love through his living word (Hebrews 4:12). You will have an opportunity to experience God as you walk through Psalm 1 in various ways.

Receiving God's Word—Psalm 1 (ESV)

1 Blessed is the man who walks
not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

What did you experience in your heart and mind as you received God's word?

Praying God's Word—Psalm 1

Prayer is foundational to our relationship with God. When we pray, we declare our dependence on the Lord but it's not just a monologue. Through our prayers, we hear from the Lord and we can hear His heart as we pray through the Scriptures. Praying God's word guides what you pray, shapes how you pray, and gives voice to your prayers. You can be confident when you pray God's word since His word reveals His purposes and desires.

Take a moment to pray through Psalm 1. You may pray about the reality you wrote earlier or the Spirit may move you to pray in a totally different way as you work your way through the psalm. As you pray, you may find yourself adoring Him, confessing your sins to Him, thanking Him, and praying for yourself, your family, your friends, your coworkers, and your neighbors.

How did God shepherd you as you prayed through Psalm 1?

How did praying through Psalm 1 differ from your typical prayers?

Isn't it a great comfort to know that Jesus and the Spirit are praying for you without ceasing? Romans 8:26-27, 34 tells us this is true. God knows our heart and the desires of our heart before we even speak them. We find God's will for our lives as we read His word, so it only makes sense that Jesus and the Spirit would be praying God's word over us, including Psalm 1.

How may the Son and Spirit be praying the Father's will for you as expressed in Psalm 1?

(Write out the Son's and Spirit's prayer on your behalf to the Father. Include your name in the prayer.)

Living Out God's Word—Psalm 1

As we engage with God's word through receiving and praying, we gain a greater understanding of who He is, what He has done, and what that means for us. All of this allows us to better relate and respond to God properly. Receiving and praying are precursors to being able to live out God's words. We are often inclined to receive and pray, but not live out God's word. The Father calls us to be hearers and doers of His word in a reciprocal and parallel manner. We can't fully embrace following God's will for our life without living out His and we cannot fully live out God's word without receiving and praying His word.

God gave us at least three different word pictures to help us to understand the importance of living out God's word. First, Jesus uses the parable of two foundations, where He compares the wise and foolish builder (Matthew 7:24-27). The main difference being the wise builder hears and does the word, which enable him to withstand the storms of life. Jesus adds that those who hear the word and obey it are blessed (Luke 11:28).

Secondly, Jesus uses the image of the vine and the branch. Not only can we not doing anything apart from Christ, but we abide in His love when we obey His commands, which results in experiencing His joy (John 15:5; 9-11).

Thirdly, we are given the picture of a mirror. Those who merely hear the word is like one who looks in the mirror then forgets what they look like in their disobedience—forgetting who they are in Christ, how God calls them to live, and who God is and what He has done. But the one who looks at God's word and does it, which helps in not forgetting what they heard, is blessed and finds freedom as they live with God and live for God (James 1:21-25).

Given what you noted about what reality is pressing down on you, or how you are struggling in your relationship with God, consider how God is calling you to trust and obey Him so that you can live His word, which enables you to experience His blessing and find freedom found in Christ.

How Can I Live Out Psalm 1?

List 1 or 2 practical ways God is calling you to live out the truths found in Psalm 1. Here are some examples:

- When I am distracted by the world, I will look to Jesus, and His commands, that I may delight in them and meditate on them in the morning and evening. (1:1).
- I will find comfort in being planted where God has planted me, bearing the fruit that He wants me to bear for my own good and for the good of those around me (1:3).
- I will seek to be righteous as Jesus is righteous, knowing that righteousness is only possible because of Him and that the Lord sees Jesus' righteousness when He sees me (1:6).

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