

RTM

reaching/teaching/ministering curriculum

May 24, 2009
How to Get Life Right
Psalm 1



MINISTERING HELPS

Group Prayer

Some people may be skittish about sharing concerns with a large group, but they do want prayer. Why not get everyone to get in groups of two today and ask each group to ask and pray for each other about at least one thing that they could use prayer about.

Go After Absentees

Is there someone in your class that is having an extra tough time right now? Is there something your group could do this week together to make a big impact on them? It might be doing yard or house work, or it might be taking them a couple of meals or purchasing something they need. Plan and do it!

REACHING HELPS

Take a look at your roll sheet. The last section of names on your roll is folks who are prospects for your group but haven't joined yet. If they are attending today, ask them to join your group and become a member. Assign group members names of other prospects to follow up with. See if these prospects have connected somewhere yet, and if not, invite them to join your group as a member.

TEACHING HELPS

We continue our sermon series called LIVING AT THE SPEED OF LIFE.

Today, Pastor Chad's sermon is about the right choices Daniel made even though he was in a situation where things were quickly changing and not for the best.

In Psalm 1, David helps us understand some simple things we can do to get life right, and not end up getting life wrong.

How to Get Life Right

Psalm 1

A couple of years ago my wife and I stopped at a state park in Illinois along the Illinois River. There were many awesome sites along the river trails but none as great as a tree stump outside the visitor's center. Located about 100 yards from the river was an old oak stump that was over 10 feet in diameter. Alongside the stump was a plaque that told the history of the tree. Dating back to the 19th century, it was thought to be the oldest tree in the region. The plaque highlighted the history of the tree with some of the historical events of the area and nation through the whorls on the tree. (Circular growth marks around the center of the tree indicating the age of the tree.) Historical droughts of the area, ice storms of the area, both World Wars, The Civil War, and even The War of 1812 were mentioned. It was a marvel of God's creation.

The plaque continued to explain that the growth of the tree was abnormal to the area because the tree was "off the trail," and "near an open water source." Growth and health were prominent because of its location and food source. Psalm 1 talks about the blessed man's spiritual growth like a perfectly located tree. This Psalm similarly links the characteristics of a healthy tree to the spiritual characteristics of a blessed man.

Although Psalm 1 has no title it is a fitting introduction to the Psalms in that it summarizes the two ways open to mankind, the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. It is a wisdom psalm highlighting the theme of the two paths—the path of the righteous and the path of the wicked. The motifs in this psalm recur again and again throughout the collection. The psalm describes the blessed man who leads an untarnished and prosperous life in accord with the Word of the Lord, and contrasts him with the ungodly who will perish.

1. The Blessed Man: Psalm 1:1-3

*Blessed is the man 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 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, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

Teaching Plan

Introduction...

Get your group talking by asking one or more of the following questions...

- ▶ What is the WORST advice you ever got? Did you follow it? What was the result?
- ▶ What is the last test you took? Did you pass it? What did you do to prepare?
- ▶ Have you planted flowers or other plants this spring? How do you insure that the plants get the water and nutrients it needs?

Explain that Psalm 1 is a passage that tells us what we need to do to insure that we get life right and not wrong.

1, The Blessed Man (Psalm 1-3)

1. Have someone read all of Psalm 1.
2. This phrase begins with "Blessed is the man." Using the commentary, help group members to understand...
 - ▶ it means they are happy...
 - ▶ it is plural in form
 - ▶ it means people, not just guys

One way of saying a person is blessed is to say that this is a person who is getting life right!

3. Verse one says that the person who is getting life right does not do three things. What are those things?

Discuss the subtle differences between...

- ▶ walk in counsel of wicked
- ▶ stand with sinners
- ▶ sit with mockers

Blessed is the man is literally, “Oh, the happiness,” a repeated exclamation of the Psalms. It is properly in the plural form, blessedness, or may be considered as an exclamation produced by contemplating the state of the man who has taken God for his promises. It carries the weight of Christ’s words in the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12 and conveys a message of peace. “The man,” is emphatically “that” man; that one among a thousand who lives for the end of which God created him. It is a singling out one man that has many blessings because he is not led or influenced by the sinful. Man is understood as “the person” and not males only.”

Three types of evil companions are presented in this psalm with a progressive form of influence. The first type is walking in the counsel of the wicked. The wicked is one who does not have God in him or one who is without God in the world. The wicked man is unconcerned about religion. He is neither zealous for his own salvation, nor for that of others. He counsels and advises those with whom he converses to adopt his plan, and not trouble themselves about praying, reading, repenting, etc. This man is all about himself and his pleasures of life. Notice, blessed is the man who does not walk with this individual. The relationship here is a form of casual influence. It is his counsel that is cautioned against because the wicked is uninfluenced by God.

The second type of evil companion is the sinner who “misses the mark.” This man not only does no good, but he does evil. The former was without God, but not desperately wicked. The latter adds outward transgression to the sinfulness of his heart. The sinner always has his particular way of sinning; one is a drunkard, another dishonest and another unclean. Few sinners sin in every possible manner however they are habitual at transgressing the law in at least one particular command. There are many covetous men who hate drunkenness; many drunks who hate covetousness. Each has his easily besetting sin and adds his sin to his own wickedness. But, blessed is he who does not stand in such a man’s way. Standing conveys looking on the activity of sinners with jealousy. The warning is, when being off his guard; he will soon be a partaker in their evil deeds.

The third type of evil companion is a mocker. They are those who have no religion. They live in open disobedience to God’s laws. They ridicule revelation, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of an invisible world. The mocker is a deist, and tries to dissolve, the bonds of moral obligation in civil society. As

4. Some people think that we are blessed because we DON’T do bad things. But that is only half the story. It’s what we ARE DOING that really helps us to get life right. Verse 2 says that the person who gets life right does two things. What are they?

- ▶ delights in the law
- ▶ meditates on the law

5. What is the law? What is the purpose of the law? In David’s time, all they had of the scriptures was the laws from Moses. Now we have the whole Bible. All of it was given by God so that we might know who He is, what He desires and how to experience getting life right.

6. What does it mean to meditate on the law? How do we meditate on scripture? Have group members give testimony of ways they meditate or spend time in the scriptures. Talk about the importance of regular time in God’s word.

7. What does it mean to delight in the law? How important is it to delight in the Scriptures? It’s easy to see how we would be delighted in the promises of God, but what about when we get to a correction or a reproof from Scripture? Can we really be delighted if we are under conviction?

8. Get the class to describe the benefits of a tree planted near water versus a tree planted near little water. How is that tree planted near water similar to the person who is firmly planted in God’s Word, delighting in and meditating on that Word.

An oasis is a tree or trees near water but in the middle of an arid or desert region. How are we like an oasis?

9. What does “everything He does prosper” mean? What does it NOT mean?

the sinner exceeds the ungodly, so the mocker exceeds both. The mocker has brought all religion and moral feeling to an end. The fact that he has sat down is a confirmation of his impiety, and that he makes a mock at sin. His conscience is seared; and he is a believer in all unbelief.

Blessed is the man who doesn't sit down in his seat. The warning is, living as a sinner; he becomes unconscious of his deeds and mocks the very existence of God and his laws.

The progression of Psalm 1:1 is obvious. He who walks according to the counsel of the ungodly will soon stand to look at the action of sinners and being off his guard, he will soon be a partaker in their evil deeds. He who has acted in willful disobedience, in all probability; will soon become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, sit down with the mocker and endeavor to turn religion into ridicule. Blessed is the man who stays away from the wicked!

The blessed man's delight is not in others, but in God. His will, desire, affection, motive of the heart and every moving principle in his soul are on the side of God and his truth. He takes up the law of the Lord as the rule of his life. He brings all his actions and affections to God's holy standards. He looks into the perfect law of liberty and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the Word. Therefore, he is blessed in his deeds. He not only reads to gain knowledge from the Word, but he meditates on what he has read, feeds on it, and receives the sincere milk.

It is not an occasional study to him as it is his work day and night. As his heart is in it, the experience is frequent and perpetual. He is a man of God because God is pouring out of him in action, word and thought. Read Psalm 119:9-17.

GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT

What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Paul tells us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, commendable, virtuous, and praiseworthy. Do you have problems with impure thoughts and daydreams? Examine what you are putting into your mind through television, books, music, conversations, movies, and magazines. Replace harmful input with wholesome material. Above all, read God's Word and pray. Ask God to help you focus your mind on what is good and pure. It takes practice, but it can be done. —*Life Application Bible Commentary*

The analogy of a blessed man delighting in God's Word and staying away from the wicked is a well located tree. The tree is one that has been carefully cultivated for proper growth. It is taking advantage of the fertile soil and situation to which it has been chosen and produces fruit. This is alluding to the custom of irrigation in the eastern countries, where streams are conducted from a canal or river to different parts of the ground. They were turned off or on at the pleasure of the farmer depending on need. The blessed man in need of nourishment only has to go to the Word, his source for life.

Fruit is the expectation for such a tree. The fruit is born and it comes at the time in which it should come. He who reads, prays and meditates, will see the work which God has given him to do and the power by which he is to perform it. He will take those times, places and opportunities for doing those things by which God can obtain most glory. This fruit in-turn sustains his faith. As the leaves and the fruit are the evidences of the vegetative perfection of the tree; so a zealous religious man, accompanied with good works, are the evidences of the soundness of faith in the Christian man.

Ultimately the blessed man will prosper. A tree is always healthy by extending its roots, increasing its fibers, circulating its nutritive juices, budding, blossoming leaves, bearing fruit and all the operations that go on in their proper seasons. So too, the godly man is taking deeper root growing stronger in the grace he has already received, increasing in heavenly desires, and under the continual influence of the Holy Spirit, forming those purposes from which much fruit to the glory and praise of God will be produced. All of this enables prosperity in next steps for God.

2. Wicked Man: Psalm 1:4

⁴ *Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.*

The wicked are not grounded like the blessed man. This negative speaks both to the conduct and happiness of the wicked. The wicked here are not in a covenant relationship with God. They live according to their passions. They are not godly. They may do kind and charitable deeds, but God's evaluation of them is that they are without eternal merit. There is nothing of substance and there is nothing good in their ways.

The wicked are not good grain because they are only chaff. Chaff is the light outer shell (husk) of the grain that protects and provides nourishment during growth but is of no good during harvest and so it is separated and burned. The wicked will be separated from the good grain when the fan or shovel of God's power throws them up to the wind of his judgments. The manner of winnowing in the eastern countries is they either throw the grain and chaff up in a place outdoors by a large wooden shovel against the wind; or with their weights or winnowing fans shake it down leisurely in the wind. (Matthew 3:12) The grain falls down nearly perpendicular; and the chaff, through its lightness, is blown away to a distance from the grain.

An ungodly man is never steady because his purpose is subjective. His conversation is light, vain and foolish. He has hollow professions, friendships and relationships that are ultimately insincere and insecure. Both he and his works are carried away to destruction by the wind of God's judgments just like the wind blows away the chaff. The prophet Isaiah describes the wicked as the Psalmist does in Isaiah 5:8-24.

3. The Payoff for Getting Life Wrong: Psalm 1:5-6

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 will perish.*

Because the wicked are not of God they will be judged. It may sound like they will not be judged but the Hebrew indicates more clearly that they will have no defense when they are judged. Therefore, when they come to be judged, they will be condemned. They will have nothing to plead in their behalf because their life was lived in wickedness. God will then separate them from the righteous. Christ foretold of this process in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 24-25 through several parables. This separation/judgment is God's permanent solution to judging the wicked and blessing the

2. The Wicked Man (vs. 4)

1. What is the definition of a wicked person?
2. What is the wicked person compared to? Not everyone knows what chaff is and how it is removed, so explain the process and then make a comparison of how the chaff is like the person who does the opposite of the things we talked about in verses 1-3.

3. The payoff for getting life wrong... (vs. 5-6)

1. In verse one there are places where people who get life right DON'T stand, but here there are some places where God says those who get life wrong WON'T stand. What are those places?

What does it mean "the wicked will not stand in judgement"? What does it mean that they will not stand in the assembly of the righteous?

2. What does it say the ultimate end is for the person who gets life wrong in verse 6 is? What other verse do you know that has the word perish in it? (John 3:16) Read John 3:16 and talk about how God doesn't want us to perish.

Take time to share the plan of salvation here and invite group members who have never prayed to receive Christ to do so now!

righteous. Therefore, the way of the blessed is most desired.

The basis for this judgment is the Lord's knowledge. The first half of the verse, The Lord watches over (lit., "knows") the way of the righteous, is best understood by the way the wicked will perish; it is called antithetical parallelism in poetry. Antithetical parallelism is repeated terms of a poetic couplet that are opposite in meaning.

Salvation in the day of judgment is equated with being known by the Lord. In Psalm 1:6 "the way of the righteous" is contrasted with "the way of the wicked." "The way" means one's whole manner of life including what directs it and what it produces. The worthless life of the ungodly produces nothing of value to God therefore, it will not endure. God's curse will be on all that they have, do and are. In the day of judgment, they will be condemned to perish in everlasting fire. Malachi, in context of the wicked who were robbing God of his tithes, and those righteous who were seeking him; describes the wicked and righteous well. 3:18 "*And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.*" God is clear. Those who purpose to serve him alone will be called righteous. Those who do not are wicked.

References:

The Old Testament Volume; New Commentary on the Whole Bible
Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament
The Bible Knowledge Commentary: The Old Testament

Points for application...

1. Life is really a choice we make to either be blessed or cursed forever.

Maturity is the ability to put off what you want for the moment to receive what you desire as the end result.

How does that statement apply to today's passage?

2. The key to getting life right is getting a right attitude and a right connection to God's word.

ATTITUDE- Many folks have a bad attitude about God's Word because they equate it with reading an instruction manual rather than spending time with God. Challenge your group to change their attitude if this is true for them by seeing the Scriptures as a love letter from a friend that they look forward to being with.

CONNECTION- Share a basic plan for reading and talking to God. Lead them to sign up for DAILY DEVOS at www.dailydevos.fbcallen.org or another devotional guide (there is a rack full of devotional guides in the foyer of the Worship Center. Challenge them to connect to God every day.