

## Psalm 1

### The Art of Meditation

#### Introduction: prayers and songs of Israel.

The Psalms are beautifully complex, in the same way that life in this world is complex. We can relate with the Psalmist as he contemplates the path of wisdom and the path of folly. We can empathize with him when he cries out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” Or as he prays, “create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Or, “avenge me because of my enemies.” He has high highs and low lows. He has moments of great faith and deep pits of depression and doubt.

It has been said before that whereas scripture speaks to us, the Psalms in particular speak for us. In them we find: Delight. Fear. Anger. Joy. Grief. Depression. Gladness. Loneliness. Love and Loss. And this is just a small sampling of the range of emotions in life, ones that the Psalms fully describe.

But while the Psalms allow us to express our raw emotions they simultaneously seek to shape them into righteous ones. With the Psalms we can approach God with brutal honesty, seeking to be rooted in truth and ready to submit to him.

Tim Keller says, *“On the one hand, the Psalms actually show you that you can be unhappy in God’s presence. The Psalms, in a sense, give you the permission to pour out your complaints in a way that we might think inappropriate, if it wasn’t there in the Scriptures. But on the other hand, the*

*Psalms demand that you bow in the end to the sovereignty of God in a way that modern culture wouldn't lead you to believe.” - Tim Keller, the Songs of Jesus*

Now where the Psalms do contain doctrine about God, we can study them, we can teach from them, they are not primarily for teaching but for worship.. The five books of songs correlates to the five books of the Law (Torah), which implies that the scripture is for dialogue with God. It is meant to be conversational.

Eugene Peterson writes - *“Our habit is to talk about God, not to him. We love discussing God. The Psalms resist these discussions. They are not provided to teach us about God but to train us in responding to him. We don't learn the Psalms in until we are praying them.” - Eugene Peterson, Answering God*

The Psalms are given to us in order to teach us to pray

**Psalm 1 though is really unlike any other psalm. It is not a prayer nor is it a praise, but it is foundational to the rest of the psalms. Psalm 1 is in fact a guide to making sense of the rest of the Psalms. It suggests that before authentic praise, before passionate and expectant prayer, there is a deep need to ponder.**

- 1. The Blessing.** The way the Book of Psalms opens is with this pronouncement of Blessing or flourishing! - O How joyful, how flourishing are those who... delight in the law of the Lord..... Who in the

world that does not want joy and flourishing? Who doesn't want a fulfilling life?

1. The Psalmist opens up similarly to the Proverbs. Proverbs portrays "Lady Wisdom" - She is in the town square where everyone is passing by and she is calling out with an offer of wisdom and blessing to anyone that will hear. And this is the offer.. Who wants blessing, who wants meaning and purpose, who wants fulfillment and fulness of life? Then Listen up, attend your ears, tune in.
2. **The Righteous - the blessed man or woman, the one who has the favor of God, and his blessings.**
  1. **Negatively** - what he or she is not like
    1. **Walks not in the counsel of the wicked.**
    2. **Does not stand in the way of sinners** - He or she does not stand in the way meaning is kind of lost in translation. It means to walk in someone's shoes or walking in their way...
    3. **Does not sit in the seat of scoffers.**
      1. These three complete phases show three aspects, of departure from God, by portraying conformity to this world at three different levels:
        1. Accepting it's advice, its values, it's goals
        2. Being party to its ways, following in what everyone else does...
        3. Adopting the most fatal of it's attitudes - the one who scoffs at God. Mock's God's wisdom, His ways, His truth, His power, his love and care, and especially his existence.

1. Listen to the way Psalm 10 describes this character,  
**"For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul,  
and the one greedy for gain curses  
and renounces the Lord  
In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him  
; all his thoughts are, "There is no God."**
2. Most of us don't even realize how influenced we are by our surroundings - It's not even that we are taught to do certain things or think certain ways, though that is a part of it - And that just it - it's not taught it's caught, and it's caught because it's everywhere... It's just the water we're all swimming in..
3. If this is the constant voice in your life, if this is what and who you listen to, it is going to change your way of thinking, which will change your way of living...which, as this psalm shows, will change your destiny. Whatever you consistently put into your life/mind will take hold of you and will eventually work it's way out... That's why the righteous man or woman, doesn't give this way any place in their life.

### **3. Meditation**

#### **1. Lets take a few minutes for quiet reflection and prayer -**

1. What is the most consistent voice in your life; who's counsel do you listen to; who's image are you being formed into? Friends, family, boyfriend or girlfriend, a cultural icon, philosophical ideal political party or cause?

2. **Pray this Prayer - Lord expose for me the ways I listen to counsel that is contrary to your voice and the ways I am shaped in my thinking and practice by those who do not know God..**
3. **Scripture reading:** -“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.  
**-Psalm 139:23-24**
4. **Confession** - Lord we have not loved you as we should. Lord we have not esteemed your word as we should. Lord forgive us. May we, by the power of your Spirit at work in us, be able to say with Job - **“I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.” Amen.**
5. **Pray aloud together** - “Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### **4. The Blessed one - what he or she does do**

1. **“His (or her) delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”**
2. The flourishing man or woman is constantly thinking about God - his character and person first (Exodus 34) then the law, instruction, and knowledge - that flows from his character.

Scripture - God's wisdom, understanding and knowledge is what formed the Garden of Eden -this is the greatest counsel from the greatest source and as you take it in, it begins to shape you, the way you think, speak, and live. -You've probably heard it said, "You are not what you think you are; but what you think, You are!"

3. If this is the constant voice in your life, if this is what and who you listen to, it is going to change your way of thinking, which will change your way of living...which will change your destiny  
Whatever you consistently put into your life/mind will take hold of you and will eventually work it's way out...
4. We need counter formation! Psalm 1 as well as Romans 12:1-2 show that this counter formation, this transformation comes only by the renewal of your mind through God's word.
5. The Psalmist is one who delights in the law.. The word Law is the Hebrew word Torah. The root word of Torah is Yarah which means to throw... Eugene Peterson in his book Answering God - says that the word Yarah has with it the idea of a javelin being thrown or an arrow being shot. So then if the law of God is like a javelin or an arrow being shot, the target is our hearts. The idea is that God's word is not just another piece of advice to take or leave; it is the Truth of the universe being aimed at your heart.. it isn't just something to learn about, facts, peoples, places things... it is God's truth that is to be contemplated, meditated on, assimilated into our lives and incarnated into every area of our daily living...

6. The Psalmist isn't talking about a rigid discipline, or a burden... He describes it as delight, a Joy to be in it, to receive it, that he goes twice a day, at least, to sit under it's teaching and while he isn't listening or reading, he is thinking on it, working it out in his mind and into his heart.
7. He delights in God's instruction or literally his "Torah." When reading the OT we must remember this principle -the Law, or instruction of the Lord was given to the people of Israel only after he had already delivered them from slavery to oppression in Egypt.. Exodus Chapter 20 (the Chapter which explicitly lays out the Ten Commandments) begins with these words, **"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery....you shall have..."** God's Torah is first a record of his faithful love before it is instruction to be obeyed. His instruction, is heard, obeyed, and loved, only in light of his goodness and love that he has clearly proven to his people. This fact, that God moved first, this knowledge of his mighty deeds and love has empowered and sustained God's people in their worship and service for thousands of years, no matter what their circumstance.
8. **How much more for us?** - Don't we know something so infinitely greater than God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt? Yes we do, we know of the Cross, where God gave his most precious gift, his one of a kind Son, for our lives, to deliver us from slavery to meaninglessness, to sin, to death, and to the devil. Jesus delivered us and set us free at the Cross. Tim Keller says, *"Christians have their attitude toward God changed from*

*one of duty to free, loving self-giving because of what Jesus did for us on the cross.”*

9. If we really thought about who God is and what he has done for us, in Jesus, our response would be that we want to love him in return, we want to please him, we want to obey him. It's a pleasure not a duty.
10. Just as the Israelites were taught to abide in the Law of the Lord, so also Jesus tells us **“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”**

## **5. Meditation #2**

1. **Take a moment and think upon the Grace of God displayed for us in the Cross -**
2. **Reflect** - Think about who you were when God called you by his grace into salvation... think about who you are even now, your struggles, your inconsistencies and your failures
3. **Scripture reading** Romans 5:6-8 - **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**
4. **Listen** - *“Do you believe that the God of Jesus loves you beyond worthiness and unworthiness, beyond fidelity and infidelity - that he*



*loves you in the morning sun and the evening rain- that he loves you when your intellect denies it, your emotions refuse it, your whole being rejects it. Do you believe that God loves without condition or reservation and loves you this moment as you are and not as you should be?" - Brennan Manning*

5. **Confession - "Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I Love! Here's my heart Lord, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above!"**
6. **Thanksgiving - "Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!" - Psalm 103:1-5 (NLT)**

## **6. The Result of Torah/Biblical meditation-**

1. **"He or she 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."**
2. Regardless of life's varied experience the tree always shows signs of life and bears fruit in the correct seasons of life.
3. Here is blessing in Biblical terms. Rooted. Never moved, Fruitful in all the right places and seasons. Never lacking, never drying up. Always prospering. Fulfilled and at peace in every sense of the word.

1. To know how to meditate on and delight in God's word, is the secret to a relationship with God and to life itself.
2. It is through meditation and prayer that we assimilate the truth of God to our daily lives, which is the work of sanctification. Meditation and prayer is how we get God's truth from our heads to our hearts.
1. In Philippians 4:8-9 Paul says, **“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”**
2. Paul says, to think. This is a greek accounting word that means “to reckon” or to “count up.” Paul is saying if you want peace think long and hard about the core doctrines of the Bible.
3. Peace comes from a disciplined thinking out of the implications of God's word and promises.
4. Think on who God is, what he has done for you, who you are in Christ, what is in store for God's people....That's where we get stability, peace and blessing to face whatever life on this planet may throw at us.