

The Path  
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Psalm 1:1-6

Everyone wants to be happy! **How do people try to find happiness? What things do most people think will bring them happiness?**

Psalm number one gives us the contrast of two paths in life. The path of someone who has followed Christ as Savior and lives their life based on God's word, contrasted with the ungodly person. In six short verses, we're given the prescription for TRUE HAPPINESS as a godly person.

The big idea: A steady diet of God's word and obedience to what it tells us is the path to true happiness in life for a follower of Christ.

**Psalm 1:1–3 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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; <sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> 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.

- The first word in verse one sets the tone - Psalm one is all about how to live the "blessed life" of a godly person.
- That word blessed, means "how happy!, i.e., a heightened state of happiness and joy, implying very favorable circumstance and enjoyment."<sup>1</sup>
- This word is used 44 times in the Old Testament; 26 of those in Psalms. The Psalms have a lot to say about how to be truly happy. For example:

Psalm 32:1 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Psalm 40:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust...

Psalm 84:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!

Psalm 106:3 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!

- Continually the Psalms point the way to happiness for a follower of Christ.
- Lifeway's Leader's Guide: *"The secular understanding of happiness is that it is an unpredictable emotion that comes and goes depending on what happens to us. The Bible, however, describes happiness, or blessedness, as an ongoing state of being that results from faithfulness to God and is independent of what happens to us."*<sup>2</sup>
- Verse one tells us what NOT to do, if we want to be happy. The happy/blessed person *"does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,"*<sup>3</sup>
- **Why do you think the Psalmist used the three different words "walk," "stand," and "sit" instead of "hang around with?"**
- *"The verse expresses a progression that degenerates from bad to worse, from walking to standing to sitting. At first, the psalmist refers only to walking in the counsel of the wicked. But the next step is stopping to stand with sinners, and finally comes sitting down with people who mock."*<sup>4</sup>
- Today you cannot even walk down the street without hearing profanity. It's hard not to "overhear" the influence of ungodly people as you "walk." At least if we're walking we can keep moving. The Psalmist says don't walk WITH an ungodly person.
- What about "stand and sit?" Our lesson commentator writes: *"First, their counsel is overheard. Next comes standing in their way. Last is sitting down in their company or seat. In the Bible, sitting in a seat often refers to a position of instruction. That language is carried over into the modern world when we refer to a professor occupying a chair. It's an honored position of instruction. To sit in the seat of mockers, someone would have to earn a degree in sin and lecture on mockery. That's not the way to be happy."*<sup>5</sup>

- There is another progression in verse one: “the wicked”, “sinners”, and “scoffers.” The wicked are simply unsaved. *The “sinner” is a man whose wicked misconduct has become habitual.*<sup>6</sup> The last one is different. **What is a scoffer?** “**scorn synonyms** despise, abhor, condemn, disdain, look down, **related words**, jeer, scoff; mock, ridicule, taunt **idioms** hold in utter contempt”<sup>7</sup> **Does this feel familiar in today’s society?**
- “Scornful people are those who hold nothing sacred, scoffing at God and all that is associated with him. To ‘sit’ with such people takes us a step further than walking and standing. It suggests remaining or abiding with them and enjoying their company. *The godly person always feels out of place and unhappy around those who make sport of God*”<sup>8</sup>
- Verse one says do not take their “counsel;” don’t “sit” in their class!
- **But wait, how can we witness to the ungodly if we don’t hang with them? How do we balance showing love but not being influenced?**

1 Corinthians 5:9–10 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— <sup>10</sup> not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

- We are called to witness to the unsaved, we’re NOT to try to live in our own “Christian bubble” with only our Christian friends.
- The point: Love your pagan friends and neighbors. Witness to them! But, don’t take advice on how to live your life from an ungodly person. Don’t base your standards of right and wrong on an ungodly person.
- Caution: If they’re rubbing off on you more than you are rubbing off on them, you’ve gone from walking and standing, to sitting and soaking up!
- The Life Application Study Bible has great advice: “*Do your friends build up your faith, or do they tear it down? True friends should help you draw closer to God, not hinder your relationship with him.*”<sup>9</sup>

- Verse two shows us how to “immunize” ourselves from ungodly influence: “Delight” in the “law of the Lord.” “Meditate” on it “day and night.”
- How do we delight in something? Let’s use a human experience as an example. **When you first fell in love with your spouse, how did you delight in him/her? What are some examples?**
- Delighting in your sweetheart is one thing, but delighting in the “law of the Lord” sounds like going to school. How many of you delighted in school?
- It’s all about how much you love the subject and the teacher! [Examples: My friend Dan’s daughters and their school work. My old report cards.]
- Let’s talk about that word “meditate.” *“In Isaiah 31:4, the word translated meditates refers to a lioness growling over her prey. The lioness is brooding over the prey she has killed, announcing that it belongs to her, and preparing to eat it. Similarly, meditating on God’s Word is delighting in it, looking at it as life-sustaining provision.”*<sup>10</sup>
- What sounds do you make when you behold a delicious meal?
- Warren Wiersbe writes: *“Meditation is to the soul what digestion is to the body. It means assimilating the Word of God. What you delight in is what will direct your life, so be careful what you enjoy.”*<sup>11</sup>
- In other words: YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT! To nourish our spirit we need to be FEASTING on and DIGESTING God’s word.
- Meditating “day and night” doesn’t mean you quit your job and do Bible study 24/7. It means in every situation of life we need to be thinking about what we’ve read in God’s word and OBEYING it.

Joshua 1:8 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

- The Life Application Study Bible is very practical about this: *“Meditating means spending time reading and thinking about what you have read. It means asking yourself how you should*

*change so you will live as God wants. Knowing and meditating on God's Word are the first steps toward applying it to your everyday life. If you want to follow God more closely, you must know what he says."*<sup>12</sup>

- Verse three paints a picture of what the happy, godly person is like: "...a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in season and its leaf does not wither."
- Jesus said in John 15:5, (ESV) "*Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*"
- When you think of a beautiful, green tree, **what words come to mind?**
- One commentator put it this way: "*What does the tree suggest? Strength and stability! Fruitfulness! Beauty! Refreshing shade! All of these things are found in the one who delights in the Word of God. And the degree of the delight is the degree to which they are found. The delighting person has strength and stability in the storms of life.*"<sup>13</sup>
- Also, a healthy tree produces fruit. In the life of a follower of Christ the first fruit we should see is the fruit of the Spirit as outlined in Galatians 5:22. There should also be fruit in terms of loving God, loving others, building His kingdom, and doing His will.
- We need to be careful with that sentence: "*In all that he does, he prospers.*" False teachers have used that word "prosper" to "fleece the flock" for a long time. God promises to meet our needs not fulfill every "want" we have. Some believers are rich, some are poor, but all believers are blessed and cared for by our Heavenly Father.
- Note: Nowhere in scripture does it say the godly person who delights in God's word won't have storms and problems. The promise is that when the drought comes your "deep roots" will have access to streams of water. When the strong winds blow, those roots will hold you firmly planted!
- In verses four through six, the Psalmist gives us the other view. The contrast of the wicked:

<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. <sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; <sup>6</sup> for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

## So, What's the Takeaway?

- Everyone wants happiness in life; there is no true happiness apart from a relationship with Christ. Even after we've followed Him as Savior and Lord, there are some things to DO and NOT DO in order to be happy.
- We need to avoid the influence of ungodly people. As we said, love them, witness to them, but if they are rubbing off on you more than you're rubbing off on them it's a problem.
- Don't take advice on how to live your life, or base your standards of right and wrong on the counsel of an ungodly person.
- Instead, the only way to true happiness for a follower of Christ is a steady diet of God's word, and obedience to what it tells us. When a follower of Christ absorbs God's word into our minds, His Spirit living inside us will bring it to mind when we need it. First, we have to put it in our heads!
- Delight in it! Meditate on it! Savor it, chew on it, store it up for the storms of life. Obey what it says! Be well-fed and not malnourished in God's word. When it comes to feasting on wisdom, you ARE what you eat!
- If we follow the wisdom of Psalm 1, our lives will be strong, vibrant, and refreshing like a tall, green tree, not only for our own sake but for the benefit of those around us. That's the prescription for true happiness.

<sup>1</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Lifeway 2017. (n.d.). *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*.

<sup>3</sup> *The New International Version*. (2011). (Ps 1:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>4</sup> Lifeway 2017. (n.d.). *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*.

<sup>5</sup> Lifeway 2017. (n.d.). *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*.

<sup>6</sup> Dilday, R. H., Jr., & Kennedy, J. H. (1972). Psalms. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The teacher's Bible commentary* (p. 292). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

<sup>7</sup> Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate thesaurus*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

<sup>8</sup> Ellsworth, R. (2006). *Opening up Psalms* (p. 30). Leominster: Day One Publications.

<sup>9</sup> Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 146637-146639). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>10</sup> Lifeway 2017. (n.d.). *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*.

<sup>11</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W.. *Prayer, Praise & Promises: A Daily Walk Through the Psalms* (p. 9). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

<sup>12</sup> Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 146637-146639). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>13</sup> Ellsworth, R. (2006). *Opening up Psalms* (p. 31). Leominster: Day One Publications.