

Psalm 73 – Week 6 – The Most Important Thing – Bible Study Helps

Title: The Most Important Thing

Sermon Summary: Preaching from Psalm 73, Brandon uses Asaph's raw and honest account of spiritual struggle to address the very real challenges Christians face when living faithfully in a world where the wicked seem to prosper. Rather than offering a polished, feel-good message, the sermon validates the genuine inner conflict believers experience — the temptation to envy the wicked, the pain of feeling like righteous living goes unrewarded, and the danger of remaining stuck in discouragement. The turning point of the psalm, and of the sermon, comes when Asaph enters the sanctuary and his perspective is changed. He recognizes the temporary nature of worldly prosperity and the eternal weight of fellowship with God. The central and closing thrust of the message is drawn from Psalm 73:28 and James 4:8 — that drawing near to God is not merely a remedy for hard times, but the single most important thing a Christian can pursue, in any season of life.

Key Points:

- Christians must acknowledge the certainty of Scripture even when their feelings contradict what they know to be true about God
- Envy of the wicked is a real and documented struggle that even godly men like Asaph experienced, and pretending otherwise is dishonest
- The prosperity of the wicked is temporary and incomplete because it exists apart from fellowship with God
- Going back to a place of meeting with God — seeking Him earnestly — is what changes a believer's perspective
- Acknowledging personal failure and foolishness before God is necessary, but believers must not remain in self-condemnation after confessing sin
- The most important thing a Christian possesses is not church attendance, ministry, family, health, or finances, but personal fellowship with God
- Drawing near to God is a command, not merely a suggestion, and it is available to every believer in any circumstance
- Christians should not wait for heaven or for circumstances to improve before pursuing closeness with God

Scripture Reference:

- Psalm 73 (primary text)
- James 4:8, which commands believers to draw near to God with the promise that He will draw near to them

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- Proverbs 23:17, which warns against envying sinners
- Proverbs 2:3-6, which describes seeking God's wisdom as one would search for hidden treasure
- Psalm 51:4, David's acknowledgment of sin before God
- Psalm 37:1, a parallel passage on not fretting over the wicked

Stories:

- Asaph's personal account in Psalm 73 serves as the narrative backbone of the sermon, tracing his journey from near spiritual collapse through honest struggle to renewed closeness with God
- The account of Esther is referenced to illustrate that genuine fear and hesitation are not signs of faithlessness, but that courage means moving forward in obedience despite fear
- Jacob's pattern of returning to places where he had previously met with God is mentioned as an example of seeking renewed fellowship, even after prolonged spiritual carelessness
- David's sin with Bathsheba and the killing of Uriah is referenced through Psalm 51 to illustrate how confession and forgiveness restore fellowship without requiring ongoing self-condemnation
- The brazen serpent is briefly referenced as an illustration that even those too weak to crawl toward God need only look in His direction to receive His help

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Discipleship Questions

Asaph begins Psalm 73 by declaring what he knows to be true about God before describing what he feels — how does anchoring yourself in the certainty of Scripture help you navigate seasons when your emotions seem to contradict what you believe?

Brandon argues that admitting struggle and doubt to God is not a sign of weak faith but actually a necessary step toward restoration — do you agree, and what does it look like practically to be honest with God about where you really are spiritually?

Asaph confesses that he was envious of the wicked when he saw their prosperity, and Proverbs 23:17 warns against this very thing — why do you think God included this warning in Scripture, and what does its presence there tell us about the nature of the Christian life?

The turning point in Psalm 73 comes when Asaph goes into the sanctuary of God and his understanding changes — what places, practices, or disciplines have served as your own 'sanctuary' where your perspective on difficult circumstances has been renewed?

Brandon warns against what he calls the 'one day syndrome,' where Christians endure the present by only looking forward to heaven rather than pursuing closeness with God right now — how do you balance a genuine hope in eternity with an active, present fellowship with God?

Asaph realizes that the wicked are not simply prosperous but are 'far from God,' and he concludes that being near to God is what truly matters — how does this reframing challenge the way you measure success, blessing, or a life well lived?

The sermon draws a distinction between knowing the Bible intellectually and actually fellowshiping with God through it — in what ways might a person study Scripture diligently and still miss genuine closeness with God, and how can that gap be addressed?

James 4:8 is presented as a command and a promise — that drawing near to God results in God drawing near to you — what specific obstacles most commonly prevent believers from obeying this command, and how might those obstacles be overcome?

Brandon points to figures like Noah, Abraham, David, Ruth, and Enoch as people who walked closely with God despite difficult or wicked circumstances — what common thread do you see in their lives that enabled that closeness, and how does it apply to your own walk with God today?

Asaph ends the psalm by declaring that it is good for him to draw near to God, not because his problems are resolved but because God is the strength of his heart — how does this conclusion reshape the way you think about prayer, worship, and seeking God during trials that do not have immediate or visible solutions?

Small Group Guide:

"Draw Near to God" — Psalm 73

Overview

This guide is based on a sermon from Psalm 73, a psalm written by Asaph. Asaph writes honestly about a season of spiritual struggle — envying the wicked, questioning God's goodness, and nearly losing his footing — before arriving at a profound conclusion: it is good to draw near to God. This guide is designed to help your group engage honestly with that journey and apply its lessons personally.

Key Takeaways

- Asaph begins with what he knows to be true — God is good — even before he describes what he feels, demonstrating that what we know from Scripture and what we feel in the moment are not always the same.
 - Envy of the wicked is a real and documented struggle for God's people, and pretending otherwise does not make it go away.
 - The turning point in Asaph's life came when he went back to a place where he had met with God. Getting close to God requires intentional effort.
 - The prosperity of the wicked is temporary. Asaph's perspective changed when he understood their end.
 - The most important thing a Christian can have is not ministry, knowledge, church attendance, or material blessing — it is fellowship with God.
 - James 4:8 is a command and a promise: draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.
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Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Before reading or studying Psalm 73, which psalms or passages of Scripture have helped you most during difficult seasons? What made them meaningful to you?
 2. Brandon noted that Asaph was not the average person who tries to look like everything is fine. How much do you think honesty — with yourself and with God — affects your ability to grow spiritually?
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Section 1 — The Certainty of Scripture (Verse 1)

3. Asaph opens by stating what he knows to be true before describing what he felt. Why do you think it matters to anchor yourself in what Scripture says before processing difficult emotions or circumstances?
 4. Have you ever been in a season where what you knew to be true about God and what you felt in daily life seemed to contradict each other? How did you handle that tension?
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Section 2 — The Challenging Steps (Verses 2 to 16)

5. Asaph admits he was envious of the wicked when he saw their prosperity. Proverbs 23:17 and Psalm 37:1 both address this same struggle. What does it tell us that God addresses this temptation so directly in Scripture?
 6. Brandon said that Christians sometimes struggle to admit real problems because they are worried about what others think, or because they believe admitting struggle means they lack faith. Do you agree? How does that kind of pride make things harder, not easier?
 7. Asaph describes doing everything he believed God asked of him while still experiencing hardship, while the wicked seemed to prosper. Have you ever felt that way? What did that season teach you?
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Section 3 — The Changing Sight (Verses 17 to 20)

8. The turning point for Asaph came when he went into the sanctuary of God. It was not the physical location that was the focus — it was returning to a place of meeting with God. Where or how do you personally meet with God? Is that a consistent part of your life right now?
 9. Proverbs 2:3 through 6 describes seeking wisdom and understanding the way a person searches for hidden treasure. Many Christians are simply not willing to put in that kind of effort. What are the most common things that crowd out that pursuit in your own life?
 10. Asaph's perspective on the wicked shifted entirely once he went back to God. He stopped seeing their prosperity and started seeing their end. How does an eternal perspective change the way you view circumstances that seem unfair right now?
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Section 4 — The Calamity of Self and the Closeness of the Savior (Verses 21 to 26)

11. Asaph calls himself foolish and ignorant for the way he thought during his struggle. But he does not stop there — he moves immediately into "nevertheless, I am continually with thee." What does that teach us about how God responds when we fail or think wrongly?

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12. First John 1:9 tells us that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive. If God has forgiven it, we should move forward. Is there an area of past failure or doubt that you are still carrying unnecessarily? What would it look like to truly let that go?
 13. Verse 26 says that even after Asaph looked to God, his flesh and his heart still failed. Getting close to God did not eliminate his problems. How does that reality change or confirm your expectations of what walking with God should look like?
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Section 5 — Drawing Near to God (Verses 27 to 28)

14. The sermon made it clear that the most important thing a Christian can have is not church attendance, ministry involvement, Bible knowledge, or material blessing — it is fellowship with God. Do you agree? In your own life, which of those things has most often substituted for genuine closeness with God?
 15. James 4:8 says to draw near to God and He will draw near to you. This is a command, not just an encouragement. What is one practical step you can take this week to draw near to God — not to gain knowledge or check a box, but simply to fellowship with Him?
 16. Drawing near to God is not only for hard days. It is for every day, in every season. What would it look like for your daily routine to reflect that priority consistently, not just in crisis?
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Practical Applications

This week, consider doing one or more of the following:

- Read Psalm 73 again on your own, slowly, and journal your honest response to each section. Where do you see yourself in Asaph's journey?
 - Identify a time in your life when you felt close to God. What was different about that season? What can you do to return to those habits or disciplines?
 - Spend time in prayer that is not focused on requests or intercession, but simply on fellowship — talking to God honestly about where you are, what you feel, and what you know to be true about Him.
 - Read James 4:6 through 10 and Proverbs 2:1 through 10 as companion passages to this sermon. Write down one observation from each that connects to what Asaph experienced in Psalm 73.
 - If you have been carrying guilt over past doubt, fear, or spiritual failure, take time this week to confess it specifically to God, receive His forgiveness, and consciously move forward. Do not let your own discouragement become a reason to stay distant from God.
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Closing Thought

Asaph did not end where he started. He started with his feet almost gone and his steps nearly slipped. He ended with this: "It is good for me to draw near to God." The distance between those two places was not fixed by his circumstances improving. It was fixed by him returning to God. That same path is open to every believer, in every season, today.

5-Day Bible Reading and Devotional Guide

Based on Psalm 73 and the Theme of Drawing Near to God

Day 1: The Anchor of What We Know Reading: Psalm 73:1-3; Psalm 62:8

Devotional: There are moments in life when what we feel seems to contradict what we know. Asaph knew God was good. He stated it plainly before confessing how close he came to falling. That ordering is not accidental. Before he described his struggle, he anchored himself in truth. When your circumstances cloud your vision, return to what God has already declared. His goodness is not determined by what you see around you on any given day. Truth does not change with your mood. Let what you know from Scripture be the foundation beneath your feet, even when those feet are nearly slipping.

Day 2: The Honest Cry Reading: Psalm 37:1-8; Proverbs 23:17-18

Devotional: God does not warn against envying sinners because it is unthinkable for a believer. He warns against it because it is entirely possible. Asaph felt it. David wrote about it. God took it seriously enough to address it repeatedly in Scripture. The danger is not in the feeling arriving. The danger is in refusing to acknowledge it before God. When you pretend the struggle is not there, you cannot bring it to the One who can resolve it. Honest prayer is not a sign of weak faith. It is often the first act of genuine faith. Bring the real thing to God and watch what He does with it.

Day 3: The Turning Point Reading: Psalm 73:16-20; Proverbs 2:1-10; James 4:7-8

Devotional: Asaph's understanding did not change on its own. It changed when he went somewhere. He returned to the place where he had met with God before. Understanding from God is not handed to those who remain at a comfortable distance. Proverbs describes a person who cries after wisdom, who seeks it the way a man searches for buried treasure. That kind of seeking requires effort and honesty. The world's apparent prosperity looks very different when you are standing in the presence of God. Distance distorts. Nearness clarifies. Whatever it costs you to return to that place of meeting with God, it is worth it.

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Day 4: The Calamity of Self and the Grace of God Reading: Psalm 73:21-24; Psalm 51:1-12; 1 John 1:9

Devotional: When Asaph finally saw clearly, he did not congratulate himself. He called himself foolish and ignorant. He recognized that his own thinking had been the problem. But the remarkable thing is what came next. Despite his foolishness, God had never released his hand. God had been holding him the entire time he was stumbling toward the edge. The same is true for you. Your failures do not terminate God's faithfulness. Confess what needs confessing, receive what God has promised to give, and move forward. Do not let the weight of your own mistakes become a second obstacle on top of the first one.

Day 5: It Is Good to Draw Near Reading: Psalm 73:25-28; James 4:8; Romans 8:38-39

Devotional: Asaph's conclusion is not complicated. After everything he walked through, he arrived at one clear statement: it is good to draw near to God. Not one day when circumstances improve. Not after the problems resolve themselves. Now. The command in James 4:8 carries a promise attached to it. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. His steps toward you are far greater than any step you can manage toward Him. Whatever your day looks like tomorrow, whatever you are carrying right now, the most important thing you can do is close the distance between yourself and God. Everything else flows from that.