



REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Words were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

"Series of Six"

A selection of Psalms for meditation

Welcome to this six-week study of selected Psalms. The Psalms are amazing songs that have ministered to saints throughout the ages. John Calvin called the Psalms "An anatomy of all the parts of the soul, for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror." They are basically written as poetry, containing every single emotion that you and I feel, from the highest of elation to the deepest of sorrows.

Others have said the Psalms "Touch all the notes in the keyboard of human emotions." John Phillips writes, "The Psalms are rich in human experience. At times they ring with the din and noise of battle; at other times they take us with hushed hearts into the inner sanctuary, into the immediate presence of God. At times they set our hearts aflame and our feet dancing with joy; at times we turn to them when our face is drenched with tears."

I have found this to be true in my own life. I have run to the Psalms in my times of despair and found comfort by the words of King David as he grieves and pours his heart out to God. My heart is turned towards praise and thanksgiving when reminded of God's majesty and power. The Psalms are known as the worship and praise book of Israel, and the early Christians clung to the Psalms as well. A.C. Gebelein once said, "A Psalm a day keeps worry away." Many have found the Book of Psalms to be a source of strength and courage for their spiritual walk; a reminder of our need to totally depend on God.

Each week our study will be broken into five days of homework, with both commentary and applications questions. It is simply written as a tool to help you study through the Scriptures. In no way is it meant to replace the Word, or to claim to be an exhaustive study of the selective Psalm. The goal is to train ourselves to think and study "inductively," so as to grasp the intended meaning of

Scripture to gain knowledge, and then the wisdom to understand how to apply it to our lives. We do this by asking ourselves some simple questions: What does it say? What does it mean? What does it mean to me? As we study portions of Scripture with these questions in mind, it helps us get a fuller grasp of the content and context of the text.

This week's lesson will be a bit more reading than usual. It would be an injustice to jump into a Psalm without first learning about the authors, why they were written, and other interesting and important facts. We pray that over the next six weeks, you will be challenged, inspired, instructed, and refreshed. May they speak directly to your heart, bringing laughter, tears, joy, and delight.

First Day

Let's begin today's lesson by taking a look at the background of the Psalms. Psalms were written to instruct the mind and encourage the heart. It's said to be an "emotional" book. (Good, right up my alley!) Ray Stedman, in his book, Psalms of Faith, says, "They are designed not only to reflect a mood, but also to show us how to handle that mood; how to escape from depression, or how to balance exaltation with wisdom. This quality is the mark of their divine character."

The Psalms were written over 3000 years ago, somewhere between the time of Moses (around 1440 B.C.) and the Babylon captivity (586 B.C.), but they are still relevant today. David wrote the majority of the Psalms (73); Asaph wrote 12; the sons of Korah wrote nine; Solomon wrote two; Heman Ethan and Moses each wrote one, and 51 Psalms are anonymous. The New Testament ascribes two of the anonymous Psalms (2 and 95) to David (Acts 4:25-26, Hebrews 4:7). Many say that the key verse of the book is Psalm 150:6: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!" It's said that the book was written and put together by ancient Hebrews so that we would understand what the people of God went through and how they found their way out of their troubles. Psalms were used for worship in Solomon's Temple (957-587 B.C.), in the Second Temple (537-519 B.C.), and in Herod's temple (19 B.C.-A.D.70). They were used in Jewish synagogues and homes. It was also one of the most popular Biblical writings in the Dead Sea Scroll Community.

The Psalms are not organized by topics, but divided into five books which are similar in theme to the first five books of the Bible, called the Pentateuch, which was written by Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).

Book One: Psalm 1-41. *Genesis* introduces human life and the needs of the human heart. It tells how mankind was created, fell, and was given the promise of redemption. Many of these Psalms discuss humans as blessed, fallen, and redeemed by God.

Book Two: Psalm 42-72. This Book corresponds to the Book of *Exodus*, which records how God moved in history to redeem His people. As God rescued a nation, He rescues us! Many of these Psalms describe the nation of Israel as ruined, then recovered.

Book Three: Psalm 73-89. These books correspond to *Leviticus* which is about how God's people learned to draw near to God and worship Him in His tabernacle. These Psalms discuss God's perfect holiness and the reverence that is due His name.

Book Four: Psalm 90—106. Many of these Psalms go along with the Book of *Numbers*, which records the wanderings in the wilderness: a time of testing and failure. The Psalms remind us to keep all things that happen in the right perspective.

Book Five: Psalm 107-150. This section of Psalms is like the Book of *Deuteronomy*, the second law, which is the law of Jesus Christ. It describes how God accomplishes redemption of His people and the importance of His Word. These Psalms are anthems of praise and thanksgiving which were used in worship.

There are many topics and themes in the Psalms. There are also many prophecies concerning Christ, foretelling His birth, His life, His character, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, and His coming again. Some of the Psalms discuss the horrible days when the Antichrist will rule on earth, and others talk about the glory of the millennium.

Some of the themes include praise, God's power, forgiveness, thankfulness, and trust. It is said that the authors "put into words our deepest hurts, longings, thoughts, and prayers."

Many of God's people have called upon the comfort and encouragement of the Psalms. *Isaiah* and *Psalms* are the Old Testament Books most often quoted by the writers of the New Testament. Let's take a look at some of the specific Psalms that have been quoted.

We'll end here for today. I hope the little bit of background we discussed helps you to understand the purpose of the Psalms. May God pour out His blessings on you as you dedicate time each day to spend with Him in His Word! God bless!

Memory Verse of the Week: "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Psalm 1:6

Second Day

Work on our memory verse -- it's a great one!

For the rest of the week, we will be studying Psalm 1, known as one of the anonymous Psalms. Psalm 1 is the introduction to the Hebrew songbook. We have no title or mention of the author's name. The Holy Spirit designed this Psalm to be first, acting as the "faithful doorkeeper," confronting us with a choice. It's the choice that each individual must make that will determine their future. Psalm 1 opens with a blessing and closes with a curse.

1. Read Psalm 1:1-6. Observe the facts in this chapter. What does it say? What are some of the repeated words or phrases?

2. Does this chapter raise any questions for you? Write them down and see if they are answered by the end of our study.

3. How would you outline this chapter?

4. What is the main point or thought of this Psalm? Why do you think it was written?

Let's close here for today. I pray that as you study the contrast of the two types of people, you will make sure that you've chosen to walk, stand, and sit with the Godly.

Third Day

Meditate on your verse for the week. Let it take root in your heart.

1. Read Psalm 1:1-6 again. What two types of men are contrasted?

The word "blessed" means "O how happy." Ray Stedman calls this a Christian "code word" because it's one of those words only Christians use. Here in this Psalm we find a clue to the secret of happiness.

2. Who else used this term to begin a sermon? Read Matthew 5:1-12.
3. The Psalmist contrasts the Godly man with the ungodly, the saint and the sinner. From verse 1, what is the Godly "not" to do?

The Psalmist sure doesn't begin with the power of positive thinking, does he? The Godly is marked by things he does "not" do, things he does not participate in, places he does not go. The believer is to avoid certain things in life that can be destructive or poisonous.

The "wicked" or "ungodly," in verse 1, doesn't necessarily describe or refer to murderers, rapists, and other vile sinners, although it would encompass all of that. The term refers to the man who has little or no time for God in his life, someone who hasn't allowed or chosen to let God, the Ruler of the universe, be the Ruler of his life. Life is either "Me centered" or "God centered." Our choice.

4. Notice the progression; the believer doesn't walk, stand, or sit. What do you think that means? How does sin progress like that?

5. Practically speaking, what are some things that we should avoid that could lead us down the wrong path?

6. What effect can our friends and those we choose to hang out with influence which path we take? (1 Corinthians 15:33) Does that mean we shouldn't have contact with unbelievers? (Mark 2:15-17).

Verse 1 clearly tells us that we should be separated from the world. Separated means contact without contamination. We are told to refuse the counsel and viewpoints of an unbelieving world and world system. Paul tells us not to "be conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

7. Read 1 John 2:15-17. What exhortation does John give the believer? What promise?

8. A person who finds themselves in sin usually declines gradually. Notice the progression of Peter's sin before he actually denied Christ. Read Mark 14:54, John 18:18, and Luke 22:55. Write your thoughts.

9. Reflect on your own life. Have you slowly conformed to this world in any area? Maybe in your home, at school, or your workplace? Are you making the choices that steer you towards the right path, or are you trying to walk on the middle line? Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart.

That's it for today. I pray that you are choosing the consecrated life. May God give you the strength and wisdom to make choices that honor and glorify Him.

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse.

Psalms are usually classified in different ways to help us understand how to interpret them. Psalm 1 is classified as "Wisdom Poetry." Wisdom literature has been produced in all ancient and modern societies. The men of Israel sought to give wise counsel concerning everyday life, as well as the problems of human experience. These writings often came to be used for instruction, especially to the young.

The poems in Scripture often use something known as "parallelism" which is the practice of saying the same thing twice in different words. Try to notice this pattern as you read through the Psalms. For instance, "He that dwells in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn: the Lord shall have them in derision." (Psalm 2:4). Or an example in our language would be " Joe was an old man and an old man was he."

Now let's take a look at what the Godly "should" be doing!

1. Read Psalm 1:1-6 again. According to verse 2, the believer is blessed if they do what?

2. Define the word "meditation." Does that mean disengaging the mind, as in transcendental meditation?

The believer should saturate themselves with the "law of the Lord" or the Word of God. Warren Wiersbe says, "Whatever delights us, directs us." It's deliberately soaking our mind with the truth of God's Word. It's reading the Word, through the power of the Holy Spirit, seeking to understand and apply. Pondering questions such as, Is there any sin that I should avoid? Is there any promise for me to claim? Is there any blessing to enjoy? Is there any new truth I didn't know about God? What is the main thing the Spirit is trying to show me? Then it's relying upon the Word of God at all times, for everything.

The believer who is meditating on the Word of God can reject the world's philosophy because he has learned to delight himself in the Lord. The Bible will give us a completely different view of life, of sin and of self, than the world will give us.

3. I must ask, are you delighting in the Word of God? Are you meditating day and night? What do you think that practically means? How is it possible?

4. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. It's a familiar verse, but so important. What is Scripture profitable for? What does that mean? In verse 17, what are the results if we obey? Do you sincerely allow it to instruct and teach you?

Many times we ask God to "bless us" without wanting to do what He asks, like delighting ourselves in His Word. The Lord blesses and honors obedience to His Word. Period. Jesus reminds the disciples of this in John chapter 13. After He washes their feet, He exhorts them to do the same for each other. He's telling them to serve one another, as He served them. In verse 17, Jesus said, "If you know these things, happy are you IF you do them." Again, it's obedience to His Words that brings us blessings. Reading and obeying the Word are the secrets to a Godly life.

5. Read Psalm 1:3. What are the characteristics of a man (or woman) that is planted by a river?

Trees are amazing. There are so many uses for trees. They hold soil, produce fruit, offer shade, etc. Strong trees usually have deep roots. The same principle applies in our spiritual life. If we are trees, then we need to plant our roots down deep in the Lord. You can't see a tree's roots, but you can see the strength, beauty, and grace that they produce in the tree. If we are planted deeply in Christ, we also will bear the beauty, strength, and grace of our Savior. The roots are the hidden part of our life, the part that should be devoted to God.

6. As a tree soaks up water, it bears fruit. What "fruit" should we be bringing forth? Inspect your fruit -- is there any there? ☺
7. Are your leaves withering due to lack of nourishment? Are you spending time with Him? Are you neglecting prayer? Are you, perhaps, trying to do things in your own strength? Or are your leaves "wither-free"?

Verse 3 tells us that if we are planted by the river, "whatever we do will prosper." This isn't a guarantee that we won't have difficulties or trials, or a promise of great health and lots of money. This means that when we obey His Word, the fruit will be good, we will be blessed (how He chooses), and He will be honored!

The picture of this tree gives us a great visual to compare ourselves to. But this tree cannot grow on its' own, can it? The tree needs water, sun, and soil to grow. This is a picture of a person who is centered on Christ; who is totally dependant on Him for their strength, their wisdom, and for their life.

8. Read John 15:1-11. What do you think it means to abide? Which verse tells us that we can't do anything on our own?
9. Draw a picture of two trees: one that is deeply rooted with lots of fruit, and one that is barren and weak. Ask God to use it as a reminder of what He desires us to look like!

We'll stop here for now, but one more reminder. To have the blessings of verse 3, we must obey verses 1 and 2. Let's be separate from the world and saturate ourselves in His Word!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory. I pray it sticks in your heart!

1. Let's read Psalm 1:1-6 again, focusing on verses 4-6. Now we are introduced to the ungodly, wicked, or faithless man. The man who is "Me-centered" instead of "God-centered," what is he compared to?

2. What is "chaff"? How is a person without God like chaff?

The Psalmist is drawing a huge line between these two people. Chaff is driven away by the wind; it was removed from the grain by a process called threshing and winnowing. Chaff is really light, and as they toss it up, it is carried away by the air. Chaff is a symbol of a meaningless, purposeless life, driven by the winds of the world.

3. In verse 5, what truth is he stating, and what line is the Psalmist drawing?
(Read also Matthew 13:36-43; 47-50; 25:31-46.)

4. Sometimes we are discouraged when we see unbelievers, or wicked people, getting what looks like "blessings" on this earth when we are doing our best to live a Godly life. How do these verses put everything into perspective? What should they motivate us to do?

5. The wicked has nowhere to "stand" on judgment day because he built his house on the sand. Read Matthew 7:24-27. Compare a house built on the Rock to the house built on the sand. What are you building on? Are any waves crashing right now? Are you holding steady?

6. Read Psalm 1:6. The Psalmist summarizes his whole lesson in this one verse. What is the choice that every man is given?

This is a great time to ask the most important question of the week. Have you made that choice? Have you chosen the road of the Cross that leads to Calvary, then to glory? Or have you chosen to sit in the seat of the scornful, being blown around like chaff in the wind? It doesn't matter how many possessions you have, how successful you are, or how many friends you have. Whatever appearance of godliness you may seem to have, apart from Christ, it means nothing.

Jesus said in **John 14:6**, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father but by Me." We are an unholy, sinful people. There is no way that we, on our own merit, can even connect with a holy, righteous, perfect God. We all have sinned. (**Romans 3:23**). That's why Jesus came to earth, died on the cross, and rose again (**Romans 5:6-8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4**). He took the punishment for our sins. He became the propitiation, or the substitute, for us (**Romans 3:24-25**). Now we can go to the throne of the Father, through Jesus Christ (**Romans 5:1-2**). He has made us righteous. But all this is only available if we first repent of our sins, recognizing our need for a Savior. His forgiveness is a gift that we first need to understand that we need. Then as we accept His gift we are granted eternal life, and cross over from death to life eternal. (**1 John 1:9; Romans 6:23**). We become the Godly man that the Psalmist is referring to in verses 1-3, rather than the chaff in verses 4-6. This is serious stuff. I pray that if you've never accepted Christ, you make that step today. Grab your leader or give her a call. She would love to pray with you and rejoice with you. It's the most important decision you will ever make. Your eternity rests on it. Like our memory verse of the week says, "**The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.**" (Psalm 1:6)