

# Happiness comes from knowing God in his word

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[ 0 : 00 ] the Word of God. So please do join one of those for your own benefit and for the encouragement of others. And one last thing, if you can help with cleaning the church, getting it ready Sunday by Sunday, if you could get in touch with Sarah, that'd be great. We're here to worship God.

We're here together. It's good to be able to join together. I'm going to read our call to worship from the beginning of Psalm 118 and verse 1, which is, give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever. So we're gathered in God's presence to remember he is the God of unfailing love and goodness to us. Now we're going to hear and we're going to reflect in here anyway on Psalm 1, a recording of Psalm 1, which we'll be thinking about later on. A chance for us to reflect. If you've been here already, you'll know it's different when we can't sing together. I was thinking this morning of our brothers and sisters in the persecuted church who maybe only ever get to raise their voice in a whisper. So perhaps we can, in a sense, identify with them as for a time we can't sing in our building. But if you're at home, you can join in singing Psalm 1 and after that we'll pray.

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[ 2 : 42 ] Psalm 1 and after that we'll pray.

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Lord, we'll pray. Lord, we bow in your presence. Lord, we bow in your presence so thankful that you are a God who speaks, that you are not a God who is silent.

We thank you that you are not a God who has hidden yourself, but rather you are a God who has revealed yourself. And today we thank you that you are a God who has hidden yourself. And today we thank you that you are a God who has hidden us in your word, the Bible.

That you are a God who has hidden us in your word, the Bible, the Bible, the Bible, the Bible, the Bible, and the Bible. We discover that you are Father, we discover that you are Father, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. We discover that you are a God who has hidden us in your word, the Bible, and the Bible. We discover your unchanging character, your love and your goodness, your faithfulness and your justice, your holiness and your righteousness.

[ 4 : 36 ] Lord, we thank you that in the Bible, we discover the way of salvation. We thank you that it reveals to us from beginning to end the story of your great love and your determination to save sinners and to bring them back into relationship and fellowship with yourself.

And we thank you for those great acts of redemption that we find throughout the Bible. That climax in the sending of your son Jesus and his going to the cross to die in our place for our sins.

Before being raised in victory and ascended to the glory of heaven. And we thank you for the prospect of full and final salvation when he returns to make everything new and to bring his people to be with himself.

Thank you for that great story of salvation we find in the Bible. We thank you for that in the Bible we discover your will for our lives. That we're not left to wonder what is right and wrong.

We're not left to wonder what is righteous and what is wicked in your eyes. Lord, we confess that sometimes we don't listen. Sometimes we would rather choose our own path.

[ 5 : 53 ] We would rather make our own verdict on what is right and wrong. Lord, we confess our sin before you, our holy God. But we do thank you that you do reveal what kind of life is the good life, is the righteous life, is ultimately the happy life.

A life that loves you and that loves others and that responds in faith and obedience to your word. And so we thank you that we have the Bible that we can sing and that we can read.

Whether that's here in church or whether that's at home, whether that's on a Sunday or through the week. Lord, we thank you for everywhere in Edinburgh, everywhere in Scotland, everywhere around the world today where your word is read and preached.

Where people believe it to be the word of God and the only direction for how we should live. We pray that as people hear the good news of Jesus that new life would be born in people's hearts. That you would keep building up and strengthening your own people for our day-to-day lives. Lord, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who don't have access to the Bible.

[ 7 : 14 ] Perhaps persecuted believers. Perhaps those who are part of the underground church or those who are too poor to be able to afford even a portion of the Bible for themselves.

We pray that you would enable them to store up your word in their hearts. That they would be able to meditate on your good words day and night.

And we pray that you would provide for them. We also pray for the work of Bible translation.

Knowing how important it is for people to hear the word of God is the word of truth and life and salvation.

We ask that you would give wisdom and perseverance to those who are trying to translate the Bible into various languages around the world. We thank you for friends that we have who are preaching the gospel today in different places.

We thank you for friends in India, in Indonesia, in Myanmar, in South Africa, in Colombia. Lord, we have connections all around the world as a church and personally.

[ 8 : 20 ] Now we pray wherever your word is read and preached that it would achieve your good purpose for it. And Lord, we pray that that would be true in our own lives and in this gathering today.

That you would open our eyes, open our hearts to receive wonderful things from your word, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Now let's hear, we'll hear God's word together in Psalm 1.

You'll find it up on the screen if you don't have access to it in your own Bible or device. Psalm 1.

Let's hear God's word.

Blessed is the word.

So we're thinking together again about Christian spirituality.

[ 10 : 00 ] As we find it in the book of Psalms. How do we grow in our relationship with God? What language do we have to speak to God? And here we're going to consider the search for true happiness and to see how that connects with how we relate to God.

And in particular, God's word. The question, how can we grow in our relationship with God? It must be a near universal one.

It's a question that influences the direction of our lives. It influences the decisions that we make.

Stephen Pinker, a psychology professor in 2018, delivered a TED talk in which he posed the question, since we live in a staggeringly wonderful world that's never had it so good, why is it that we're not happier?

And so he began to look at some of the reasons. And he noted we are enjoying more freedom than ever, but that freedom begins to bring with it a level of anxiety.

Perhaps you know the paralysis of choice. He talked about the loss of traditional religions. As people become disconnected from faith, they become disconnected from a source of greater meaning.

[ 11 : 25 ] There is today a greater awareness of collective responsibility, whether that's through media or social media, and that brings increased worry. And then he spoke about the boredom factor.

Because our lives are made more efficient by technology, we have more free time than previous generations, we're more vulnerable to distractions and to things that would in the end steal away our happiness.

So we've never had it so good. But still we don't seem happy or as happy as we could be as a society. So how can I be happy is an important question. It's not a trivial question.

And it's good news that from the beginning of the book of Psalms, that question is addressed.

Psalm 1 verse 1 is saying to us, happiness is possible.

There is someone who is blessed, who has a life of joy and who has a life of satisfaction. So that's what we're going to think about this morning. This psalm is going to help us to consider two types of people.

[12:32] The righteous and the wicked are in view. And what we need to appreciate, this categorization of righteous and wicked, is how people relate to God and His Word.

So when we think about righteous and wicked, we need to think in terms of relationship, relationship with God. And as we look at the story of the Bible, we can see that what's true from the beginning is that happiness and relationship to God have been interconnected.

When Adam and Eve were first created, they enjoyed a world of perfect life and perfect love and perfect joy and peace because all was well between them and their God. But as soon as they began to mistrust God and His Word, and as soon as they disobeyed, that's when shame and fear and guilt and hiding came.

That happiness was lost because trust in God, relationship, fellowship was lost in that moment. God says to us in His Word, He is the one who created us.

He is the one who loves us. He reveals Himself as the source of life and joy for everyone. And He says, follow my way for true happiness. And whether we find that ultimate happiness depends on, am I going to listen to God or not?

[13:53] So as we work our way through this short psalm, we'll see that true happiness depends on our choices. And those choices then have an impact on how we face the seasons of life.

What do we trust in those moments? And it's important for us when we think about happiness to remember the conclusion of our life as well. So the psalm does all of this to help us to see that deep and lasting happiness comes when knowing God and knowing God in His Word is what drives our life.

So three questions to consider briefly. First, on the topic of choices, what do I delight in? Verse 1 and 2.

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on His law day and night.

This psalm gives us, in a sense, an image of two paths to follow and a choice that must be taken. It's a theme that we see often in literature.

[15:06] Maybe you know Robert Frost's famous poem, The Road Not Taken. Or we can think of Jesus' own teaching where He warns people against following the broad road that leads to destruction, instead to follow the narrow road that leads to life.

Well, in our psalm here, there are two different people. One person fails or refuses to believe that God is the ultimate source of happiness.

And the choice that then is made is that they go to seek happiness in other places. And the impact of that choice then is that this person's values and identity are not set and determined by God.

So it's there in the language of verse 1. This person walks in the step of the wicked in the counsel, the way of thinking, listens to the advice of the wicked rather than listening to God.

stands in the way of sinners. A behavior, patterns of actions that are not determined by what God says are right, but what the culture says.

[16:20] This person sits in the company of mockers. Here is their ultimate place of belonging, not with God's people, but those who adopt a mocking or a cynical attitude towards God.

And that's not the path to happiness the psalm is laying out for us. Because the message of the Bible is that when we allow anything other than God to drive our lives, we will find ourselves off track in our pursuit of happiness.

Even if it's good things that we live for, those good gifts that God gives to us of family or work or anything like that, they will lead us off track from true happiness, which is to be found and founded on God alone.

Perhaps we recognize this pull off track as Christians. Why is it that at times we lie or we cheat or we explode with anger at someone, even as we know that those actions are wrong?

Isn't it because in that moment, we think that we will be more happy pursuing that path than choosing obedience to God?

[17:37] It seems more uncomfortable to us, so we choose a different path. And perhaps we can all recognize what happens when enjoying someone or enjoying something shifts to this person or this thing is my everything.

When we've taken God out of the picture, we're always looking for a substitute to give our life a center. And when we do that, ultimately everything will lead to disappointment and frustration.

Our joy will be spoiled because we're placing too much hope on something or someone that cannot and will not last and fully satisfy. So that path, as Samus says, does not lead to true blessing.

So what does? Well, it's there in verse 2. Happiness comes when we delight in the law of the Lord, knowing God, knowing God and His word. There is true happiness, the psalmist is saying.

What does this kind of life look like? Well, in the first instance, we have to recognize it's going to look counter-cultural. This is a different set of values and behaviors.

[ 18 : 54 ] This is a very different identity and sense of belonging than most of the people that live around us. Because we are taking our cues from what God says in the Bible rather than culture and society and peer group.

But the crucial choice that is made, the road that is taken for this person is that they are choosing to delight in God. God as they find Him in His word, in His law.

This person is meditating, chewing over, reflecting on God's word, delighting in it and speaking out that delight. This is a pattern of personal Bible reading and meditation that isn't based on dull duty. It's not based on a formality where my Bible reading app tells me I need to read a few verses so I'm going to do it so I can get on with my day. This is delight.

Because this happy person knows that when we read God's words, we get to know God. He reveals Himself to us and so there is joy in that, in growing that relationship.

[ 20 : 16 ] Maybe we ask the question, but how can anyone delight in the law, the Lord? We need to recognize that the psalm here is talking not just about the bits that have the laws in them, though that's included.

This isn't just delighting in the Ten Commandments. This is delighting in the whole word of God as it is revealed. So for the psalmist, everything he had from the Old Testament for us is delighting in the old and the new.

Because what do we find in there? We find a God who is our creator and our sustainer. We find a God who has taken the initiative to establish covenants and He will be faithful to keep His promises to His people.

We find God as Redeemer and Savior for sinful people at the cost of His own Son. We find His will and His commands.

We find ethics that give us good and right limits so that we can enjoy life as God intended. So we find in the word of God the key to a truly happy life because it brings us into friendship with God.

[ 21 : 25 ] It's the way God relates to us. So happiness comes when we learn to meditate on and delight in the word of God.

And when we do that, we're following the path of Jesus. Jesus is the one truly righteous man, the one truly blessed man who was always driven by a desire to know His Father, to love His Father, to obey His Father always.

that led Him ultimately to the cross. And that place of sacrifice is what makes our happiness possible.

Jesus giving up His life, it is the opportunity for us to truly live as we receive forgiveness and eternal life from Him. So that choice of what we delight in is going to be crucial to whether we find true happiness.

Moving on from there, let's think about seasons and ask the question of ourselves, where are my roots? Because we have an image here at the center of this psalm, verse 3, that person, that blessed person, that person who delights in the law of the Lord is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither, whatever they do prospers.

[ 23 : 01 ] Not so the wicked, they're like chaff that the wind blows away. So the image here is of the evergreen tree. Its roots are planted deep beside the source of living water.

So that while the tree experiences seasons, heat and frost and drought and storm, though it's not always fruitful, there are seasons of fruit bearing.

Its leaves are always green. There is always life because of being rooted and having that story that supplies.

It's a picture of a person who has stability and vitality, who has prosperity because of that relationship with God's law that they are enjoying.

stands in stark contrast to the other image, the image of the chaff. Chaff, which is the outer husk around a grain that when the winnowing happens, that the chaff just blows away.

[ 24 : 11 ] It is weightless and it is lifeless. So when the wind comes, when the storm comes, it has no roots, it has no weight, so it's gone.

We need to be asking ourselves the question, and not just once, but I think regularly, what is it that my life is rooted in? What is it that I look to? Who is it I look to to give me strength?

Where do I look to for hope? When trouble comes, where is my source of refuge and security? And again, this psalm is driving us to see that if we want true and lasting happiness, then we need unshakable hope.

We need someone who is unchanging. And I'm sure we recognize in the many changes that we've seen in our world in the last few months that we need to find our hope from outside of ourselves. Ultimately, we need to make God our source of hope. He is the only way that we can truly stand. These different seasons will blow into our lives.

[ 25 : 26 ] Perhaps, just now you are in a period where life is going well, but perhaps this is a time of anxiety as it is for many. Perhaps it's a time of real trouble as it is for many.

Those seasons can sap our strength, leave us looking to someone or something to cling on to. What is that for us?

And can we be confident that that will hold us and keep us? See, according to the Bible, true happiness always runs deeper than circumstances.

The message of Christianity is that it's possible to have joy even in the face of trouble and suffering because true happiness is about our identity and where we find our belonging and do we find that in knowing and being known by our God.

The blessed life is ours when God plants us, when God puts our roots deep in Him and His Word, when He gives us life by His Son and from His Word.

[ 26 : 43 ] As John Calvin said, that the blessed person is someone who is watered by divine grace. We need that stream of God's grace to sustain our life.

Not just relying on what God has done for us in the past but having faith that God will continue to be for us today and tomorrow and for eternity so that even if we are in a season of suffering and trouble it only causes our roots to draw deeper on God as we find Him in His Word.

The blessed person, the happy person lives in the Word of God and lives out the Word of God. It's a life that's founded on Jesus.

the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. And then as we're thinking about happiness in Psalm 1 the psalmist takes us to a conclusion and takes us to the question what is my destiny? We began with an image of paths that we can follow. It's important to think in terms of destination. So this psalm is inviting reflection. In verse 5 and 6 therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

[ 28 : 17 ] And to reflect on the choices that we make and the path that we follow how will those choices help me face the different seasons that I face in my life? What is my life built on?

And those questions matter because our lives are heading towards a final destination. A true story from the news last year.

An 81 year old Italian Luigi Ramoni was living in Newcastle and decided to set off on a journey to Rome and he wanted to see the Pope.

So he set off in his car and he programmed his sat-nav got as far as Dusseldorf in Germany and then his sat-nav started playing up a little bit so he pulled in at a service station he asked the petrol station attendant to help him out to reprogram his sat-nav they were only too happy to oblige he got back into his car and numerous hours later in the evening he arrived at his destination according to the sat-nav and to use his own words as he got out of the car he found himself exclaiming Mamma Mia where am I?

It's the best Italian accent I can manage the answer was he wasn't in Rome the centre of all that's beautiful he was in an industrial village of Ruhm in Germany the petrol station people in Dusseldorf had missed out on E and he'd ended up 680 miles off course looking to find happiness he found an industrial town we're all looking for happiness we need to think in terms of destiny and destination and we need to be asking ourselves the question is this path I'm following is it going to give me true and lasting and ultimately eternal happiness verses 5 and 6 moves our thoughts towards God's final judgment and it requires the eyes of faith for us to think beyond the here and now because you know and I know many people who are living without God and they are prospering and they are

comfortable and they have good careers and loving families and they're happy but will that happiness last and here this psalm is reminding us that without

[ 30 : 40 ] Jesus without trusting in him as saviour if our lives are not rooted in God's word and God's salvation then we will not stand we will face judgment there will be destruction but for the righteous they will stand among God's people there is an eternal hope and an eternal home and we're told in verse 6 God will watch over his people to guide them safely home so our destiny depends on our response to Jesus our relationship with Jesus our happiness depends on knowing him Jesus said to his troubled disciples in John chapter 14 in my father's house are many rooms speaking of glory as a place of homecoming and Jesus said I'm going to prepare a place he was going to die and rise and return to glory to be the saviour that we all need and then he said I'll come back and I'll take you to be with me so that you may be where I am and that according to the bible is happiness to be with

Jesus what path am I on what path do I want to be on so this psalm is telling us happiness and deep happiness and eternal happiness is possible but it depends on that choice that we make who calls the shots in our lives who do I belong to fundamentally the choice that we need to make is to delight in God to delight in his word in our lives to love to obey it because his laws reflect his unchanging character to love its message which is all about saving grace through Jesus to make God's word our source of life and strength which is the key to happiness let's pray together now father your word says as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth so is my word that goes out from my mouth that will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which

I sent it Lord we thank you that you send your word to us you reveal your word to us so that we might know you so that we might know how to live in relationship with you as we have been created for that we might know your goodness and grace in dealing with the barrier of sin that separates us from yourself that you have sent Jesus to be that word that speaks life that speaks healing that speaks salvation to us not just in his words but in his actions and especially in his going to the cross in our place for our sins Lord we pray that you'd help each one of us to reflect on the choices that we are making the direction that we have chosen for our lives help us if we're Christians to have a living relationship with you through your word that we'd be those who would be reading and meditating on it that it would be directing our life and our thoughts that it would shape our character and that it would give us hope when we find ourselves in those seasons of life that are stormy and hard Lord we pray for anyone in our church family or in our own families who we can think of who are facing real trouble to us now we pray that it would be a time of them leaning on you of putting their roots down in your word and to find strength there

Lord we pray for our communities we pray for our city we pray for a recovery of people reading the Bible of discovering who you really are of not being content with caricatures or disregarding the God that they don't really know anything about Lord we pray that you'd help us as a nation we pray for the nations of the world to return to our God our creator our savior as we find you in the Bible pray it in Jesus name amen now we are going to have another hymn before we close this one the modern hymn he will hold me fast as we think about the seasons of life that we go through the troubles that come the comfort from God's word that

Jesus says he'll never leave us or abandon us we find those thoughts here to reflect on when I fear my faith will fail Christ will hold me fast when the tempter what prevails he will hold me fast I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path for my love is often cold he must hold me fast he will hold me fast he will hold me fast for my savior loves me so he will hold me fast those he saves are his delight Christ will hold me fast precious in his holy side he will hold me fast he will not let my soul be lost his promises shall last bought by him at such a cost he will hold me fast he will hold me fast he will hold me fast he will hold me fast for my savior loves me so he will hold me so

[ 38 : 31 ] For my life he bled at night Christ will hold me fast Justice has been satisfied He will hold me fast Raised with him to endless life He will hold me fast Till our faith is turned to sight When he comes at last He will hold me fast He will hold me fast For my Savior loves me so

He will hold me fast He will hold me fast He will hold me fast For my Savior loves me so He will hold me fast We'll close in prayer With words from Ephesians chapter 3 Let's use these words to close our service I pray that out of his glorious riches God the Father may strengthen you with power Through his Spirit in your inner being

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith And I pray that you being rooted and established in love May have power Together with all the Lord's holy people To grasp how wide and long And high and deep is the love of Christ And to know this love that surpasses knowledge That you may be filled To the measure of all the fullness of God Amen Amen Amen  
Amen Amen Amen  
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