

Choose the Right Path (Psalm 1)

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Date: 01 June 2025

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[0 : 00] Amen. Amen. Children, you can go to Children's Church and by the looks out there, people looking at their watches, I do know what time it is.

And it is a promise is going to be very, very quick. But but I did want to just have a few minutes right here where we share a little bit from Psalm one this summer.

We're going to be doing like we did last summer, a summer in the Psalms where we go through a Psalm a week. And so this week we're going to start off the book of Psalms with Psalm one. And this Psalm, it's important that we started off, start this summer with this Psalm, because essentially what this Psalm does is it prepares us for the rest of the Psalms. It's essentially a gateway into the rest of the book. It helps us to understand the rest of the Psalms.

In fact, James Montgomery Boyce, he talks about Psalm one as being as it is a text, which is the remaining text of Psalms are essentially exposition. And so basically what he's saying is this is where it starts. And it's and we understand the rest of the Psalms based on this Psalm.

[1 : 10] And so when we look at the Psalms, we must understand that they're not just a collection of of greatest hits of Hebrew songs, because really they wouldn't even be that to be more like a mixtape, because they have all kinds of different artists and different things and different writers of these.

And so when we look at these, we don't just see them as songs, but we see them as God's word. We see them as scripture. We see them as life changing.

And so this morning I want us to read Psalm one. And this is a Psalm that I feel is is very easy to understand, but it's very important to understand. And so if you have a copy of God's word, I want you to to open with me to Psalm one right here.

And we're going to read this and just make a couple observations this morning that I think will be helpful for us to think about as we prepare for the rest of the book. It says this, it says, Now there's one statement that I want us to look at this morning from this passage, and it is this.

That is for I want us to understand the importance that we must focus on what draws you closer to God. The importance of focusing on what draws you closer to God when it comes to living the life that God has called us to.

[3 : 08] We must understand that there are things that God has called us to flee from, and there are things that God has called us to draw near to. There are things that we should be saying no to, but there are many things that we should be saying yes to.

And oftentimes wisdom is as much about knowing when to say no as it is when to say yes. And so from this, we see that a wise person knows when to avoid a situation.

A wise person knows when to avoid that situation. There's a progression in the warnings that you see here. It says the blessed man must not walk with the wicked. He must not stand with sinners, and he must certainly not sit with scoffers.

And so when we let sinful people have influence in our lives, we must see that this often leads to a progression of us going further and further away from God. First, a person walks with the wicked. He's walking with them. Then he stops, and he stands there with them. It's not just that he's walking by and seeing them anymore. Then he begins to get interested, and he stands there. And before you realize it, he's taking a seat with those who are living this lifestyle.

[4 : 15] And so what you see here is this progression of going further and further away from God, this warning that the blessed person doesn't do this. The blessed person doesn't.

He says no to these things. He doesn't walk with these sinners. He doesn't stand with them. And he certainly does not take a seat and live in this lifestyle with them. Now, this isn't to say that we must not befriend people.

Well, oftentimes we justify our actions and say, well, Jesus was a friend of sinners. Jesus went and hung out with everybody. Yes, but who walked away changed when Jesus did that?

Jesus changed lives. He was that salt and light, that flavor that gave life to people. And so when we understand that, yes, we must still befriend people.

We must not act like a monk or a nun and just completely remove ourselves from this world. But when we go into situations, we realize the importance of what we're there for.

[5 : 11] We're there to influence and not be influenced by it. And so what we see here is this progression that we must not get caught up in. But on the flip side of this, there's something very important that we must see here.

And that is a wise person will draw near to God. A wise person will draw near to him. This happens primarily as we delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on his word day and night.

It is important for us to know and grow in God's word. This sets us on a right path and direction that God wants to lead us on. And over the last couple of years as pastor, one of the things that I've done over these last couple of years is I've spent more time studying God's word than I ever have in my life.

Preparing sermons each and every week is I've spent more time studying God's word than I ever have, including time in seminary. And what I have found is that the more I study God's word, the more I love it.

The more I grow in, the more it just, it really does become sweeter than honey. It really does become alive in our life. It's something that I love. And this is a true story.

[6 : 23] There were times in college and seminary and pretty much all of college and seminary that the first day of a class in college or seminary, you get that syllabus. What's the first thing you do?

You look at the assignments. And I'll be like, all right, how many pages of a paper do I have to write for this class? That was the first thing I did. And I kid you not, I have dropped classes before when I looked at the assignment, I'm like, I'm not writing that.

I mean, I dropped the class after the first day when I looked at it and said, nope, not doing this. We'll take a different class. But now what I've found is that I'm writing essentially papers each and every week with these sermons.

And I love it. It's one of my favorite things to do as a pastor. One of my favorite things in this role is studying God's word and preparing these messages. And it's something that just really gets inside of you once you take time to study God's word.

It's probably why I'm a little long-winded at times. Because it's just so exciting to get into God's word. So exciting to be a part of it. And so this is what changes our lives.

[7 : 26] And when you look at these two types of living, we see that we are talking about a direction that you're going to take with your life. What you see when you look at this passage is there's two roads that are divergent, two paths that you can take.

And you have to make a decision which path you're going to go down. And here's the thing. A decision has to be made. Because not making a decision is making a decision. Not making a decision, you're following the path that leads away from God.

And so a choice has to be made. Which path are you going to go down? The path of the wicked that leads away from God or the path of the blessed man that leads towards God?

And what we must remember is that direction always determines our destination. The wicked, if we choose the path of the wicked, it leads to sitting with scoffers.

The other way delights in the law of the Lord. And that direction leads to blessing and being like a tree planted by a stream that produces good fruit. And so we must remember that it is your direction that leads to your destination.

[8 : 33] Joby Martin, a pastor that I like to listen to at oftentimes, he says it this way. He says, your direction, not your intention, determines your destination. And much of this comes down to the fact that if you don't head in the right direction, you'll never get to where you want to go.

And I've used an illustration similar to this before. But it fits so well with the message that we're talking about today. I want you to think about it like this. Last night, there was a team from our church that got back to Atlanta pretty late.

And we had one destination in our mind. We wanted to get home. We were tired. It had been a long day. We were all thinking about our beds that we wanted to get into. And we had one thing on our mind.

And that was to get home. Now, when we left the airport, we had a decision to make. There was a, that we could get on I-85. And there's two directions that you can get on when you get on I-85. You can either get on I-85 north or you can get on I-85 south. Now, Tekoa is north, right? Now, we didn't take the wrong direction. I know some of you are already thinking we did the wrong.

[9 : 39] But no, I-85 north goes towards Tekoa. And if we're all wanting to go there, if we're all wanting to get home, then we've got to take I-85 north.

Because if we get on I-85 south, it doesn't matter if we've prayed about it. It doesn't matter if we feel good about it. It doesn't matter if everybody around us tells us, hey, this path is going to take you home.

It doesn't matter if you get goosebumps and you think, oh, this is going to be the right path. That direction will never get you to your desired destination. And it's the same way in our walk with God. If we don't follow His word, if we don't follow what He's called us to do, we're never going to get to where we want to be. If we want that strong relationship with God, that deep, intimate relationship with Him that produces joy in our lives, then we've got to follow the path that leads to that.

We've got to follow the path that God has called us to live if that is our desired destination. If that's where we want to go, then we follow His path. It doesn't matter how many people in our life will try to justify it and say, hey, you can do that later on, but you'll enjoy life more if you do this.

[10 : 47] You can do that later on. Just think about yourself right now. No, we've got to follow the path that God has called us to do if we want to arrive at the destination that He's called us to.

And so that is what is important. We must follow what God has called us to do. And one of those ways that we talked about already that helps us to do that is to think about investing our treasure in the things of God.

If you want your heart to be in the things of God, then invest your treasure there. That's the direction you want to go. Then invest your treasure there because that is what changes everything.

From these few verses, we see that the blessed man, the one who is like a tree planted by the stream, is the one who not only flees from the way of this world, but also at the same time draws near to God by delighting in His Word.

This year and the years to come, I'm excited about seeing what God continues to do in the life of this church. We as a church must follow the wisdom of Psalm 1 right here to flee from the things of this world and at the same time delight in the things of God.

[11 : 58] One of the ways that we do this as a church is by doing this individually in our lives, practicing this each and every day. Not letting sin creep into our lives, but not letting our lives be influenced by ungodly people or ungodly lies that the world is telling us.

We focus on the things of God. Instead, we set our minds, fill our minds and our hearts with God's Word. If you want to help in learning to grow in God's Word, we would love to provide you with resources.

If you want to help in learning how to serve God and invest your time and resources in those things, then we would love to give you avenues to serve God. In fact, this coming semester and this fall semester, we're all going through a book called Love Your Church by Toni Morita.

And it's a way, it gives you some very practical ways in which you can be involved in the life of the church, that you can be involved in serving, that you can follow the path that leads to righteousness, follow the path that leads to God.

And so I want to encourage you with that this morning. If you want to, if we want to be a church that sees people coming to faith, that sees people change, that sees people growing in their relationship with God, that is on mission for God, then our direction matters.

[13 : 14] If we want to be families that are raising children to love Jesus more than anything else in this world. If we want to be husbands and wives where our relationship with our spouse is the relationship that's described in Scripture, then our direction matters.

If we want to live a life that's described here in Psalm 1, where we are like a tree planted by a stream that produces fruit that does not wither, that prospers in all that we do.

Then our direction matters. Your direction, not your intention, will determine your destination. If you want to live a life that follows God closely, then direction matters.

What direction are you taking in this life? A direction that leads you closer to God or a direction that leads you further away? And so I want you to think about that this morning. And this will be kind of a gateway into our understanding the rest of the Psalms this summer.

But again, thank you so much for being here. Let me pray for us. I'm going to ask Sean if he'll come up and close us with a word of, with a song. But let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you again for all that you do for us each and every day.

[14 : 26] Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for the mission team that was able to be here today to share some of the stories from the trip. And Lord, we know there are so many other stories, so many other lives that were impacted.

And so we were able to just catch a little glimpse of what took place there. And so, Lord, I pray that you be with us, be with this team, be with those that are here today. And Lord, as we think about Psalm 1, and as we think about the difference that it makes in our life of the direction that we take, Lord, help us to take the direction that leads to you.

Lord, we know that direction because it's told us over and over again throughout Scripture. And so, Lord, help us to have the boldness and courage to follow you, to follow the direction that you lead, no matter where that takes us.

Help us to follow you. Because we know that that's how we experience joy and happiness in this life, is by following you. Lord, we thank you so much for Jesus.

And it's in his name we pray. Amen. We're going to invite you to stand. We're going to stand and sing a song of invitation. If God is speaking to you this morning, won't you respond as we sing?