

Series: Dwell	Reference: Psalm 1:1-3	Title: A Good Shower	Date: 10.24.2021
Website Writeup:			
Dallas Willard said, “To dribble a few verses or chapters of Scripture on oneself through the week, in church or out, will not reorder one’s mind & spirit - just as one drop of water every five minutes will not get you a shower, no matter how long you keep it up. You need a lot of water at once & for a sufficiently long time. Similarly for the written Word.” TRUE THAT!			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

We’re doing three four week series surrounding the ongoing prayer request to grow in the three areas of worship, word & witness. We’re now into sermon #2 of the 2nd series, learning how to dwell in the Word of God.

Jonathan Edwards once said, “*God created man for nothing else but happiness.*” He was speaking of the delight of being rooted in the assurance of Gods care & love!¹

That was the spirit of the National Conference this past week. An authentic acknowledgement of the stress of ministry, with the desire to push forward experiencing the work of God & participating in it further despite our struggles.

It’s easy to make this spiritual life all about the intellect, to hide behind doctrine & theology, but that’s not our desire. We want strong doctrine & theology coupled with an active leading of the Holy Spirit. Not only to talk Kingdom, but to do Kingdom!

Psalm 1:6 says...*For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.* Psalm 1 is often viewed as a wisdom psalm dividing life into two choices, ‘*the way of the righteous*’ and ‘*the way of the wicked*’. For the psalmist the matter’s simple, walk with God or not, understanding the consequences of your choices.

You’ve heard it said, ‘People are complicated’. True, they *are* a mixed bag of multiple traumatic & joyous experiences, desires, education levels, opportunities, successes, influences, failures, so on & so forth. As a result we feel people to be too complicated a knot to pick apart. We’re overwhelmed at their issues. We treat neuroses with psychology & pharmacology, but true transformation & healing elude us. Depression & anxiety are only kept at bay. A perpetual hamster wheel of trauma & talk. Simple endurance - living with a limp. There’s something subtly deceptive in our outlook. We’re horizontally focused...we need to look up to what God can do!

The choice to be healed, find life & joy, although not always easy, is simple. God heals trauma in a moment, if we’re open to receiving it. It begins with saying yes to Jesus. Contemplating Him. Meditating on Him. Receiving from Him. Intentionally surrendering to Him. That rhythm of life we spoke of recently, fostering habits of spiritual formation & connection with the Holy Spirit.

¹ C. Hassell Bullock, *Psalms 1–72*, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, vol. 1, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 18–19.

You ever get confused as to what someone means when they refer to ‘The Law of God’? Do they mean the Pentateuch/The Torah? Do they mean the Decalogue/the Ten Commandments? Old or New Testament, or both?

The answer is, yes, all of the above - the Law can be a generic catchall term for the Word of God, or a specific term for certain parts of it. We contemplate/meditate on the words of the Bible - the Law of God. Which is the person of God, who is Jesus - the Living Word of God. They're His words, His words are Him. Inseparable. He is Truth. He pointed to the Scriptures & upheld them as authoritative Truth.

It's been said the Psalms are a meditation on the Torah (the Law of God). A sourcebook for communal & personal connection with the Lord. Psalms isn't the Torah itself, but a reflection on its ideas, ethics, history & faith. God-breathed words taking us deeper.

The collection of Psalms begins in these 1st three verses setting the tone for the whole book...*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, ²but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day & night. ³That person is like a tree **planted** by streams of water, which **yields** its fruit in season & whose leaf does not wither - whatever they do **prosper**. (Ps 1:1-3)*

Think about these bolded verbs. Three are active - you do them. You walk. You stand. You sit. You choose to do those things. The others are passive. You're planted, and as a result you yield fruit & prosper. Planted well near streams of water with deep roots, you yield fruit, remaining vibrant & prosperous. Plant submitting to the Planter. The Christian life, submission to a good God doing for us what we can't do for ourselves. Bringing good things into our life, nourishing us along the way.

The Gospel isn't relevant only for the moment of salvation. We have daily need of grace. “Christ's blood which cleansed us from all unrighteousness at salvation is the same blood which cleanses us from all unrighteousness in daily sanctification. Francis Schaeffer referred to God's grace as ‘this present value of the blood of Christ’. We're dependent on it - both as the door into the Christian life & the floor upon which we build our Christian life... Like the words of the old hymn: *What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus; What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow; No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus.*”²

We tend to extremes when listening to those first three statements in Psalm 1, as if those wicked sinning mockers are out there just killing, raping, pillaging & laughing as they go! But really it's descriptive of the person who simply chooses to live life without God. The hopeless skeptic, living for themselves, mocking others out of pride & insecurity. Without faith. Without depth.

² <https://tommyboland.com/2014/02/>

N.T. Wright encourages Christians to view the Psalms as representing a Biblical Worldview - *what you look through, not what you look at* (drill holes in a Bible). Praying & living the Psalms means “to weave the Psalms into the very heart of our devotional life & to expect to find as we do, that the way we look at the world will change bit by bit.” Saturation in the law of God, as Psalm 1 prescribes for those choosing the ‘way of the righteous’. A biblical worldview, the only legitimate way, leading to life³ Meditating on the Law of God, is to go deep in your experience of Him. To be ushered into the Holy of Holies, experiencing the Shekinah Glory of God. Shekinah meaning, ‘dwelling, or one who dwells’. Add Glory to it & it becomes...‘God caused His glory to dwell among us’! Amen to that! The presence of God available at all times to those of us who house the Holy Spirit in this mortal frame!

Usually when we say God came to dwell among us, we think Emmanuel...Christmas. Jesus came, dwelt among us for a time, died, rose, ascended, went away. As a result, most struggle through life trying to avoid pitfalls until they die. But that’s not the Biblical Worldview! It says Jesus ushered in the first fruits of Gods kingdom in Truth & Power! Before His ascension Jesus promised God the Holy Spirit to fill us. The Advocate who leads, convicts & directs, bringing us into greater things, the Good works Jesus prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2:10)! Jesus infused us with purpose to reach the nations with His Gospel. As the worship song says, “*Even when I don’t see it You’re working. Even when I don’t feel it You’re working. You never stop, You never stop working!*” God is alive & moving. Seeing the world through the eyes of the Word, we can be a part of it! Choosing to actively walk with God in the present value of Christs blood.

What I’d like you to go home with today is this...the blessed steadfast follower of God delights in God’s Word. By intentionally meditating on God’s revealed truth, we grow closer with & more deeply connected to the Lord. Not in some cold academic way, but in having the heart of God well up in our chest. Our vision focused through the lens of His Glory & Love for the world, and our purpose in bringing that to the nations. To begin to look for & ask for His leading, participating with the Holy Spirit as to what God wants to do in those around us! Realizing it’s all for Jesus, as we join with all creation, every tribe, tongue & nation glorifying Him!

This first Psalm celebrates the ‘blessed’ because they meditate on the Torah, prayerfully reading & obeying it. The Hebrew word ‘torah’ simply means ‘teaching,’ but it also came to refer to the first five books of the Bible containing the foundational laws of Judaism. The word has both of these meanings in Psalm 1. The book of Psalms is being offered as a new Torah, teaching God’s people about the lifelong practice of prayer as they strive to obey God’s commands in the first Torah.”⁴

³ C. Hassell Bullock, [Psalms 1–72](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, vol. 1, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 19.

⁴ (The Bible Project, *Read Scripture: Illustrated Summaries of Biblical Books* [Portland: The Bible Project, 2017], 36)

This blessed man of Psalm 1 doesn't take advice from, or walk in agreement with, wicked people. He doesn't stand in sin, or talk with people who only want to cause division by mocking Truth. Instead, they delight in God's law, meditating on God's truth day & night. Joyously unaware of all those others as they focus on Jesus! Like a tree rooted in all it needs, the person of God grows mature, bears fruit in time & remains strong whatever the seasons bring. And, "as a tree bears fruit not for itself but for others, so also, when the faithful person prospers, he brings benefit to others."⁵

One song we sang at the conference went like this...*May your struggles keep you near the cross. May your troubles show that you need God. May your battles end the way they should. May your bad days prove that God is good. May your whole life prove that God is good.* Being planted well & flourishing doesn't mean we'll not experience the storm, but it does mean the storm brings value & can be weathered in Christ to our benefit! So how do we grow rooted near the source & become mature in Jesus?

The Psalmist paints the picture of a person who *meditates* on God's truth all the time. But what is meditation? Often, we picture meditation as a foreign practice. Or silly, like on *The Office* when Michael tried to relieve Stanley's stress by teaching everyone to meditate, only to discover *he* was the cause of Stanley's stress. For the Christian, meditation's merely intentionally dwelling on Gods revealed truth & how it applies to our lives. It's not an emptying of yourself, it's actually a filling of God's Word!

Interestingly, Watchman Nee wrote a book called *Sit, Walk, Stand* in which he utilized these three concepts from the book of Ephesians. And as it turns out, the three passages are worthy of meditation...

Sit, Ephesians 2:4-6... *"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ & **seated** us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus..."*

This speaks deeply to our position in Christ, to what He's done in us & for us! Drastically different than sitting in the company of mockers!

Walk, Ephesians 5:1-2... *"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and **walk** in the way of love, just as Christ loved us & gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering & sacrifice to God."*

This speaks of the example Jesus left, and what it means to be a Christian. It means love & sacrifice, not power & control! Very different than walking in step with sinners!

Stand, Ephesians 6:13-15... *"...put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand** your ground, and after you have done everything, to **stand**. ¹⁴**Stand** firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."*

⁵ (ESV Student Study Bible [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011], Psalm 1:3n, 691)

This speaks of our power, protection & determination in Christ, to the courage of the Christian life in struggle...*“May your struggles keep you near the cross. May your troubles show that you need God. May your battles end the way they should. May your bad days prove that God is good. May your whole life prove that God is good.”*

As Rudyard Kipling said in his famous poem IF... “We’ve had the truth we’ve spoken twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools. We’ve watched the things we’ve given our lives to broken! Now we have to stoop & build ’em back up with worn-out tools!” And we can do that through Christ & by the comfort of His Word (Php 4:13)!

The biblical model of meditation has less to do with reaching some nirvana state & more to do with simply listening & doing. “Two Hebrew words deeply inform & enrich our understanding of meditative prayer: *haga* & *si’ach*. English Bibles most often translate both of these words with the simple word ‘meditate.’ Actually, these two Hebrew words convey a host of nuances: to mutter, to moan, to whisper, to reflect, to rehearse, to muse (be absorbed in thought), and even to coo like a dove (Isa. 59:11).

Often the emphasis of these words is on silent reflection upon God’s works in nature (Ps. 143:5; 145:5) or God’s Word (Ps. 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148). At other times it involves audible murmuring, especially when the object of our meditation is Torah, or the Law of God. The biblical stress is always on ethical change, character transformation, obedience to the Word of the Lord.

Philosopher Ken Bryson of Nova Scotia observes, ‘Old Testament meditation moves through silence to dwell on a spirituality of words, namely, the precepts, statutes, words & commandments of the Torah.’ So, in the biblical witness, we have this dual nature of meditation: stillness & action. This is why [we should] constantly seek to define Christian meditation in terms of ‘hearing & obeying.’ Always this double emphasis. On one hand we’re called to silence, stillness, to quieting ourselves. On the other, we’re called to action, right behavior, obedience to the will & ways of God. Always hearing & obeying”⁶ Not just talking & theorizing kingdom, but doing kingdom.

Meditation’s something we practice. Through meditation on God’s Word we practice stillness (Psalm 37:7; 46:10) and listening (Psalm 85:8) and grow in understanding & application.

Dallas Willard recounts his experience of stumbling upon the benefit of spending time dwelling on God’s Word. What started out as reading the Gospel of John while his laundry tumbled during a holiday break became a pathway toward developing spiritual disciplines. He said, “I did nothing for the rest of the day but live there in that world: reading, meditating, cross-referencing & rereading...There was a new thing at work in me...I had learned that *intensity* is crucial for any progress in spiritual perception & understanding. **To dribble a few verses or chapters of Scripture on oneself through the**

⁶ (Richard J. Foster, “What Is Biblical Meditation, *Christianity Today*, July 24, 2012, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/spirituallife/biblicalmeditation.html?start=1>).

week, in church or out, will not reorder one's mind & spirit - just as one drop of water every five minutes will not get you a shower, no matter how long you keep it up. You need a lot of water at once & for a sufficiently long time. Similarly for the written Word"⁷

By setting real time, apart from the hustle of life, we can reignite passion & love for God & others. It's in these times our ears, minds & hearts are ready & willing to hear what God wants to teach us about Himself & our purpose.

Babies aren't born speaking, walking, or able to do much of anything for themselves. They grow & learn by using their senses. But research shows that a child only one hour old can distinguish their mother's voice from others.⁸

When we come to Christ, we're spiritual infants. By watching, listening & spending focused time with God, we too learn how to recognize His voice & walk in His ways. The blessed steadfast follower of God delights in God's Word. By intentionally meditating on His revealed truth, we grow closer with & more deeply connected to the Lord.

I want to do a little practice today...You should all have a sheet with Psalm 1:1-3 & the sit, walk, stand passages from Ephesians. I'd like you to take a few minutes to meditate on one of them. Begin your time with a prayer, which goes something like what I've written at the top.

Allow the Holy Spirit time to speak to you about & through these verses. Focus only on one for now & use the others another day this week. Don't rush. Then when you feel God speaking, write what He's saying to you about these verses. You may be drawn to certain words or phrases, He may speak to you about an area of your life you need to address, or He may encourage you in some way.

If you're a brave soul, maybe you might want to share what you heard later.

⁷ (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* [San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998], 356).

⁸ (Alex Beard, "How Babies Learn—And Why Robots Can't Compete," *The Guardian*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/apr/03/how-babies-learn-and-why-robots-cant-compete>).

-SCRIPTURE MEDITATION-

Begin with a prayer such as this, but in your own words...

“Holy Spirit come...I invite you. I want to meditate on your Word, speak to me now concerning what I’m reading. What do you want to say to me specifically? Is there anything on which I need conviction? Or anything with which you would encourage me? I love you & desire to be led by you. Amen.”

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