

God-Fearing Youth

Devotional 1: The Young Man Who Fears God Is Blessed What Kind of Music Do You Love?

Do you like music? The Psalms are vibrant songs accompanied by instruments.

Psalm 1:1 says, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scorners;”

A question. What is your favorite type of music? Rock and roll, southern rock, classical, pop, blues, ballads, rap, country, the oldies (that is, old romantic ballads), jazz, heavy metal, praise and/or worship)?

When we think about different types or styles of music, we soon realize that with each category, different emotions arise or stir. For some, the thought of these types of music makes them sick and for others it brings nostalgia or energy.

You listen to what you hear because you have a certain mood or you want to change what you feel or you want to intensify what you feel.

For example, when someone exercises, they usually do not listen to classical music. You want something that awakens another energetic emotion and increases motivation and adrenaline. But if you want to relax, you will hear something soft and slow.

In the Bible – in the Psalms, we find different moods, rhythms and styles.

Furthermore, the Psalms were normally accompanied by varied musical styles and instruments.

The Psalms contain some of the highest expressions of praise. The psalmists plunge into a deep despair that we all identify with at times. The authors/psalmists cry and lament for their sin, for the sin committed against them; They exclaim with a voice of thanksgiving, they prostrate themselves with amazement and humility when considering the creative work of God; The psalmists rejoice in the covenant of grace that God has made with his people.

In other words, almost all human emotions are expressed in the Psalms: joy, peace, sadness, anger, rage, despair. This is the songbook of the Christian life.

The Psalms deeply remind us of the importance of worship, lament, thanksgiving, righteous anger – they remind us of feelings that are based on truth – and the righteous expression of those feelings.

We need to keep that in mind as we go through some of the Psalms. Different emotions and affects are expressed and are intended to arouse different types of affects.

Psalm 1, believe it or not, is meant to awaken our intellect and emotions. So, in this camp, we will take a brief tour of Psalm 1, a Psalm of wisdom designed for us to contemplate where true wisdom and, as a result, joy and happiness are found. Do you want to be a happy and blessed young person? Fear the Lord.

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Devotional 2: The young man who fears God does not hang out with the bad. Whose advice do you listen to?

Is it important who advises you and the advice they give you or others?

Psalm 1:1 says, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scorners;”

When was the last time he asked someone for advice or opinion? The reality is that some offer advice without you asking for it. Maybe even you will think that about this devotional. Receiving or giving advice can be a dangerous thing in our day and time, but it is something we should all do. We must be careful who we are asking for advice.

The Psalmist said, Blessed is the man who does not listen to the advice of the wicked.

Right off the bat, it should surprise us that the Blessed Man, or the happy man, is described in a negative way. In other words, instead of immediately jumping to what the good or blessed man does or should do to be even more blessed, we start with what he does not do or what he should not do, what he will not do, if he wants to live a blessed life.

The text tells us three things. This man, holy or blessed:

- 1) does not walk or follow (or walk in) the counsel of the wicked
- 2) he is not (standing) in the way of sinners, and
- 3) he does not sit in the chair of scoffers

And we immediately realize that some kind of negative progression is described.

He goes from walking (walking-actively) to standing (stopping between) and sitting (staying between) or with the bad guys.

What does it mean not to walk in the counsel of the wicked?

To follow someone's advice is to live according to that person's advice. The metaphor of walking is common in the Bible. We see it in the Bible when Christians are told to walk or walk/live in a manner worthy of the gospel.

We know that Paul, in that text, does not mean that there is a certain way to walk by putting the right foot forward before the left, but rather a way of living for Christians. It is a way of life (lifestyle) that reflects that a person is being guided by the gospel.

Consider the last part of Psalm 84:11 that God “will not take away good from those who walk uprightly.” The psalmist is pronouncing a blessing upon those who live in a way that honors and glorifies God with his words and actions.

Therefore, to walk in the counsel of the wicked is to have your moral/ethical lifestyle (or lack of) guided by the advice, opinions, example, and/or instructions of the wicked.

But who are the evil ones? To be evil, in the psalms, is to be guided by your own set of self-induced values, ignoring God. The evil person rules himself, focuses on himself, governs himself. He lives life for the praise of himself rather than the praise of God.

The blessed man, the happy man does not do that. If not, he listens, walks, he stands and sits to listen and follow Jesus' example, listening to his word.

Do you want to be blessed and happy? Listen and follow the example of Jesus and his word and not the word of those who contradict it. Stand for the truth and not for the lie.

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Devotional 3: The young man who fears God does not stand with the bad guys Do you wear the bad guys' shoes?

There are things in life that we should avoid doing, like filling the bad guy's shoes.

Psalm 1:1 says, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scorners;"

Has he ever heard the saying? "If the jacket fits, wear it!" Well, in English there is a saying that says, if the shoe fits, put it on! Today we will talk about some shoes that as Christians we should avoid filling.

Previously we saw the first of three parts that our text mentions: This man or in our case, young, holy or blessed:

- 1) he does not walk or follow (or walk-in) the counsel of the wicked
- 2) he does not (stand) in the path of sinners, and
- 3) he does not sit in the chair of scoffers

Today we will go from not walking in the advice of evil people, to the stage of, he is not (standing) in the path of sinners. From walking we went to standing.

It may seem that what this parallel statement is saying is that the blessed man does not stand in the way or obstruct the path of sinners. So, instead of standing in their way, the blessed man turns away from them.

And that's close, but a more accurate understanding would be if I could put it this way, that a blessed man does not put his feet in the shoes of the wicked.

Or think about it in these terms. An evil man walks along the beach, leaving footprints behind him. The follower of the wicked would put his feet in the footprints of the wicked so that his steps are indistinguishable from those of the wicked.

To put it into reality, if you walk in the counsel of the wicked, your life will eventually become indistinguishable from the life of the sinner. You will be in the path of the sinner; no identifiable difference will be evident in the way he thinks, behaves, or lives.

You are guilty by association and by finding yourself standing at the scene of his crime, following in his footsteps, or example or you will end up doing the same by doing what he does or obeying his advice.

The idea here is that the blessed man does not stand in the position of the wicked by following them, but that he goes the way of Jesus who said, "Follow me. Follow me and I will make you

fishers of men.” “Take up your cross daily and follow me.” “Place your feet where I place my feet.”

Better let us imitate Paul as he imitates Christ. Ephesians 5:1, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.”

The idea is that if we truly follow Jesus, our lives will become more and more like his: our actions, attitudes, and behaviors. That's an exciting thing because we want to follow Jesus! So, the progression goes from walking with the bad guys and receiving their advice to behaving like them by (putting on their shoes-walking in their paths and footsteps). If we want a blessed life, we will have enough wisdom to move away from that type of thinking and living.

Let us influence others to do good by pointing them toward Christ instead of being influenced by bad people to do bad by following his example.

Do you want to be a young man who fears God? Don't fill in the shoes of the bad guys and do not do the things they do living their life.

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Devotional 4: The young man who fears God does not sit with the wicked.

How Does Walking Lead to Sitting? Could it be that we sometimes intentionally seek the advice of bad people to follow their example?

Psalm 1:1 says, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scorners;”

I am not convinced that any of us intentionally seek the counsel of the wicked. But little by little we are being indoctrinated by what we see and hear, even on TV, on social networks, etc.

Here in Arkansas there are small establishments that offer Tarot card readings, but rarely as you drive by will you see many vehicles in the parking lot. Most people know better than that. But that's not the only way advice from the wicked comes to us, is it?

I constantly remind my children and myself that every book, every song, every movie, every television show, every painting, every poem, every newspaper article, every head is a world and has a message or agenda that they want to put into action. our brain and heart.

It doesn't matter how innocent something may seem. Everyone has an agenda. You have an agenda. Even I have an agenda! And if I'm not aware of that, and I can't discern that, what could happen for me and my children? For you? That, if we are not careful, we will walk in the counsel of the wicked and then stop to stand in the path of sinners, and then sit before their teaching/example to imitate Him.

Perhaps you will say, “Yes, that is true of many people I know.” But I'm not talking about so many people you know; I'm talking about you AND me. And the messages we allow into our minds and hearts, on purpose, or without realizing it.

Psalm 1:1 again says, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor has he stood in the way of sinners, Nor has he sat in the seat of scorners;”

Therefore, we have gone from walking casually to standing firmly and sitting (to fellowshiping and living more routinely with them). The idea here is that of a fixed position, sitting, where you look down on everyone else, mocking their way of life, by following the malevolent example of those who advised you. Now, it may seem that verse 1 asks the blessed man to isolate himself from the wicked, from the sinner, from the scorner. But that is not the case.

Bliss, biblical happiness, and joy are not found in isolating ourselves from the world. Jesus ate with sinners. He spent time with them. But he didn't do what they did. He influences them, not the other way around. What is asked is not to avoid contact, but to avoid the advice and lifestyle, their example.

So, if I do not sit in the seat of scoffers, then I had better not follow the path of the sinner; and if I do not want to follow the path of the sinner, then I had better not seek the advice of the wicked, the selfish. Let us be an example of the good instead of following the example of the bad.

Do you want to be an exemplary and God-fearing young man? Do not sit with others to live with them and criticize the good, calling the bad good and the bad a blessing.

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Devotional 5: God Meditates and Delights in the Word of God. What do you meditate on and delight in?

There are many things we can delight in. Do you delight in the bad or the good?

Psalms 1:2 says, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and he meditates on his law day and night." The element of surprise is not only a good strategic move in war but also good in poetry.

In verse 2 of Psalm 1, the psalmist goes into action and surprises us, because so far, we have seen a threefold progressive parallel, do not walk in the council, do not stand in the way, and do not sit in the council/seat of the bad guys. And we would expect a triple descending parallel to balance it out. Don't do this, that, or that, but do this, that, and that.

But we get an action. A double instruction and description — vs. 2 "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night."

And this is the surprising factor of this wisdom literature. He catches us off guard and forces us to concentrate on this: delighting and meditating on the law of the Lord, continually, walking, standing, or sitting.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 "These then are the commandments, statutes, and decrees that the Lord your God commanded to teach you, so that you may do them in the land to which you are passing to take it. That you may fear the Lord your God, keeping all his statutes and his commandments that I command you, you, your son, and your son's son, all the days of your life, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and take care to do them, that it may go well with you in the land flowing with milk and honey, and that you may multiply, as Jehovah, the God of your parents has told you.⁴ Hear, Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah. and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 And these words that I command you today will be in your heart, and you will repeat them to your children, and you will talk about them when you are in your house, and when you walk on the road, and when you lie down, and when you get up. 8 And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and

they shall be as frontals between your eyes; 9 and you will write them on the posts of your house, and on your doors.”

Delighting in the teaching of Yahweh (Jehovah) already goes against self-righteousness, because we are easily admitting that we don't know how to be happy, but God does, so not only do we listen to Him, but we LOVE to listen to Him.

Notice how generalized this instruction is:

The setting of Deuteronomy 17:14-20 is similar to Psalm 1, where in Deuteronomy God gives the things that a King of Israel should not do as well as the thing that He should do. Positive instruction has nothing to do with war strategy, political advisors, the economic objectives. What that king must do, to be a successful king,

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Devotional 6: The Young Man Who Fears God Prospers in What He Does Do you prosper in what you do?

Did you know that the person who delights in the word of God and meditates on it always prospers?

Psalms 1:3 “He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.”

The old saying is that a picture is worth a thousand words. Well, that may be true, but it's only true when you really get the picture.

The psalmist paints a picture for us, and to benefit from it, we must imagine it in our minds. That's what the author is trying to do...paint a picture in our minds. So, we need to have a tree in our minds planted on the banks of streams. But, as you might expect, there is more to this tree simply planted next to streams of water.

In reality, this tree has been "transplanted" or moved from one place to another. In the Promised Land, you can find trees and shrubs that grow and bloom during certain times of the year, when the streams and rivers are full of water. But then there are times, dry times, when it seems like nothing can grow.

Afterward, there are seasons of growth and life in those types of places. BUT, that is not what is described here.

In Psalm 1, the Blessed Man has been transplanted from an occasionally growing desert region to a rich, fertile terrain that is surrounded by several flowing streams.

That tree is constantly fed and, as a result, produces fruit. But also notice that his leaf does not wither. In other words, no matter the season, no matter the dryness of what is happening around it, no matter the scorching wind or the freezing winter, this tree always has life and is continually growing, because it is continually being fed.

Isn't that really good and exciting news? This tree is not shaken or moved, it is not affected by the surrounding circumstances. It continually gives life.

Today we find ourselves in the midst of a time of cultural chaos that could be helpful for Christians and churches who are planted next to life-giving streams of water, bearing much fruit, standing strong, and prospering.

To be a well-planted, God-fearing young man, you have to be well-planted in the word of God, in what you believe, and connected to Him and then He will make you prosper.

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Devotional 7: The young man who fears God will not have the end of the evil ones. What will happen to the evil ones?

There are good and bad people everywhere, how are you profiled?

Psalm 1:4-6 says: “Not so with the wicked, for they are like chaff that the wind carries away. Therefore the wicked will not arise in the judgment, Nor the sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous; But the path of the wicked will perish.”

We hear a lot today about not profiling people, putting them into categories or labeling them by their traits or ways of being.

Well, I'm not here to talk or discuss politics with you, but I want you to know that the Bible labels, profiles, or makes a big difference between how to identify the blessed man versus the evil and perverse man. Now, we have seen a contrast of the blessed man presented to us in very strong terms. Our text says in verse 4, “The wicked are not like that,” in contrast to the holy, but it is a little more intense than that. We should probably read it, “The wicked are none of that. Absolutely not. Not even close to what the blessed are.” But how are they not exactly? Let's analyze that.

- 1 - The wicked are not constantly being fed with water to sustain life, as verse 3 says.
- 2 - The wicked do not even give signs of life by not bearing fruit.
- 3 - The wicked wither, are fruitless and fail. They are uprooted, dry and sterile, so much so that the slightest breeze blows them away.

And then let's look at verses 6 and 7: “Therefore the wicked will not rise in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous; But the path of the wicked will perish.”

Now let's look once again at the use of parallel to help us understand the intended meaning. What is the intention of saying that the Lord knows the way of the righteous? It is explained in the contrasting parallel statement of “But the path of the wicked will perish, in contrast to the path of the righteous that will stand, being remembered.

Let's think about that. He does not say that the wicked will perish, although that too will happen one day, but he says that the way or path of the wicked will perish.

In the new heaven and new earth, there will be no problem with the wicked, nor their ways. That is, his way of being. We will not remember the ways of Hitler, abusers or anarchists. They don't win. But in contrast to that, the Lord knows the way of the righteous, or to put it more bluntly, we will remember the way of the righteous.

In the new heaven and the new earth, we will be celebrating the acts of Dorcas who made tunics and dresses for poor women; We will be remembering and celebrating the churches of Macedonia, who while in a severe trial of affliction and intense poverty, gave generously to the cause of Christ with joy; We will remember and celebrate the countless acts of love and compassion toward the least, the broken, the wounded, the fearful, that are born after being planted firmly and deeply in the delight of the law of the Lord.

Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man; But the end of it is the way of death."

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Devotional 8: The Young Man Who Fears God Prospers on the Road Are There Only Two Paths?

There is a path that seems right to a man; But his end is death. Which one are you going for?

Psalms 1:1-6 says, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scorners; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night. It will be like a tree planted by streams of water, That yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. Not so the evil ones, who are like the chaff that the wind carries away. Therefore the wicked will not arise in the judgment, Nor the sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous; But the path of the wicked will perish."

One pastor said that when it comes to self-evaluation, It's like looking in the distorting mirror at a carnival: we don't see things as they really are. As we read the Bible, we rarely see ourselves as antagonists of a passage.

For example, in Psalm 1, we would definitely not put ourselves in the category of the wicked, sinners, or scoffers. And we may want to delight in the law of the Lord day and night and be blessed, but sadly, we fall short of that mark. So the question is, "What's going on? Is there a third option for those who struggle?"

Well, this is often the way wisdom literature works. Let us think about Jesus' preaching of the beatitudes, which, by the way, is in a certain way an extension of this psalm of the blessed.

Jesus was the greatest of wisdom preachers. And he begins the beatitudes with "Blessed is the man..." just as in Psalm 1. And as Psalm 1 presents two ways/paths of life, so does Jesus at the end of the beatitudes when he gives the image of the building from your house, on the rock, or the sand.

It seems there are really only two paths. And we all know that if we struggle and try to fulfill Psalm 1:2 on our own, we will be headed for heartbreak and collapse. But let's think about this. Jesus delighted in the law of the Lord. He meditated on her continually. His food was to do the will of the Father. He listened to everything his father said; He did everything his Father asked him to do; He spoke every word his father gave him to say. He lived every moment of his life in perfect thought, attitude, and action. We have never known a moment of that kind of perfection.

Jesus is truly the holy man. He is absolutely the happiest man to ever walk the earth. Jesus is the tree that was planted, that bore fruit and that did not die eternally. In everything he does, he prospers.

The point of the Psalms, and particularly Psalm 1, is not for us to say, “Wow! That is beautiful poetry! ”No. This is wisdom for life. And if we delight in the teaching of God's word, we will find that His teaching points to someone greater than us.

His word points us to His son, Jesus Christ, who has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Him. And so, it is to Him we look, to Him we trust, to Him we cling. We will be blessed and God-fearing.