

SUNDAY July 3rd 2022.

Which is the path to Pure Happiness?

Scripture: Psalm 1.

The Psalms is a book for all seasons, because it speaks to every area and every season of our lives. It's a collection of praise and anguish, joy and

sadness, triumph and defeat written by many different authors in many different situations and seasons. It is truly a unique book.

This opening Psalms' promise is, "If you want to be happier, read this book. If you want to be a person who bears fruit in season, read this book." Psalm 1 is often referred to as the "Two ways" because it outlines two different paths that a person can follow throughout their life.

Have you been out walking someplace you are unfamiliar with and you come across a map you hope will guide you? Many maps do provide a guide – it says **YOU ARE HERE!** This helps orient you to where you are and which path you need to take to get to where you want to be.

There are also maps that do not provide a guide and if you are unfamiliar with the names of the tracks or paths – you still end up



contemplating which is the way to go to reach your destination. You may be able to “read” the map to work out which path appears easier but, I know I have chosen that and ended up a long way from where I had planned to go.

Psalm 1 gives us two paths – the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. And briefly tells us what to expect on those paths – the way of the righteous leads us to flourish and the way of the wicked sees us flounder.

Let’s talk about the wicked. When the Bible talks about the wicked it is not necessarily talking about those who take every possible opportunity to do something mean, vile or nasty – such as popping a child’s balloon, kicking the cat or double-parking their car – although a wicked person may in fact do those things. The wicked aren’t just those who are guilty of sin because we all are.

The wicked person looks at the two ways to go and instead of taking the time to read God’s map – they toss it aside and step out on their own. They create their own moral codes, doing what is right in their own eyes; making their own judgements and refusing to be guided by the wisdom of God.

Where does their path lead?

When a person leaves God’s path, they leave the only path that leads to abundant life. As our Scripture says: they become like chaff blown

away in the wind. This is what a farmer does with his harvest – throws the seed up in the air and allows the wind to carry away the useless chaff. The wicked are described as chaff – lightweights, having no substance or worth. Their pathway leads to them not standing before God in judgement, but to be blown away.

What about the righteous? The righteous stick to God's map – they don't follow others off the map; they don't follow the advice of the wicked against the counsel of God; they don't share the life of sinners; their community isn't defined by those who mock the law of God.

They look at the map – God's Word – the You are here portion and orient themselves around His will. This doesn't mean they will never sin or make mistakes; or never wander off the path. They will stumble and when they do they let God help them find their way again. They take God's pathway – the only path to life.

Based upon this truth, maybe we could develop a formula:

- *More Bible, less binge-watching.*
- *Or, More scripture, less screens.*

I would hope that you leave church happier and more settled than when you came in because you spend time in worship, time with God's people and time in God's word.

In this psalm, the psalmist teaches us the secret to happiness. He says: Happy people **do** three things: “they walk, they stand, they sit.” It’s a progression.

And happy people **avoid** three things: they don’t walk in the way wicked people do, they don’t stand in the pathway of sinners and they don’t sit in the company of mockers.

What is walking for you? Walking is taking a series of steps. Walking is about the decisions you make all day long.

A. Walking = The decisions we make all day long.

Walking is about where you live mentally, emotionally, and relationally. After you walk for a while, you usually get to the place where you’re going. And when you do, you stop walking. And you stand there.

B. Standing = The commitments we make to various causes.

The kind of thinking you adopt; the way you choose to see life. You make your decisions – that’s walking. And your decisions make you – that’s standing. – You stop somewhere and you live there. Once you’ve stood somewhere long enough, you eventually sit down.

C. Sitting = The attitude of our heart.

A happy person does not make decisions under the influence of “the wicked” who think contrary to God; who do things contrary to the laws of God and mock the almighty. ***Instead, they delight in the Lord’s instruction and meditate on His word day and night.***

Maybe you have been wandering around, trying to find the map that says – **YOU ARE HERE**. It is here – in God’s Word; in this church; with this community of believers. It only takes three simple things to get onto the right path.

A. Delight in God’s words.

Like God’s words, take pleasure in them; look forward to hearing His words in church and reading them at home, participating in a small group bible study; learning to live by them.

B. Think about them deeply.

To meditate means, “to think deeply about God’s Word.” Instead of just skimming over a passage, ask questions:

- “Why did God say this?”
- “What does He mean by this?”
- “What am I supposed to do about this?”

C. Think about God’s words day and night.

One of the best ways to start your day is to read a chapter of the Bible. And one of the best ways to end your day is to read a chapter of the Bible.

A recent Bible society report based on a national survey undertaken during the middle of the pandemic found:

People experiencing hurt and difficulties, found reading the Bible and attending church made a critical difference to their wellbeing. They were better able to cope and those who read at greater-than-average levels, also experienced the highest levels of hope.

The Psalm is saying, “Scripture–readers are happier because when you are continually taking healthy nourishment you prosper.

The most important organ in our body is our brain. It does all our thinking. Kilo to Kilo our brain consumes far more calories than any other organ. It’s constantly working and needs constant feeding. Our brain makes up 2% of our body mass but consumes 20% of our calories.

Feeding our brain on the Bible morning and evening is like planting it next to a stream so it can get constant nourishment. And when we are constantly giving our brain the right nourishment, it’s going to make better decisions, which will make us prosper.

Imagine if every person in our country read the Bible regularly? We’d be a happier country. A country for all seasons. Imagine if we all read the Bible regularly. According to Psalm 1, we would be happier – a man or woman for all seasons.

So I want to issue a challenge to all of us today:

1. Read a Psalm a day.

2. Ask yourself, “What is God saying to me here?”