

## Three Life Shaping Questions

### Psalms: Encountering God's Heart Through His Playlist

#### Psalm 1

By Dave Urbanski

Worldliness is pervasive and relentless and tantalizing. Its surface-level attractiveness fills our eyes and ears and senses every single day — kind of like a coating of sugar over everything around us. That sprinkling of sugar is readily available to taste at all times, difficult to resist — and 100 percent nutritionally EMPTY.

Same thing with worldliness. It's shouted at us and thrust upon us and so frequently showing up in our paths that we get used to its presence. And if we get too close, too comfortable with it, pretty soon we pursue it to the point where it can feel comfortable and normal — except it's also 100 percent EMPTY, spiritually speaking.

It's therefore important, as Pastor Scott reminded us Sunday, that each of us ask the question: *Am I moving toward worldliness?* With that, Pastor Scott employed the truths found in Psalm 1 to get to the heart of this issue.

The psalm's very first word is "blessed," which Pastor Scott said comes from a Hebrew word meaning "happy." As we know, "happy" is an emotion that results from happenings or circumstances, and Pastor Scott reminded us that it's important in an overall sense that we focus more on the "joy" of the Lord, which transcends stuff that happens to us, good or bad. But nevertheless, the writer of Psalm 1 is advising us that

the person who avoids godlessness and instead loves the Lord and concentrates on his word is going to be "blessed" or "happy." Not a thing wrong with that!

The first and second verses, in fact, spell out the kind of person who wallows in worldliness: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."

It's a stark contrast, isn't it? Pastor Scott suggested that in our day the counsel of the wicked could be questionable friends or individuals on social media — which is everywhere today and constantly calls to us if we're on Twitter or Facebook or some other digital platform. How much are we listening to those voices? And how much are we listening to what the Lord is telling us?

Why even spend one more second giving "air time" to those who are telling us the opposite of what God is saying?

Pastor Scott went deeper with a compelling observation regarding a person not in line with the Lord who arrives at that sad location in steady progressions: *first walking ... then standing ... then sitting*. That final spot, shared with those who scoff at the Lord, suggests where one has decided to put a stake in the ground and stay a while. Yikes!

The contrast to that is the person who instead delights in God's word. Pastor Scott noted that the Scriptures wisely tell us that our hearts are going to follow our treasure, whatever we deem our treasure to be. Is it our bank accounts? Is it our health? Is it our free time after our day is done ... or is it the times when we're hard at work doing

something we enjoy? Is it our friends and family? Not all of those things in and of themselves are bad ... but like all things in this life, they don't last forever. What does last forever is Jesus and the word of the Lord. Delighting in God's law all the time isn't just the "right" thing to do ... it's also wise, because it will endure forever. And Pastor Scott added that the more time we spend in God's word, the we realize we need to fill ourselves up with it — and the less likely it will be that we fall into worldliness.

A key word Pastor Scott pointed out from Psalm 1 is "way," which shows up in verse 1 ("stands in the way of sinners"). In this case a Hebrew word for "road" is being used, meaning the manner in which we live — how we move and act. A familiar verse — Proverbs 14:12 — uses the same Hebrew word: "There is a WAY that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."

What "way" is looking good to us, right now? In addition, what "way" is looking good to young people around you? The lifestyles of celebrities and social media influencers?

The familiar passage in Proverbs 3:5-6 points out the contrast to the "way of sinners" using that same Hebrew word: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your WAYS acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." What's more, Jesus himself said in John 14: 6 that "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

As Pastor Scott said, there's but one right way to live — and a LOT of wrong ways. Choose the right way!

Another question he suggested we ask ourselves is, "Where do you spend your thought time?" Simply put, if we choose the right WAY and meditate on the Lord and his words "day and night," we will be spiritually energized like a tree planted by water. The same idea is reflected in John 15 when Jesus tells his disciples that's he's the vine while we are the branches springing up from the vine; the vine provides life-giving nutrients to the branches, and without the vine, we (the branches) can do "nothing." Indeed, Psalm 1 says the result of one's right choice is goodness and prosperity.

Verse 4 of Psalm 1 starkly contrasts this with what happens to the "wicked," saying they're "like chaff that the wind drives away." Pastor Scott pointed out that chaff is the outer shell of wheat kernels which can be shaken off and blown away — it's nothing we need to ingest into our bodies. The wheat is what's valuable. In the same manner, living a worldly life is meaningless and wasteful and ultimately tragic in the face of eternity.

Pastor Scott also asked us, "What characterizes your resilience in life — are you a tree, or are you chaff?" Our answer, of course, is that we should be living like a tree and being fruitful for him.

Let us continually check our hearts and ask ourselves, "Am I moving toward worldliness?" If our hearts are telling us that we are, the Lord has an immediate cure for that ... confess that movement away from him, accept the forgiveness he's already provided for you, and crack open your Bible and begin meditating on its truths.