

WHAT IS YOUR MEDITATION AND DELIGHT?

Psalms 1:1-6

Key Verse 1:2

“...but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.”

We are at the end of 2014 and on the verge of a new year, 2015. Did you all have a blessed 2014? Do you all want to have a blessed 2015? Of course, we all do. We all want our lives to be blessed by God. Did you hold on to any word from God in 2014, such as a key verse? My 2014 key verse was Psalm 1:2, **“...but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.”** I chose this verse with the hope and prayer to read through the entire Bible in 2014. I even taped a schedule in my small camouflage NIV Bible. However, I did not yet accomplish my goal. I finished about half the Bible. The highlight of my Bible reading was on a trip to Russia. Usually on an airplane I am sitting next to someone and I pray to share the gospel with them. But strangely, on nearly all parts of this journey no one was sitting next to me. So I had a choice: I could either watch movies on the plane or read the Bible. Since I was a messenger in Moscow I thought I really should read the Bible. During that trip I read over 200 chapters of the Bible, about 20% of the Bible. I am speaking on this psalm today with a prayer that the word of God may be my meditation and delight all the more in 2015. I pray that God’s word becomes your meditation and delight all the more as well in 2015.

First, blessed is the one who does not... (1)

The book of psalms is the inspired songbook of God’s people Israel gathered in worship to God. As Christians, we have much to benefit from these songs and prayers. Psalm 1 begins by describing a blessed person. When we hear the word **“blessed,”** we may think of good things we have such as health or family, or valuable things that we have received, such as a good job or a new car or home. The Hebrew word for **“blessed”** can also be translated “happy.” So to be blessed does not depend on a person’s circumstances but a person’s state of mind, like shalom, a state of peace.

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Psalm 1 describes blessed people not by what they have but first of all by what they do not do, then by what they do. A blessed person does not do 3 things: (1) **walk** in step with the **wicked**, or (2) **stand** in the way that **sinners** take, or (3) **sit** in the company of **mockers**. It is noteworthy that the psalm begins by what a blessed person does not do. Obviously, it must be quite easy or natural to do these things. If there was no pull or temptation to do these things, then there would be no need to mention it. So a blessed person abstains from and resists these things. There is a progression in the words walk, stand and sit. To walk with someone is to “rub shoulders” or hang out with them. To stand with someone implies that you are talking with them. To sit with someone means you spend considerable time with them, doing what they are doing. Of course, in walking it depends on where you are going, in talking it depends on what you are saying, and in sitting in company it depends on what you are doing. Key words here indicate with whom you do these things and who is doing the influencing: “the wicked,” “sinners,” and “mockers.” The words “in step,” “way,” and “company” mean that the wicked are leading, the sinners are guiding, and the mockers are mocking in these circumstances.

A wicked person in the Bible is one who is guilty of a sin against God or man. A sinner is one who misses the right way and goes a wrong way. Who is a mocker? Proverbs 21:24 describes such a person: **“The proud and arrogant person—‘Mocker’ is his name— behaves with insolent fury.”** The book of Proverbs further describes mockers as fools who hate knowledge (1:22), those who do not respond to rebuke (13:1), those who resent or insult people who correct them (9:7; 15:12), those characterized by strife, quarrels and insults and those who stir up anger and dissension (29:8). In our sinful nature, we don’t like correction or rebuke. But one who resists correction or rebuke when it is needed becomes a mocker or a wicked fool. In contrast, if we humbly receive correction or rebuke that is based on God’s truth, then we are wise and blessed. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...”** Hebrews 12:11 says similarly: **“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”**

All people are sinful and must be told what not to do (like the Ten Commandments). The blessed life includes paying careful attention to and

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obeying God's instructions what not to do, where not to go, and who not to be influenced by. Humans are naturally self-centered and selfish. The way of blessing and life requires self-denial and abstinence. These days a popular motto is: "Follow your heart." The Bible warns about such thinking: **"the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"** (Jer 17:9)

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), Jesus contrasted 2 ways: **"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."** (Mt 7:13-14) According to Jesus, many people are on the road to destruction. It must be easy and popular. In contrast, only a few people find the road to life. Jesus admonishes us to take the narrow road to life, even though it is not easy or popular. Jesus tells us to be a good influence, like salt and light: **"You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."** (Mt 5:14a,16) Apostle Peter said similarly: **"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."** (1 Peter 2:9) Again Peter told us to be ready witnesses for Christ: **"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..."** (1 Peter 3:15) In a word, we must fight against our sinful nature and surrender to God's will. Many verses in the Bible bear this out: Jesus said, **"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."** (Lk 9:23) **"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."** (Mk 8:35) Apostle John wrote, **"The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."** (1Jn 2:17)

Second, who delights and meditates on God's word (2).

We thought about what a blessed person does not do. Then what does a blessed person do? Verse 2 tells us: **"...but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night."** A blessed person delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night. Here, **"law"**

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in Hebrew is Torah and can refer to the Pentateuch (5 books of Moses) or more broadly to the Lord's instruction or direction (way). The blessed person loves God's word. This reminds me of Psalm 119, an incredible psalm, and the longest chapter in the Bible. It's all about delighting in God's word. It begins like Psalm 1: **"Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD."** (Psalm 119:1) It goes through each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, relishing God's word. Here are two more verses: **"I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word. My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises."** (Ps 119:147-148)

Have you ever stayed up all night reading the Bible or meditating on it? I remember staying up all night once playing video games. Actually, I heard that a young man died staying up several days playing video games. On a brighter note, one time (again in Russia), because of jet lag, I laid in my bed meditating on God's word, trying to remember even 1 verse from every book of the Bible. It was a delightful exercise. One way to meditate on God's word is to memorize Bible verses. Another idea I just read about is to read the same book of the Bible 20 times through, then the contents really come to heart. It's easiest to begin with short books that can be read in one sitting, like 10 minutes at a time.

It's good to ask yourself: do I delight to open and read God's word or does it seem burdensome, dry, uninteresting or irrelevant? How easy it is to read a newspaper or book or magazine, or to surf the internet, or to watch a movie with great enthusiasm and interest. But how is your heart's attitude to God's word? Can we say like Psalm 42:1-2, **"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"**

Jesus' Parable of the Sower shows varying responses to God's word. Only the path soil rejects God's word; the other 3 types receive it gladly. The problem with the rocky soil is it is too shallow, so it withers in tough times. The problem with the thorny soil is competition from 'other' things—worries, riches and pleasures, which choke out God's word. God's word can be likened to mail in our mailbox. Some regard it as junk mail, and throw it in the garbage without even opening it. Now imagine that you got a personal letter from the President of the USA or the mayor of Chicago. Wouldn't you

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be interested in reading it carefully? Or how about a love letter or a letter from a secret admirer? People are careful to read and savor every word from a love letter, not just once but several times—finding deeper meaning behind the words.

To meditate on God's word with delight is to find new insight and joy in God's word, even in a passage we thought we knew well. God's word to Joshua echoes this sentiment: **“Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”** (Joshua 1:8) To meditate day and night goes beyond thinking about it once a week in church. There are many part-time occasional believers in the world. But there are not many who meditate on God's word day and night. Actually it requires supernatural discipline. Fallen man is driven by things like petty desires and selfish ambition. The question is: how can we have this burning heart's desire to want God more than anything? What we all need is a revival of new life, a new heart, a new love within. I'm not totally sure what each person needs to do, but I can see a few things that have helped me and some Bible verses that address this.

(1) Repent of sin. Ezekiel 18:30-32, **“Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit....For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!”** Romans 13:13-14 says, **“Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.”**

(2) Pray. Jesus told his disciples the Parable of the Persistent Widow to show them that they should always pray and not give up (Lk 18:1). Another time Jesus said, **“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”** (Matthew 7:7) Again, Jesus said, **“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”** (Mark 11:24) And again, **“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,**

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how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13)

(3) Trust in the Lord/Have faith. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5-6) “‘If you can?’” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.” (Mark 9:23)

(4) Press on/Don’t give up. “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14) “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9)

(5) Walk by the Spirit. “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16) “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.” (Romans 8:13)

(6) Put it into practice. One helpful discipline we have in our ministry is sharing testimonies, either written or oral. This enables us to meditate more on God’s word, struggling against our sinful nature in order to live by God’s Spirit and put his word into practice. Jesus said, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24)

These are just some of the ways that we can fan into flame delight in God’s word and experience revival, personally and as a community.

Third, like a tree or like chaff? (3-6)

So what is a blessed person like? Verse 3 tells us: “That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.” Trees don’t thrive in deserts. They thrive next to sources of water, like rivers and lakes. If a person represents a tree, then God’s word represents a river. One who relies on God’s word like a tree relies on water from a river, will bear much good

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fruit. God's word is like a river. Isaiah 55:10-11 says, **"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."** Jesus makes the same promise to bear much fruit, because Jesus is the source of life: **"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."** (John 15:5)

The blessed, righteous person is contrasted with the wicked. The wicked person is not described in this psalm, but Psalm 37 gives a vivid contrast between a righteous and a wicked person. Wicked people hate God and God's people but they will be destroyed. Verse 4 says that the wicked are like chaff that the wind blows away. In contrast to a tree planted by the river, chaff is the useless husk after winnowing grain that the wind blows away. Wicked people have no root or commitment. They are blown here and there by every wind of teaching (Eph 4:14). They will not be able to stand at the time of God's judgment. They cannot be included in the assembly of the righteous. The psalm concludes with a contrast: **"For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction."**

In 1928, the universities in Canada were in spiritual decay. Howard Guinness was a medical student in London, involved in student Christian movement. He had a passion to see people won for Christ. Daily he would whistle hymn songs and witness to Christ on the bus to and from work. When he bought a motorbike he fastened a big sign to it that read, "Prepare to meet thy God." After finishing his medical exams, he decided to go to Canada in October until Easter to revive some student ministry in Canada. He never went back to medicine, exchanging medicine for a lifetime of preaching Christ. On the boat ride across the Atlantic, he led his cabin-mate, an engineer emigrating to Canada, to Christ. He encouraged daily prayer meetings, weekly Bible studies and a huge vision to small groups of students in almost every university he visited. "He went across Canada like a flame of fire; wherever he touched down there came life." ("For Christ and the University," by Keith and Gladys Hunt, p.64). One person who delighted in God's word touched thousands of lives for Christ.

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The fruit of our lives depends on our choices made from our hearts' desires. Moses challenged his people: **“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.”** (Deut 30:19-20a) May God help us by his Spirit to delight in his word and to meditate on it day and night.