

**Priority: Scripture**  
**317 Vision Series**  
**2020**

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Well, welcome! We are for the 317. Today we are talking about our 4<sup>th</sup> priority as a church – Scripture. We’ll be in **Psalm 1**. And as a church we want to delight in Scripture and live it out on a daily basis.

I remember a few weeks ago, I was sitting in my office here at the church, slaving away, when in walk two co-workers who many of you all probably know, but who I will not name... (staff pictures of Caroline Lamkin and Tom Harrigan). What? I said I wouldn’t *name* them. Anyways, I’m working, in they walk and it’s for work-related things, but somehow the conversation turned to Harry Potter. Now, I like Harry Potter, I’ve read all the books, seen all the movies. But these two are all about Harry Potter. And eventually the convo gets to the point where Person 1 is talking about how he has access to all of the Harry Potter books on audio and how that makes “reading” them that much better and then Person B is like all giddy because, I’m not sure.

But it was really eerie because **I’m studying Psalm 1 which says, “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.”** I’m studying that passage, studying *delighting* in God’s law, and here are Person 1 and Person 2 who *walked in*, and then as the subject of Harry Potter ensued, they *stood* around in my office talking about it, and then before I knew it, they had *sat down* on my couch, Person 1’s laptop open, playing audio snippets of the Harry Potter books. I was like, “Oh, wow, sermon illustration!”

Of course this is no big deal, but what’s interesting about all of that though is how, that wasn’t the first time I had heard Tom talk about those Harry Potter audio files. Caroline was just next in the line of people whom Tom wanted to share his delight with. His delight worked its way into his conversations (hey! I’ve got these Harry Potter audio files that are awesome!), his use of his time (listening to the books), his bank account (because he purchased the audio versions), and it landed him all the way in London at King’s Cross Station at this Harry Potter display (picture of Tom in London at Harry Potter display). Okay...funny, I know. But that is the disposition we want to have towards the Scriptures.

I’m not sure what your relationship with Scripture/The Bible are like...

- Maybe you’re like me and you grew up with the bible and you’re **in love**. You can’t get enough.
- Maybe you two have **never met**. If not...well, “Hey there, let me introduce you to Bible.”
- Maybe you’re cool with the Bible and all, but ya know life is busy, the Bible is kinda hard to understand, and to be honest it doesn’t seem all that relevant so your relationship with it is well, kinda **on again, off again**.
- Maybe some of you grew up with the Bible, but as you became a grown up, you came to the Bible with some grown up questions (what about slavery? What about weird Levitical

laws? What about the Bible and science? What about how it was put together?) and your relationship with the Bible was all well and good but as you got to know it a little better now it starts to get on your nerves a little bit, now it's talking about "moving in," now you're finding out some things that you didn't know were there to begin with, and you begin having *constant* disagreements, and now you're getting a little freaked out because *commitment*, and to be honest, **you're having second thoughts**. – which, I totally understand. I've had/have my own questions too.

- Or maybe none of that applies to you and you're just **not interested**. You're a rational person, and I know you think things through, you've just landed on the idea that the Bible is scientifically inaccurate, or historically unreliable, or culturally regressive or maybe all three. You say, "Thanks...but no thanks."

I'm not sure where you and the Scriptures are and I know that this message will not answer all your questions about it. My goal is not to answer all your questions, and in fact, I had so much more I wanted to say today I could have preached a couple of sermons. My goal is, however, to expand upon the idea that, as a church, we want to delight in Scripture and live it out on a daily basis. Here's why.

Let's look at **Psalm 1**. God's people loved the Psalms (a.k.a. ancient poems). In fact, Jesus grew up in a Psalm-soaked world. And people in Jesus' day that followed God *loved* Psalm 1 especially. They loved it because they were always wanting to not just live, but to flourish. They loved Psalm 1 because it expresses what leads to living a blessed and flourishing life. That's what the first five words indicate is going to be expressed: "**Blessed is the man who...**" so as to answer the question: What does it look like to live a blessed, flourishing life?

And as we read, we get the Psalmist's answer...but in the negative. He says in verse 1, "**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...**" Oh, okay...easy. But, wait a second...what does that even mean? What is the counsel of the wicked?

When I was growing up, I would have known exactly what the counsel of the wicked meant. The counsel of the wicked was anyone who told me to have sex before marriage, go out and get drunk, or be an atheist. And there may be truth to that, but I think in our culture, it's more subtle.

All around us online, on TV, through advertisements, in people's conversations, etc, we hear our culture telling us to "acquire more, be more successful, look younger or sexier, and get even with those who hurt you..." And by sheer inundation, the world has a way of convincing us of what a blessed and flourishing life looks like.

I heard one pastor give examples of what the counsel of the wicked would be like in our day. Here's what he said: The counsel of the wicked tells you...

- To live as if it were not true that you are an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's universe.
- To believe as if God is not real or present, active in your life.

- To live as if the outcomes of my life are on my shoulders and I control them, so I must have that constant pressure on my life.
- To live as if satisfying *my* desires and appetites is central to my well-being...and a wise strategy for living.

These are the kinds of things that the writer of this psalm is warning us against. And he's warning us because he knows no one chooses the "not-blessed" life intentionally. It happens gradually to that person as they are pulled in by the world around them.

Notice the progression. First, you are shaped mentally by *walking* in and around the "counsel" of those around you...but then you begin to conform. Now, you're no longer *walking* in the counsel of the wicked, you begin to hang out for a moment – you're *standing there*. And after a while, you move from standing...to *sitting*. And, when I sit down, I'm not going anywhere.

Here's what the psalmist wants us to realize: **You either live by default or by design**. And the psalmist is saying that just to drift, to live by default, is disaster...Just like how one just *drifts* when they're playing in the ocean without ever realizing it.

The crazy thing about all of this, is that NONE of us makes choices to intentionally walk down a path that we know would not lead to our flourishing. We make decisions that we think will lead to a blessed life.

I remember traveling to Kenya and how we'd always have a layover in Paris, France in the Charles de Gaulle airport. Walking through a place like that I began to realize that CDG has a *vision* for what my life should look like – they are purporting to me what the good, happy, and blessed life is. When you get off the plane, you walk through an area with lots of duty-free stores selling all kinds of things: perfume, macarons, wine, etc. And you're surrounded by the likes of Gucci, Prada, Chanel, Salvatore Ferragamo, and more.

So, I began by just walking through the airport. But eventually, I stopped and decided to mosey on over to one of the stores because, ya know, I am immune to any cultural pull on my life (because I'm a pastor). When I entered this boujee store I got this look from the store manager that was like, "You can't afford *any of this*..." But I ignored her and eventually found myself standing over a pair of shoes. And I went over to look at these shoes and was like "Oh wow, these are nice." So I went from walking through the airport, to standing in the store, to now wanting to ask the store manager if I could sit down to try them on. I picked up the shoes to go ask for my size and as I did, I wondered what the price was on those bad boys because ya know, maybe I'll get a pair...a souvenir...from *France*...I looked at the tag. Nope.

So, I slowly, reverently, put those puppies back on the shelf and backed away slowly to leave the store, trying to avoid eye contact with the French lady managing the store who was giving me this look like, "Mmhmm zat is what I thought." She didn't say that, but her eyes did.

What's interesting is that everything around me was telling me that the blessed life necessitated the purchase of those shoes. I could *logically* and *rationaly* tell you that that wasn't the case, but the stories that the world tells us weren't trying to convince my brain...they were working on my

heart. And they pulled me in without me even really being conscious of it. It happens all the time!

But we know...that buying the thing, putting all our hopes in a person, foregoing the wisdom we find in God's Word only leads us to hurt, dashed hopes, and heartache.

And so the Psalmist is telling us that there are two paths: You can either live life by **walking, standing, sitting** in the way of the world. Or, you can be like the blessed person who is characterized as someone who takes an alternative route.

The psalmist writes, **“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”** The psalmist says, “No, no, no...the *blessed* person isn't the person who goes the way of the world...the blessed person is the person who is shaped by, **delights in**, and **meditates on** God's law!

Now, why “delight?” The Psalmist says, **“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...”** Why is the *blessed* person the one who *delights* in God's law? I think it's because the psalmist knows that what you delight in, determines the rest of your life. What you delight in will determine where you walk, it will determine where you stand, and it will determine where you sit. Delight is a function of the heart. And your heart determines everything about you.

- If you delight in a hobby, take photography for example, you will be moved to buy the equipment, buy a nice camera, spend time taking photos, spend time editing photos, and so on.
- If you delight in a sports team, you'll be moved to watch every game, see them in person, buy their gear, and teach your kids about supporting them!
- If you delight in your kids, your life will revolve around getting them to practices, taking them on trips they want to go on, buying them the latest and greatest, etc.

Which is why the psalmist's words are so contrarian. Instead of delighting in the way of the world, he says if you want to live a blessed or flourishing life then you will delight in God's law.

This word **law** can have several connotations but it's being used here in a general sense to talk about aligning yourself with the Scriptures and what they reveal about the way things are in our world – reality itself.

Now, you may be asking, “Well, what if I just don't like the Bible? It's hard to understand! It's weird!” And so on...I get that. But I also know that we can delight in things that challenge our thinking and we can also delight in things we don't fully understand.

Think of a great work of fiction or a really good piece of art or even a person you delight in. They may say or do things that may shock you or they may say or do things you don't fully understand...BUT you can still delight in them. OFTEN, it's because those people, books, or

works of art challenge us and are hard that we in fact *do* delight in them. The same is true with the Scriptures.

This year I've been challenged by, delighted in, been encouraged with 1 Kings and 2 Kings, Luke's gospel, James, Romans, and even Leviticus. Yes...you heard that right. And it's because I've found what's in here not only interesting, but also challenging that I've come to delight in it so much.

So, we should delight in Scripture. But just delighting isn't enough. The Psalmist also expects his readers to meditate on them day and night. As the Psalmist says in verse 2, **“His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”**

To **“meditate”** literally means “to mutter or to speak quietly to yourself” – the idea being that for the rest of your life, you slowly, prayerfully read the Bible out loud to yourself and as you do, you talk about what you're reading with others and as you do, you make sense of the puzzles, you make connections, you discover what it all means, and you begin to live it out.

Which reminds me of Lauren Reece. Lauren is a member of our Shelby St. campus and she has an incredible story of coming to delight in God's Word in a new way recently even though she had grown up with the Word all her life. Take a look. (video of Lauren Reece)

Isn't that great?

Now, I want you to see something...look at the result of delighting in and meditating on the Scriptures according to the psalmist: **Psalm 1:3, “He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”** Contrast this with the not-blessed person who the psalmist describes as one who he later depicts as someone who is **“like chaff that the wind drives away...”** and who will not **“stand in the judgment”**, who will not be in the **“congregation of the righteous”**, and who ultimately will **“perish”**.

We want to be a place that is for the 317. But we cannot do that if we are not living and breathing God's Word...if we aren't allowing the Word of God to be sown into our hearts to sprout into tangible acts of love. We can't do that if we are blown about by the winds of culture and if we are tossed to and fro by the storms of circumstance. No, we need to stand on this what God has given us in and through the words on these pages, what God does in and through this story to **shape us, root us, and form us** to become like Jesus. As a church, we want to delight in Scripture and live it out on a daily basis.

The Scriptures are not arbitrary. We have this book for a reason. We want to be a church that delights in Scripture and lives it out on a daily basis because we believe that when we do we'll be shaped into the kind of people that look, live, and love like Jesus – firmly rooted, yielding fruit, never withering, always prospering.

Prayer.