

In the Habit of Dwelling

Psalm 1:1-3

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WELCOME TO WORSHIP

We're in a worship series that we're calling: "In The Habit." We're exploring discipleship habits and practices that connect us more deeply with God in ways that shape our lives into Christ's likeness. Today we're exploring how being "In The Habit" of "Dwelling in the Scriptures" is a powerful habit that roots us in Christ and enables us to bear fruit in daily life (Psalm 1).

A year ago as school systems were coming to grips with new ways of teaching and students were exploring new ways to learn, our granddaughters were part of a small group of students whose teacher was able to incorporate spiritual practices into their learning. One of the most remarkable things that came out of that experience was how our granddaughters learned to journal scripture.

For a short period of time every day or two, the students would choose a passage from scripture, a Bible story, and simply write it out – word for word. Not only were they working on their writing habits and penmanship skills, but they were learning scripture. Journaling scripture word for word – a way of getting them into God's word so that God's word would get into them.

Today we're talking about being "In The Habit" of "Dwelling in God's Word." We'll be taking a look at Psalm 1. And as we do that, we're asking This Week's One Big Question: As apprentices of Jesus, how will we dwell in God's Word in a way that helps that Word dwell in us?

MESSAGE

I'm so glad you're here for this... Welcome to worship! Pharrell Williams's song, "Happy," is one of the most successful songs ever recorded. If you've seen the movie, *Despicable Me 2*, or listened to the soundtrack, then you probably have a good idea why it's such a great tune! "Happy" was first released about 8 years ago on November 21, 2013. Within three weeks the song began peaking at #1 in United States, the United

Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and 19 other countries. Within eight months of its debut, "Happy" had sold 12 million copies worldwide, becoming one of the best-selling singles of all time. Not only that, but it was also nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Song but lost to another catchy little tune, "Let It Go," from *Frozen*, a movie about a really unhappy childhood. But I digress.

Pharrell's song is popular because it so profoundly resonates with people's lives. It invites the listeners to be happy in the midst of everything. The song was certainly timely; a few months after its release, USA Today published a study revealing that upwards of 70% of people polled were unhappy with their jobs. And then last year during the pandemic, a survey commissioned by the University of Chicago found that Americans are the unhappiest they've been in 50 years. It's like people are frozen in unhappiness. So let me ask you, are you happy?

We all have an idea of what creates happiness: getting something we don't already have, making more money, being close to family, good health, boating, golfing, eating, hiking, driving a new car, having more technology, going on a vacation. We've all got our own version of what brings happiness. It's no surprise that people have been seeking happiness since the beginning of time. And since the beginning of time, God has had a lot of things to say about happiness. In the ancient language of the Bible, happiness is defined in a lot of ways. Happiness is being content, joyful, peaceful, full of gladness. Biblically speaking, the most common word for happy is "blessed." The bottom line on all of this is that however we translate the word, from a biblical perspective, being "happy" is connected to just one thing: being in relationship with God. Being in relationship with God that brings happiness. And the more that relationship is nurtured and developed, the happier we are.

We're in a worship series that we're calling In the Habit. We're exploring discipleship habits that connect us more deeply with God in ways that shape our lives into Christ's likeness. Today, we're exploring how being in the habit of dwelling in the scriptures is a powerful habit that roots us in Christ and enables us to bear fruit in our daily lives.

When Jesus calls us to follow him, he's calling us to an apprenticeship. An apprentice is someone who watches the master, and then does what the master does. At first, it's awkward and the work is imperfect.

But with enough practice, an apprentice develops skills that become habits. At first, challenging and requiring concentration, the work over time, and with training, becomes effortless. This principle holds true in so many areas of our lives. You want to get better at tennis? Practice the basics until they become habits. You want to play the piano well? Practice the basics until they become habits. You want to become a more fruitful follower of Jesus? Practice the basics until they become habits. In our series on habits, we want to lift up the habits that help us become more like Jesus. And this is probably more important now than ever – mainly because we’re living in such a challenging time when people are so unhappy. And that brings us to Psalm 1.

So I’d like to do this together. I’d like to wonder how becoming apprentices of God’s Word, God’s law, God’s direction, and God’s guidance will impact our lives. What I want to do is to read this Psalm for us, make a couple of observations, and then suggest three habits that you can practice that will help you grow as an apprentice of Jesus. Psalm 1:1-3 (NRSV).

¹ Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; ² but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. ³ They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

This is the Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Well, a few observations. First, Psalm 1 is what is called a Wisdom Psalm. It provides practical, spiritual guidance and timeless wisdom that is as relevant today as it was when it was first written centuries before Jesus was born. If you have a study Bible at home, the topic heading for Psalm 1 is likely “The Two Ways.” One way, the Way of God’s Law—or God’s Word is the way of happiness and leads to life and more life. The other way, the Way of Wickedness (which, c’mon now, you’ve just got to admit is a wonderfully juicy biblical word!) is the way that leads to destruction and death. The psalm writer is saying that those who are NOT in a relationship with God are not happy—they are unwise. But those who are in a relationship with God are happy; they are wise.

Second, Psalm 1 describes the happiness of an apprentice of Jesus as someone who meditates or reads about or thinks about or talks about what God has to say through God’s Word. And God is always speaking through the Word. This is someone who sets

a habit, practices, and figuratively chews on the words of God. This word of God feeds, and refreshes, and enables apprentices of God to live full, thriving, fruitful lives. The purpose of getting into God’s Word is so that God’s Word will get into us.

Third, an apprentice of Jesus is happy because that person delights in the teaching of God. The phrase, the Law of the Lord, is a reference to the Hebrew “Torah” (the first five books of the Bible) which is essentially a collection of “instructions” or “teachings.” Those who delight in what God says through scripture, these teachings, are blessed. They are happy to delight in that law, in that instruction, that teaching of the Lord.

Psalm 1 describes the happiness of those who find delight in the law of the Lord: those who do not follow the advice of the wicked (verse 1); the person whose delight is in meditating on the law of the Lord (verse 2), and that person’s life will be like a tree, cultivated and cared for under the best circumstances so that it never fails to produce fruit (verse 3).

Thinking about this week’s one big question as apprentices of Jesus, “How will we dwell in God’s Word in a way that helps that word dwell in us?” I’m going to give you three different ways of making dwelling a habit: journaling Psalm 1, praying Psalm 1, and watching for Psalm 1. First, Journaling.

Journaling Psalm 1

Not everyone is a journaler, I get it. But you know, this kind of journaling is pretty straight forward. Let me explain how it goes.

First, read the whole passage, paying attention to the words or phrases that stand out. And then just write down what you notice.

Second, identify words or phrases that you particularly connect with. Like when you read the passage, you find yourself saying, “That’s my experience!” or “Wow, I totally get that!”

Third, write down the words or phrases that do not make sense to you, things you may understand, or maybe even things you disagree with.

Finally, write a few sentences about your interaction with the Psalm. That’s how you journal a psalm.

Praying Psalm 1

Second, another way, praying Psalm 1. Another way to dwell in God’s Word is to pray God’s Word. As you read Psalm 1, you can use a translation that works for you. The Message Bible is a great version to use for praying scripture, but you can use just about any translation that’s meaningful to you. But as you do that, use your imagination to rewrite the Psalm in your own words.

Here's how I might do that:

Verse 1: Lord, I know I am happiest, I'm truly blessed when I am following you—when I'm looking for you, when I'm seeking you instead of following after other things.

Verse 2: God, your Word is delightful. Make your Word my delight. Make my delight your Word. Help me always to find my delight in you.

Verse 3: God, your ways are sure and strong and provide a sturdy foundation—your ways bring guidance in all things.

Friends, you get to use your God-given creativity to reimagine the passage as a prayer. There's no right or wrong way to pray, honestly. You get to use the inspiration that God breathes into you, using the words that seem right for you, as you dwell in the Word.

Watching for Psalm 1

And then third, watching for Psalm 1. This is really engaging. Watch for reminders of Psalm 1 for each day. We've read the first 3 verses of Psalm 1. So for each day this next week, read just one verse in the morning. Memorize it if you want. Then as you move through the day, watch for real life examples of that verse during the day. For instance, tomorrow read verse 1.

- Verse 1: *"Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers..."*

Watch for people around you making wise decisions, watch for people who are asking for help from trusted family and friends. And then notice how that impacts their lives. You might do that for a couple of days. On another day, read verse 2.

- Verse 2: *"their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night."*

What you do is you pay attention to people that you may know that have a daily practice of reading their Bible. Ask them about their habit, what works, what is helpful. Do they use a schedule? How does daily meditation create blessing in their lives and in the lives of others around them? Again, you can do this for a couple of days; just dwell in that. Then, one more day, read verse 3.

- Verse 3: *"They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper."*

I love the line, "Like trees planted by streams of water..." What a lovely image. Who do you know who is like this? What are the habits that they have set into place that help them become like this?

Well, that's some good stuff...did you get all of that? At the end of our service today I'm going to provide you with a link to a guide that we've created for you that will lead you through all of these different methods, step by step, ways of making dwelling a habit: journaling Psalm 1, praying Psalm 1 and watching for Psalm 1.

I keep thinking back to those images of our granddaughters carefully reading scripture in their Bibles, and then writing the words of scripture in their journals. The act of doing that over and over again is part of their apprenticeship; part of them learning to be more like Jesus. I can only imagine how that practice will be part of their lives for a long, long time.

Link for the guide:

<https://popmn.org/downloadgrid/in-the-habit-of-dwelling-sept-18-19/>