

*Day Four*

In Psalm 1, the psalmist says that the blessed or enviable person is who “delights” in the law of the LORD. What is conveyed in using the word “delight” that might be lost if the psalmist had simply said something like, “but he spends some time in Scripture,” or “he reads his Bible,” or even, “he knows a number of Bible stories”?

Let’s look a little closer at this idea of “delight.” There are a number of words in the Old Testament that can convey the idea of “having great favor towards something.” This particular word, conveying that idea of having great favor about or for something, also carries the sense of genuine emotional involvement; this is delight that is flavored by real joy, both in attitude and conduct. †

How do the following passages help you grasp what is conveyed by this word “delight”?

Genesis 34:19:

1 Samuel 18:22:

Although the above passages picture a delight anchored simply in what is personally pleasing, they do capture the idea of the word: *having great favor for something with real joy*. Grasping this idea, how does it shape your understanding of the “blessed” person in Psalm 1 who “delights” in the Scriptures?

The truth is, there are times when the friends of God really don’t seem to have much delight in His Word. If you are not really feeling delight, what could you ask the Lord to do for you? What do you really need if you are not feeling delight in His Word?

God intends for our relationship with Him to not simply have impact on our behavior (although it will), but on our affections and our desires as well. The person who lives like a fruitful tree is not one who simply *does the right things* but who *delights in the right delights*. And those delights come as God works on our hearts and as we come to experience the joy that can be found in life with Him. So, ask for, pursue, and anticipate finding your delight in God and in His Word.

†Drawing on *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 330.

*Day Five*

At the heart of Psalm 1 is a picture of someone whose heart is captured by the right things and who settles down there, in God and in His Word. That is the blessed life, the enviable life. That picture is also found in Jesus’ own teaching as well.

Read Matthew 5:1-12. Here we also meet those who are “blessed;” and, again, the idea is those who are experiencing the enviable life.

As you reflect on these “beatitudes,” fundamentally is Jesus giving a list of “to-do’s”? Why or why not?

Where do you see the idea of heart or desire or delight reflected in Jesus’ language?

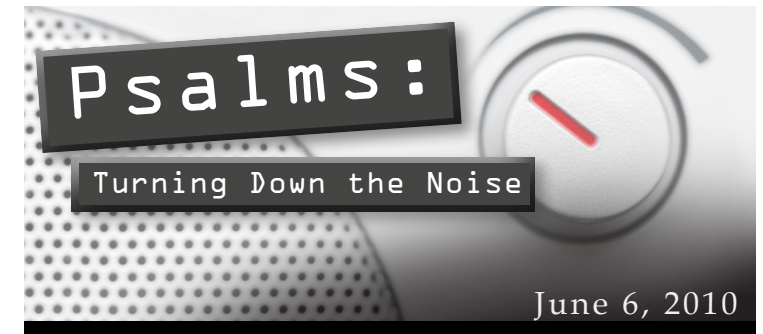
How is the idea of “being planted” (as found in Psalm 1) reflected in the language of these beatitudes?

What other similar ideas or common “feel” do you discern between Psalm 1 and Matthew 5?

Both the beatitudes and Psalm 1 include something for us to give ourselves to--something, in some sense, to do--even though neither Jesus’ sermon nor the first Psalm is a set of instructions. They are both invitations to a kind of life.

Talk to the Lord about the kind of life pictured in both places. Where are you tasting this kind of life? When do you feel dry or parched or dissatisfied?

What would you like to see happen in your soul so that you, too, could more richly live in this “blessed” life, this enviable life?



*Day One*

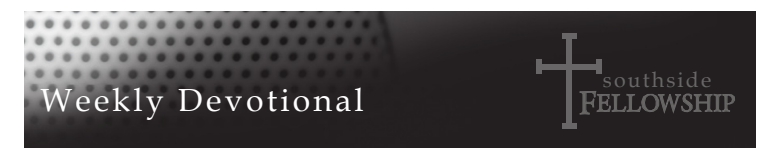
We are going to be reading and exploring the Psalms together this summer. Our intention is to uncover ways to “turn down the noise” that clutters our minds and our souls to better hear and enjoy and follow the Lord. And the Psalms, as expressions of the heart of a worshipper of God, help us in this process.

But we need to recognize that Psalms are not like the narrative passages of Scripture we find in Genesis or in the Gospels. Nor are they exactly like the instructions we find in the New Testament epistles or the exhortations we uncover in the Old Testament prophets. Let’s think a bit about just what a *psalm* is and what characterizes Psalms, so that we can be better readers of these wonderful words.

Psalms, basically, are the poetic expressions of a heart caught up with the living God. Sometimes, the cry of the heart comes out with an ache, sometimes with a cheer. But, we need to recognize that the Psalms are *heart expressions* (with all the imagery and emotive language that such expressions use) and they are *poetic expressions* (with all the stylized language appropriate to poetry).

Old Testament poetry is not built upon a rhyming structure as is English poetry. What characterizes Old Testament poetry is *parallelism*. Parallelism is where one line of the Psalm builds on, in some way, what precedes. Sometimes the parallel thought is nearly identical, sometimes it is substantially in stark contrast, and sometimes it embellishes or adds to the prior line.

For example, read Psalm 19:1-4.



Where do you detect some sort of parallelism in the first verse?  
What about the second verse?

In referring to the “heavens declaring” and “the sky above proclaiming,” the psalmist is not speaking about two different things. He is using parallel ideas to make one point. When, in verse two, the psalmist speaks of what happens “day to day” and then what happens “night to night,” he is not specifically making a distinction between what God reveals at night versus what He reveals in the daytime. He is using parallel ideas to make one point.

What is the point underscored by verses one and two?

This Psalm also gives us a good glimpse of the emotive or figurative language common to the Psalms. In what way do the heavens “declare” and the sky “proclaim” and does “speech pour out” from creation?

Like the lyrics of a song, where the emotive language and the patterns and rhymes are intended to appeal to the emotions and stir the heart, so the Psalms are designed to reach us on that level. While Psalms do contain truth and are wrapped around good doctrine, they are not primarily expositions of truths so much as they are invitations to and pictures of heart-felt response.

Read back over the first four verses of Psalm 19. Try to enter into the “flavor” of the music of those verses. What reaches your heart? What stirs in your soul as you reflect on those words?

Think about the difference between a business memo sent to a co-worker and a love note you might send to your sweetheart. Although both convey information, the way the information is conveyed and the intent behind the message differs. With that idea in mind, what do you think the Spirit intends for you to take away from the opening verses of Psalm 19? Why?

### *Day Two*

Let's turn our attention to a specific Psalm. Read Psalm 1.

What parallelism do you see in this Psalm? (Note where one thought seems to build on or embellish or clarify another.)

In the first two verses of this Psalm, there is a contrast. What is the core of that contrast?

To speak of someone as “blessed” is to identify him or her as someone to be appropriately envied. The “blessed” person is one who is living the desirable life. Clearly the contrast in these opening verses is between someone who is living right and someone who is not. But why does the psalmist not simply say something like: “Do good stuff, don't do bad stuff”? What is the impact on you of speaking of the “blessed” person?

As the psalmist turns to describing this enviable life, he uses some rich imagery in verses 3 and 4. What is pictured here?

Why do you think the psalmist uses imagery of fruit trees and fruitfulness (and fruitlessness in verse 4) rather than simply saying something like: “Life goes better for you if you do the right things”?

In the last two verses, the psalmist indicates that the LORD (notice, that the psalmist is using God's personal name) “knows” the way of the righteous. When he speaks of “knowing,” it is much more than just awareness. The word speaks of a personal, intimate, relationally-based knowing. What is being driven home through this language?

Write a “refrain” to this song. Capture, in a few words, the essence of the life of the “blessed” person as pictured here.

### *Day Three*

In Psalm 1, the psalmist tells us that the blessed person who delights and meditates on the Scriptures is like a “tree planted by streams of water” (1:3). What is the connection between the ideas of meditating on Scripture and a tree with roots reaching down to a stream?

Why would the imagery of a tree planted by a stream be a better metaphor for a life influenced by Scripture than, for example, the image of a potted plant that got watered from time to time?

That image of a planted tree pictures a regular and constant nourishment. That is part of what is conveyed by the idea of meditation. Meditating on Scripture is more than merely reading a verse or few in the morning (or in the evening, depending on your schedule!). The root word refers to an under-the-breath kind of mumbling or growling (sometimes used of the growling of a lion as in Isaiah 31:4). It pictures something like a subtle, continual, speaking to oneself; thus an ongoing personal dialogue with oneself.

How do the following passages fill in the picture of what this word “meditating” conveys?

Psalm 63:5-6:

Psalm 77:11-12:

Psalm 143:5-6:

Meditating on Scripture, on the works of the Lord, and on God Himself is not so much a thing to do but a way of thinking. As our minds and hearts are immersed in God and His Word, who He is and what He has to say to us begins to fill our hearts and minds. Meditating is the ongoing internal “conversation” we carry on about Him and His Word and with Him about His Word. How have you experienced that dimension of life with God?

Write out Psalm 1. Carry it with you today. When you have a pause in the busy-ness of the day, reread the Psalm. Think about the words; talk to yourself about what you are reading; discuss with God what He is saying to you. In other words, practice meditating.