

Pre-Praying for 2021, part 1
Insights from Psalm 1
Pastor Bob Johnson, January 17th, 2021

Two Potential Hindrances To Our Prayers:

1. D _____ “What about that?”
2. I _____ “What about them?”

Two Helpful Keys from Psalm 1:

- A Practice:

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. Psalm 1:1-2 (ESV)

“law” (torah) comes from “yarah” : “to throw something like a javelin”

- A Picture:

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. Psalm 1:3 (ESV)

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. Psalm 137:1 (ESV)

How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? Psalm 137:4 (ESV)

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.
Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NLT)

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This Week's Discussion Guide:

Welcome to week 1 of our first small group season for 2021!! It is our prayer at GPC for our Sundays and small groups to provide the encouragement we all need to support each other as we desire to grow closer to God and build friendships in the coming weeks. This small group season will be for 10 weeks and wrap up the week of March 21st. For the next two weeks we'll be studying and discussing some insights found in Psalm 1 and 2. After that, we'll be taking a look at the second half of the Book of Daniel. God gave Daniel some visions and dreams that were helpful back then and are still helpful for us today as we strive to understand more of God's larger story He is inviting us to be part of.

Getting Started:

For our first week, let's spend some time catching up and getting to know each other. During this crazy, long, stretching season of social distancing that we are still in, what is something new that you have chosen to start doing or something you have decided to get a little better at?

Bob talked a little about javelin throwing as we studied Psalm chapter 1. Speaking of throwing something, what are some memories you have of throwing something (good or bad) that you have?

In Psalm 1, we are encouraged to imagine a picture of a tree planted by streams of water. Speaking of pictures, what is one of your favorite pictures you took or someone else took and why?

Here is an accountability question :). During this covid-19 season, we all know we ought to exercise. What have you been doing for exercise these past months ... or what do you plan to do for exercise as this new year is starting out?

Quick Review:

Let's re-read Psalm 1:1-3. From these verses and Sunday's message, and looking back at your notes, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged you, encouraged you, or stretched your thinking?

Digging Deeper:

Psalm 1 encourages us to be less distracted when we pursue a time of prayer with a practice and with a picture.

The practice is meditating on God's Word and allowing God's Word to focus our thoughts and prompt certain prayers based on what we read.

Psalm 1 talks about one being 'blessed' who meditates on God's Word.

Let's spend some time practicing the habit of meditating on God's Word as we reflect on Matthew 5:1-12.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

(Matthew 5:1-12, ESV)

In this passage, Jesus describes eight experiences (the last one is repeated again in Matthew 5:11-12) that lead to being blessed. Let's each read the passage slowly several times and try to linger on each of the words and be open to what God wants to illuminate or emphasize.

Let's share with each other any insight or question that we had from this time of meditating on God's Word.

Which one or two of these statements most encouraged you?
Which one of these do you have more questions about?

Let's spend some time in prayer based on these verses that we meditated on.

In Psalm 1:3, a picture of a tree planted by streams of water is emphasized. As we meditate on God's Word on a regular basis, and choose to live in light of the insights God reveals to us, we will be like this tree that yields fruit in its season.

We like most trees, don't blossom year round. The tree described in Psalm 1 yields fruit in certain seasons although even when it doesn't seem to be budding, it's leaves continue to show life.

There are times when we are faithful to God (showing life), but it is difficult to recognize much fruit. In those times, what can help us choose to persevere and continue to be faithful with what God has called us to while we wait for fruit to sprout?

God desires praying to be a priority for His people. What are some thoughts related to prayer that have helped you develop a growing prayer life? What are some questions you have related to prayer that we can discuss?

Let's spend some time in prayer for each other with any other needs that we would like to share.