

Psalms 1–2 and Private Bible Intake (or Bible Interaction)

Prayer

Introductory Questions

- How do you interact with the Bible *privately* during a typical week (including reading through the Bible, Bible study, Bible meditation, and/or Bible memorization)?
- What obstacles interfere with your private Bible intake?

Introduction

Psalms 1–2 introduce the entire book of Psalms, which contains 150 psalms from ancient Israel. Psalm 1 *begins* with the happiness (or blessedness) of those who turn away from evil and delight themselves in the LORD’s instruction (Ps. 1:1–2). Psalm 2 *ends* with the happiness (or blessedness) of those who take refuge in God’s Son (Ps. 2:12). These two psalms (and the book of Psalms) encourage us to look to the LORD, his Word, and his Son for happiness in God—now and forever. Why must we prioritize God’s Word (both privately or publicly)?

- **God’s Word is essential to know about God, his ways, and his will:** “29 The hidden things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).
- **God’s Word is essential for knowing God personally and living with him forever:** “13 In him [Jesus] you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed” (Eph. 1:13).
- **God’s Word is essential for standing firm against demonic attacks:** “16 In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit—which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:16–17).
- **God’s Word is essential for expressing love for God:** “2 This is how we know that we love God’s children: when we love God and obey his commands. 3 For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands...” (1 John 5:2–3).
- **God’s Word is essential for ministering to others:** “16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

We explore Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 below: (1) The Two Paths of the Godly and the Wicked (Ps. 1) and (2) The Two Responses to the LORD and his Anointed One (Ps. 2). We conclude this lesson by summarizing the habits of private Bible intake.

1. The Two Paths of the Godly and the Wicked

- “1 How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! 2 Instead, his delight is in the LORD’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night.” (Ps. 1:1–2)
- “3 He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. 4 The wicked are not like this; instead, they are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand up in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.” (Ps. 1:3–5)
- “6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.” (Ps. 1:6)

Verses 1–2 describe the happy state and behaviors of a godly person. Such people are “happy” in God (or favored by God) and delight in his Word. They are first described by *what they don’t do*. They do not “walk” or “stand” or “sit” with unrepentant, persistent sinners (v. 1). This is a picture of someone’s life grinding down to a settled state of pleasure in sin, which is always accompanied by a desire to be free from God’s rule (Ps. 2:1–3). Instead, godly people delight themselves in “the LORD’s [Yahweh] instruction,” found, in this context, in what we call the Old Testament (v. 2). For Christians, his instruction includes the New Testament as well (2 Tim. 3:16). Godly people “meditate” on the Word—focus on it, reflect on it, consider how to obey it—day and night (v. 2), because it makes them happy and secure in God (v. 1).

Verses 3–5 contrast the state of the godly and the wicked (both currently and in the future), in light of how they view and respond to God through his Word (vv. 1–2). Godly people are like trees planted beside flowing streams (which provide life and health), which bear fruit (the positive outcomes of godly living), and whose leaves do not wither in the heat (healthy and stable in times of hardship) (v. 3). They holistically prosper in their life with God. The wicked, however, are not spiritually alive, fruitful, or resilient; they are like chaff (the husks of grains) blown away by the wind (v. 4). “The wicked will not stand up” in the judgment: they will not be forgiven or vindicated, and they will be put down and condemned by God (v. 5). Nor will wicked people find themselves in the assembly of the righteous at the end of the age (v. 5).

Verse 6 provides a final contrast: “The Lord has intimate knowledge and experience of the way of all “righteous” persons (the word is now plural); the flip side is that the way of the wicked leads to destruction” (*NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, 877). The way of the righteous is eternal: “11 You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures” (Ps. 16:11). The future of the wicked will be ruined: “38 But transgressors will all be eliminated; the future of the wicked will be destroyed” (Ps. 37:38). Apart from God’s grace in Christ, this is the destination and destruction we all deserve.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are so many people indifferent or hostile toward God and his Word? • To what extent are you happy in God’s Word? How can we develop that quality? |
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2. The Two Responses to the LORD and his Anointed One

- “1 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers conspire together against the LORD and his Anointed One: 3 “Let’s tear off their chains and throw their ropes off of us.”” (Ps. 2:1–3)
- “4 The one enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord ridicules them. 5 Then he speaks to them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath: 6 “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.”” (Ps. 2:4–6)
- “7 I will declare the LORD’s decree. He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You will break them with an iron scepter; you will shatter them like pottery.”” (Ps. 2:7–9)
- “10 So now, kings, be wise; receive instruction, you judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with reverential awe and rejoice with trembling. 12 Pay homage to the Son or he will be angry and you will perish in your rebellion, for his anger may ignite at any moment. All who take refuge in him are happy.” (Ps. 2:10–12)

Verses 1–3 describe rebellious nations taking a stand against the LORD (Yahweh) and his Anointed One (the Davidic King). The psalmist highlights the nations’ raging (hate-filled opposition) and plotting (scheming/meditating to rebel against and oppose God; cf. 1:2 where the godly “meditate” on the LORD’s instruction, *NIV/BSB*, 878) (v. 1). The nations’ leaders take their stand (cf. 1:5!) and conspire against God and his Anointed One—who originally referred to the king of Israel, but ultimately points to Jesus, the Anointed One (Messiah/Christ) (v. 2; cf. Acts 4:25–26). The rulers are evil, illogical, and suicidal: they view the LORD and his Anointed as slave owners, and they long to be free from their rule (v. 3).

Verses 4–6 describe the Lord’s reign in heaven and his response. He laughs and ridicules the wicked, worldwide rebellion (v. 4). In anger and wrath, he speaks words that should terrify the nations (v. 5). God has installed his king in Zion (Jerusalem), who would enforce God’s laws and bring God’s judgment (v. 6).

Verses 7–9 describe the LORD’s decree, which is why the nations should be terrified. God has made the Anointed One his Son—a functional category that speaks to his authority from God (v. 7). The LORD has made the nations his inheritance and the earth his possession (v. 8). The Son will rule the nations with an iron scepter and shatter them like pottery (v. 9).

Verses 10–12 describe how the nations should respond. If wise, they should receive instruction (v. 10). They should serve the LORD with awe and rejoice in trembling (v. 11). And they should pay homage to the Anointed One/King/Son, or he will be angry and destroy them (v. 12). Happy (or favored by God) are all who take refuge in God’s Son (v. 12). These realities find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus (Acts 4:25–26; 13:33; Heb. 1:5; Rev. 2:26, 27; 19:15).

- How do the nations express rebellion against the LORD and his Anointed/Son?
- How does this psalm instruct us (both what *not to do* and what *to do*)?

Sound Doctrine: Private Bible Intake

Psalm 1:2 describes the happy/favored person as someone who delights in the LORD’s instruction—which includes private and public dimensions. As a key part of your plan to grow in your love for and knowledge of the Bible, consider buying a quality study Bible—such as the *ESV Study Bible*, the *CSB Study Bible*, or the *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*. These Bibles contain detailed introductions and study notes for each book of the Bible. Below we outline five ways to engage with the Bible privately:

1. **Read through the entire Bible.** When speaking to the Ephesian elders, Paul said he “did not avoid declaring...*the whole plan [or counsel] of God*” (Acts 20:27), and Paul told Timothy that “*All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable*” (2 Tim. 3:16). God has spoken and continues to speak to us through each part of the Bible. And reading the entire Bible continually reinforces essential parts of a Christian worldview—such as God as the Creator, Lord, and Provider; humanity’s fall into sin and our worthiness of judgment; redemption in and through Jesus’s death and resurrection; and the nature of obeying God. In fifteen minutes a day, you can read through each book of the Bible in a year.
2. **Study the Bible.** The priest and scribe Ezra is an excellent model for us to follow: “10 Now Ezra had determined in his heart to study the law of the LORD, obey it, and teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). While most of us will not teach the Bible publicly on a consistent basis, all of us have opportunities to explain God’s Word. Studying the Bible can be as simple as reading the notes in a study Bible or reading a commentary (such as one from *The Bible Speaks Today* series) to gain more understanding.
3. **Memorize the Bible.** The psalmist said, “11 I have treasured [or hidden] your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you” (Ps. 119:11). Choose passages of Scripture to memorize that are particularly meaningful to you and carry them with you to memorize during the day. For example, when you are afraid, you can recite verses such as Isaiah 41:10: “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand.” See truth78.org/products/fighter-verses-pack for an excellent resource.
4. **Meditate on the Bible.** As we studied in this lesson, the godly person delights “in the LORD’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night” (Ps. 1:2). To meditate on God’s Word means that we focus on it, reflect on its meaning, and consider how to obey it.
5. **Obey the Bible.** James wrote that we should “be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). “Doing the word” will require that we both stop what we shouldn’t be doing (sins of commission) and start what we aren’t doing (sins of omission). Whether the Word of God addresses our desires, thoughts, words, actions, or emotions, the primary way we express our love for God is by doing what he says.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What comments and questions do you have about this lesson? • What is one thing you can do in response to this lesson? |
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Prayer