



## The Psalms (Part 1) – Rooted in the Word

Trevor Joy – May 19, 2019

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How are we doing? If you came in after announcements, my name is Trevor Joy. I'm one of the pastors here on staff, and I get the privilege this morning of leading us into our next sermon series where we're going to be this summer. We are going to spend the summer in the Psalms. Myself, JT, and Josh are primarily going to be teaching. There are going to be a few other guys as well. We're going to be teaching of course not through *all* of the psalms. That would be a lot longer than a sermon series throughout the summer, but we *are* going to preach through a selected group of psalms.

The title for this series is *The Story of God Through the Songs of His People*. I'm going to give a brief introduction to the book of Psalms this morning before we jump into our first one. Believe it or not, we're going to start in Psalm 1. We're going to start right in the beginning. I'm going to give a brief introduction, but just so you know, the introduction is going to somewhat be ongoing throughout the summer.

As we'll see more in a minute, as we get into the Psalms and we get to different books of the Psalms that have different themes, different genres, different makeups, there's going to be somewhat of an ongoing introduction as we kind of understand and get our heads wrapped around, our hands around this book and all that's in it.

The Psalms particularly are so much more unique than any other book, because they're the hymnbook for Israel's worship of God. Because they were not just read or studied but prayed and sung, they've always carried a unique role in the formation of God's people. They weren't only used to facilitate worship but to teach them God's redemptive story.

These psalms are so deeply embedded into the hearts and minds of God's people. When Christ made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as we see in Mark 11, the people began to sing. They'd rehearsed this before. They'd seen this before, and they began to sing. What did they sing? Psalm

118, which they'd sung countless times. They sang, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." That story was on their hearts, and they saw it in their eyes and sang what they'd known.

There are some unique aspects to the psalter that differ from any other books. There's not just one author; there are about eight authors, with David being the most predominate author, having about 73 of the psalms. It's a collection of authors and books over the course of hundreds of years of human history. Though it's organized into five books, they all really take two forms, either poetry or prayer, but a lot of themes...themes like joy, lament, thanksgiving, confidence, remembrance, wisdom.

As I consider our summer in the Psalms, one aspect about this particular book that I've been most drawn to is that the Psalms uniquely teach us how to think and how to feel rightly. I don't know if you're a fan of personality tests. I like them. I don't worship them. I don't think they're the key to unlocking the human code, but I think they can be very helpful. I've taken several of them, and they all are really consistent, so I'm apparently not very difficult to nail down. All of the personality tests kind of paint the same picture of me.

I'm an Eight on the Enneagram scale, and in Your Unique Design I'm a Persister. One of my buddies who is a pastor at another church, when he was describing me to a group of people, said, "Trevor just has a bias for action." That's kind of a unique characterization of me. All of them kind of paint this picture together, this holistic picture of a person who has what you might call a very, very unique relationship with emotions. I have a bias toward action. I like concrete things.

When we get into the land of feeling, of emotions, that's when I start to get a little bit more skeptical, because I like things I can get my head around, get my hands on. I like something concrete. We start railing into the world of how I feel and emotions, I start to get a little bit more skeptical and I want to put those things into categories or spaces I can control. I am okay with emotions as long as I have a category for them, but I've historically not liked to navigate them a whole lot.

There have been a couple of moments in my life, especially in pastoral ministry, that have really challenged this. There's one in particular. It has been several years ago. I was called into a really tragic situation where a young boy had a tragic accident. I was called into the hospital. I was in the hospital room. This boy died as a result of that really tragic accident. I remember being in the room,

and the emergency room doctor is stepping back, and he's covered in tears and sweat and just shook his head and said there was nothing more they could do.

I remember the air getting sucked out of that room in that moment. I step outside that hospital room into the hallway, and I remember so vividly seeing this hallway full of these grown, big firemen, and they hear the news and just begin to break. I've been in difficult moments before then and since then in pastoral ministry, but this is one of those moments where there wasn't anything that was going to prepare you for that moment. There weren't words I was going to bring into that situation that were going to solve anything. It's just prayer and presence.

I remember we were there for a long time. I don't remember the walk from the hospital to my car, but I do very much remember driving home. I began to reflect back on what just happened. That's one of those things... You're there, and you're a part of it, and it's heavy. So I'm driving home. It's late at night. I'm driving home by myself, and I started to remember... I saw the picture of this young boy, and at that time I had a boy at home who was the exact same age as this boy. It could have easily been the other way around.

At that time, these emotions began to surface in me that I didn't have a category for and didn't know what to do with, but I also couldn't push them aside. They were overwhelming. This began a really long and beautiful but difficult journey for me that I would describe as a journey inward, where I really began to deal with those places in my heart, do business with my heart, and face some of those aspects of my heart and emotions that are really difficult.

I share that because throughout the journey the Psalms have been a really safe and beautiful place. It has given me a way to bring those emotions I don't really trust into the presence of a God I *do* trust. There have been so many psalms that have ministered to me over the course of that time, like Psalm 6:2: **"Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled."**

Psalm 51: **"Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. [...] Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."** Or Psalm 66: **"Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!"** On and on I could go.

What the Psalms have helped do with me personally is to give me a road map to navigate through those thoughts and emotions in a way that moves me toward God. Calvin said he wanted to call the Psalms the *anatomy of the soul* because there's not an emotion in the entire human experience that isn't expressed there. Like in a physical mirror we can see how we're doing on the outside, the Psalms reveal our inside and help us see if we are moving toward or away from God. Eugene Peterson says it this way:

"People look into mirrors to see how they look; they look into the Psalms to find out who they are. A mirror is an excellent way to learn about our appearance; the Psalms are the biblical way to discover ourselves. [...] A mirror shows us the shape of our nose and the curve of our chin, things we otherwise know only through the reports of others. The Psalms show us the shape of our souls and the curve of our sin, realities deep within us, hidden and obscured, for which we need focus and names."

Here's a statement I wrote to summarize the Psalms as we step into them: The Psalms teach us to pray by bringing every thought and emotion in the human experience into the context of God's story. Through the Psalms, our hearts, whether broken or bursting, become aligned with God's heart. The Psalms help lead our thinking and our feeling Godward, that wherever we are in life, whatever befalls us, whether pleasure or pain, the words which come from God become the steps by which we find God.

With that in mind, I want us to dive together into Psalm 1. It's not a very long psalm. It's six verses. We're going to start reading through it together, and then we'll dive deep. Starting at 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; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 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. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."**

Oftentimes in worship services (if you've been around church any amount of time, you've probably experienced this), the person leading worship will start by having everybody stay seated and saying something to the tune of, "Hey, I want you guys to stay seated, and I want you to just listen to this song as we sing it over you."

The intent and purpose behind that approach is to give us an opportunity that by sitting and listening we might be able to meditate in a deeper way, kind of engage with the words of the song in a different way than when we sing. We can think about them. It also gives us that opportunity to orient our minds and our hearts about what we're able to step into together. It's that moment where we're not singing; we're listening, and we're listening so we can think intently about what those words are and what they mean for us in a way to help reorient our hearts.

Psalms 1 and 2 are much the same way. It's the first song we need to intently listen to before we proceed into the rest of the psalms. Combined with Psalm 2, which we'll cover next week, it's said to be the gateway to the rest of the Psalms. Much like the rest of Wisdom Literature, the psalm is going to draw our attention to two people or two paths. This concept bookends the entire psalm, that there's a way of the righteous and a way of the wicked.

Notice this doesn't leave room for any middle ground or gray area. There's no third option. We like middle ground because it allows us to continue crafting our own terms, but the Bible is clear. We're all on one of two paths. We're on the path of righteousness that leads to blessing or on the path of wickedness that leads to destruction. There's simply no third option.

Jesus affirms this in Matthew 7. **"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."** Psalm 1 acts for us as the gatekeeper, warning the unrighteous not to proceed any farther. Why? Because there's an intimacy with God experienced in these words only the righteous can partake in.

Though this psalm is only six verses in length, the first three are where we're going to focus in on, because they paint a picture for us of what it means to walk in this righteousness, walk on this righteous path. Since all the Old Testament is pointing to Christ, the only one to ever truly perfectly fulfill these first three verses is the person of Jesus. Jesus is the prototype, and the invitation here is to come and be like him.

The challenge in Psalm 1 that we're going to see this morning that it declares is not to become something we're not but to increasingly become something that Jesus is. There are several words throughout this psalm that are really, really deep mines, rich with meaning, that we're going to dig into together. It starts here in verse 1, the phrase that kicks off this psalm. It says, "**Blessed is the man...**"

*Blessed* is our first example of one of those words. On the surface, the definition of *blessed* is happy. It's happiness. But if you take it a couple of layers deep, the definition is actually bliss, which is happiness in its perfect or fullest form. The word *blessed* is how Jesus began the greatest sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful or the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

I don't think it's any coincidence that the book of Psalms begins the same way. This blessed man, the one who experiences true bliss, is not somebody who's walking or standing or sitting in the path of destruction, like the scoffer, that image we get here of the consummate fool. Rather, this person has chosen the path of life and joy. Then verses 2 and 3 help draw us in to what marks that life of joy and bliss. Verse 2 says he who walks this path... What does it say? "**...his delight is in the law of the LORD...**"

*Delight* is another word I want us to anchor in. It's not just describing pleasure; it's describing a gravity. Let me put it *this* way. I can have a great meal and that meal be delightful, but I can wake up the next morning and be like, "I don't have to have that again." Have you ever had those experiences that are really, really incredible experiences in their own right but not so incredible that you have to do it again? You're really glad you did it. Maybe it was even a bucket list item, but once you've done it you're like, "That's checked off the list. That was amazing, but I don't have to do it again."

The beach is always that way for me. I just have an aversion today. I live in Texas. I don't want to be hot any more than I have to. I go to the beach. I see it. It's awesome. Check. I don't have to go back. My wife wants to keep going back to the beach, but I've been there. It's awesome. It's incredible. It's beautiful. I love the ocean, but I'm done. It's okay. But if you ever experience something that's so incredible it actually changes your desires... That's what we're talking about here.

I remember my first date with Rachel when we were in college. Her effect ran so deep in me I needed to just be around her. I remember leaving my time with her so amazed and impacted it created this gravitational pull in me that I just had to be near her. Seventeen years later, I'm still following her around. This delight is not just enjoyment; it's a delight that creates a desire. Delight here is a gravitational pull toward something that deeply satisfies you.

What's the object of delight here? It's the law of the Lord. There's a ton of meaning here, but for the sake of time, the *law of the Lord* can be translated as the *Torah* or *instruction of the Lord*. JT said a couple of weeks ago that God is not only good *to* us but he is good *for* us. This is going to be a consistent theme throughout the Psalms: God's ways or his instructions are good for us and lead to our flourishing, but our ways aren't and lead to death.

Proverbs 14 says it this way: "**The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.**" John Calvin said, "It is not left to every man to frame a system of religion according to his own judgment, but the standard of godliness is to be taken from the Word of God."

We delight in the law of the Lord because we believe his way ultimately leads to life. Because his way leads to life... The second half of verse 2 says we meditate on this instruction day and night. *Meditate*, again, is a very deep and rich word, but this one is going to be particularly troubling for us in this day and age. *TIME* magazine published an article in 2015. This is the title. Are you ready for it? "You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish." That was the title.

Microsoft did a study in 2015 and found that 15 years into the iPhone revolution, the average human attention span had diminished from 12 seconds to 8 seconds. Twelve seconds is not a great place to start. Eight seconds is a devastating place to be. Let me illustrate what I mean. I just want everybody to stare at my hand right now. That's it. That's all we have...right there. That's where we're at.

One of the quotes from the study said, "We are moving from a world where computing power was scarce to a place where it now is almost limitless, and where the true scarce commodity is increasingly human attention." There's another statistic here that'll hit everybody in the room, I'm sure. The average American checks their iPhone every four minutes.

If you don't believe me, they've put in this great new app on your iPhone, a new little thing you can check in your settings. It's called Screen Time. If you haven't checked that out, you may not want to do it. It's kind of depressing. You can go on there and see exactly how often you're on that thing. Before you say, "Well, most of that time was on my Bible app..." No. It will tell you exactly how much time you spend on every single app.

This is what we're contending with. So we're going to have a difficult time in dealing with this understanding of meditating, but I don't think *meditating* is talking about or is just limited to and defined here of staring into, like you did my hand. It *does* mean to peer into. It *does* mean to think about, to ponder and study, but it also means to mutter or to speak. You combine that definition with this persistent notion of doing this day and night means the Word of God is on your mind and your heart and your lips continually. It's what you think about. It's what you speak about.

Proverbs 23:7 says, "**For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.**" What we think about and speak about creates an index for who we are. Just like an index helps us see what the contents of a book are going to be, the object of our meditation shows us an index for what's in our hearts. This means that for God's Word we don't just seek to hear it, we don't just understand it, but we internalize it. We let it soak into our minds, into our hearts. Let it transform you, but you have to give it the attention necessary to do that.

So much of our life's purpose is formed by what we give attention to, and there has never been a point in human history where human attention has been pursued like it is today. We are absolutely inundated with distractions, yet there's a story that is more beautiful and compelling than anything the world has to offer and will bring you greater satisfaction, purpose, and meaning than anything you've ever experienced, but you won't know that story and you certainly won't know your place in God's story apart from God's Word.

Then the psalm kind of takes a turn, and it paints this beautiful picture for us of somebody who walks on this path. It describes it *this* way. It says this person, this blessed man, will be like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in season, and its leaf does not wither, and in all he does he prospers. I'm going to put up this picture for us I just want us to see, because I think images can be powerful.

This is one of my favorite places in the world. This is the Frio River down in the Hill Country, and that's a cypress tree. (I did not take this picture, though I'm great at taking pictures. I can't claim

this.) I have been here many times. My family usually goes every summer and float this river. What I love every time we go is the whole river is lined with these cypress trees, and you can see these roots... They just shoot up, huge, monstrous trees with these deep, intricate root systems that spread into the water. It's beautiful.

What's incredible is... I've been down there so many times. I've been down there plenty of times where it's after a big flood. What's interesting about the flood is you have all this debris that's floating down the river. Two things happen after a flood. First, it tends to wash away a lot of the mud from the bank so you can see just how deep and intricate these roots are, but do you know another thing those big, massive floods *don't* do? They don't move the trees. They're right there. Year after year, flood after flood, they're there.

If you wait later in the summer, maybe July or August, or summers like we had several years ago, where we had over 100 days over 100 degrees... I don't know if it's a drought or not. It's just hot enough where all the water is gone. You go to float the river, and it's so low... It has shrunk back, but those trees are still there, still alive, still growing, still thriving, because their roots are deep. I want to read this Jeremiah passage where he's going to echo Psalm 1 again. I just want you to look at that as I read this over to you.

**"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."**

I'm going to camp out here in this image for the rest of our time. What I really want to do is give a practical application. If you're asking the question, "Okay, great. I get that. I want to be that..." I think there's not a person in this room who would not look at that image and go, "Man, I aspire to that. I want to be that. I want to be that tree that's firmly planted by streams of water, that when the storms of life come, I'm there, I'm unshakable, continuing to yield fruit, not dying and withering. I want to be that tree. So how do I get there? Is it just I need to always be listening to the Lord? I just need this Christian music? Do I need to get into this [whatever] program? What is it I need to do?"

What I want to do here is... My hope is to paint a practical and holistic picture of what it means for us to be a tree rooted in this way. Here it is. A Psalm 1 person is somebody who is *rooted in God's*

*Word with God's people about God's purposes.* That's as simple and holistic as I can make it. So let's start here: *rooted in God's Word.*

I was able to go visit one of our missionary teams on the field recently in a very difficult and unreached part of the world. In a city of over a million Muslims and very, very few Christians, on that Friday morning, when most of the Muslims are all going to the mosque... That's the safest time for the Christians to gather, when everybody else is away at the mosque. So they gather. That's when they do church.

So we gathered together in a home for church, and we started by breaking bread together and having a meal. Then we all came and sat down in the living room together, and with the sound of Muslim prayers screaming from minarets outside the walls of the house, we opened the Word of God together. My relationship with the Word of God changed in that experience. I had never before seen people with this kind of relationship to the Word of God. They clung to the Word for encouragement, for direction, insight, and hope.

This was a community of faith that was truly submitted to the instruction of the Word. They sang it together. They read it out loud. They talked about it. They devoured it. They stirred up the desire for it in one another. They needed it. Why? Because outside the walls... "God, this task feels so big. This feels so beyond us. What do we do? How is this ever going to happen? Persecution around every bend. This feels impossible." Almost like David saying, "They're at the walls, and it's pressing in." They're clinging to the Word of God, to every word together.

I love this quote from Martin Luther. When he was put on trial by the church and told to take everything back, he refused and said, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God." How do I know my life is rooted in the Word of God? Has God's Word captivated my conscience? Am I submitted to its instruction? Does the Bible hold a place of true authority in my life? If not, where do I start? Maybe that thing is so intimidating to you. You're like, "Man, I want to obey what it is. I just don't even know what it says."

Here's where you can start. That's why we have classes. That's why we have studies, these places where you can grow in your understanding of God's Word, that we might be a people who submit ourselves to its instruction, because submitting ourselves to the instruction of the Word is the path to blessing. We want to be those people who are trees firmly planted by streams of water that can withstand the storms of life, because the other option is we're going to be those that are tossed back

and forth by every new wind and wave. We don't get to be those streams planted by water that can withstand the storms of life apart from submitting our lives to the Word of God.

So, we're rooted in God's Word *with God's people*. Recently, Rachel and I were able to get away on vacation, and we went to a resort. Two things we love doing. We love people watching. That and airports are fantastic places for that. Then the other thing is we love to have conversation. Just asking the Lord, "Would you give us opportunities to have conversations with people?" We weren't there with anybody else. Just us.

We just said, "Lord, would you give us opportunities maybe to talk about Jesus and just have conversations with people?" It was a really fascinating week. We had great conversations with people until we got about 10 minutes in and they asked what I did. I told them I'm a pastor, and then that conversation quickly ended. Apparently, at a resort they didn't want to hang out with a pastor. I don't know why.

One night, we're sitting at this restaurant. We're sitting over on the couches. We're just hanging out. It's beautiful weather. There are these two couples over at the bar. They caught our attention because they were having a great time, and they were being very, very loud. They made great people watching. They caught our attention, so Rachel and I are just sitting right here, maybe like the distance from *here* to that drum cage. They're having a great time.

We notice that one of the guys leaves. He leaves for about 5 or 10 minutes, and after a few minutes he comes back carrying this package wrapped in tissue paper. He walks over to the other guys. One couple is noticeably a little bit older than the other, but they're obviously there together, and they're having a great time.

He walks over with this package, and he walks over to the guy and gives it to him and says, "Hey, I got this for you today when we were in town. I got it for you just in remembrance of our trip." He said, "Okay." He takes the package, he opens it up, and it's this neon blue souvenir lamp. We really weren't prepared for what was next. We can see this whole thing unfolding, and we're being creepers. We're watching.

This guy opens it up and just starts weeping, just sobbing. He had to hand the lamp to his wife, and he just starts doing *this*, wiping tears away. Then he takes the lamp and plugs it in. It's a neon blue lamp. He takes a picture with it and just starts weeping again. He's smaller than the other guy. He

walks over to this other big guy and gives him this big embrace, and they have this moment. Rachel and I are watching this, going, "What's happening?"

Then for the next 5 or 10 minutes we started playing the game of "What's the story? Because something else is happening besides that blue lamp that is invoking these kinds of emotions. Something is happening." So we started playing the "What if?" game. Maybe there was a tragedy or something, because he looks at him and says, "Every time you see this lamp you can remember our time together." The guy was so impacted by that.

We're wracking our brains, thinking, "What could the story be?" Well, about half an hour later, I get into a conversation with one of the men, and then that conversation grows. His wife jumps in, and then *my* wife jumps in, and then the other couple jumps in, and sooner or later it's all six of us, and we're talking. I just couldn't help myself. I had to find out.

So I'm like, "So, have you guys known each other for a long time?" The guy who received the gift goes, "No, no, no. We just met two days ago on the beach, but we're best friends." Mind blown. I said, "So you guys didn't come here together?" He's like, "No, no, no. We'd never met before. I'm from Oklahoma. He's from Texas. We met here. We're good friends." He gave him a big ol' hug again. They had another little moment, and then we got to hanging out.

Rachel and I were walking away, and we were talking about this scene and how this scene was such an incredible picture for how much we long for relationship. We long for belonging. It wasn't the blue lamp; it was just this guy was so deeply impacted that somebody saw him and knew him and loved him. That's it. Knew the guy for two days and bought him a souvenir lamp, and it touched something deep in him, because we have that deep longing for belonging.

There was a study that said only around half of Americans, 53 percent, say they have meaningful, daily, face-to-face social interactions, including extended conversation with a friend or spending quality time with a family. We are rapidly becoming the loneliest generation in human history. In a world where connection is getting easier and easier, we're actually known less and less. But we have this desire, this longing to belong, because we were created for it.

C.S. Lewis says this quote. I love this one. He said, "God can show himself as he really is only to real [people]. And that means not simply to [those] who are individually good, but to [those] who are united together in a body, loving one another, helping one another, showing him to one another. For

that is what God meant humanity to be like; like players in one band, or organs in one body. Consequently, the one really adequate instrument for learning about God is the whole Christian community, waiting for him together."

I think I've told this story before, but it's a great example. First, talk about that kind of complex relationship of emotions I had. The first several years of marriage, there was this accusation Rachel would always have toward me that anytime the conversation got really emotional I would make this face, and this face communicated to her something to the tune of "I don't value your emotions." I never believed that face existed, because I *did* value her emotions and I *did* want to hear them and I was okay with going there, but my face apparently communicated something otherwise.

I fought this for about five or six years pretty strongly. This was like this myth, this thing where I'm like, "It doesn't exist. No, my face isn't doing that right now. It's not happening." One night, we're in a little bit of a spat, and we're going over to a friend's house for dinner. We arrive. It was one of those where we got into a little argument and it didn't resolve before we got there, so we were like, "Okay. Let's just go in to dinner. We'll pick this up later."

So we go in to dinner, and we're there for five minutes and they recognize, "Hey, you guys are in a little bit of a fight, aren't you?" We're like, "Yeah." They're like, "Do you want to hash this out here?" I'm like, "Sure. Tell them." So we started having that conversation, and it starts getting a little bit emotional. She starts explaining we're having an argument about this face, this thing that happened, because she said it happened again and I said, "No, it didn't."

She starts talking about this face, and he goes, "You mean *that* face?" She said, "Yes! That's it!" In an instant it was done. My argument was deflated. Done. They were like, "Yes, you *do* make a face, and yes, that face *does* communicate that. Please don't ever do that again." All this instant did was demonstrate to me how insufficient I am as an individual to grow in the fullness of my maturity in faith. I have to be known. We're insufficient alone.

Is your life rooted with God's people? Are you really known? Here's a hard question to ask. Are you needed by anybody? If your answer is "no," then I just want to encourage you. Let this summer be the time where you take that step. Community and relationships are really beautiful. They're really messy. Both those things are going to coexist at all times, but they're so needed and necessary.

You cannot be who God created you to be alone. Cannot happen. There is no context in God's Word for it. If you don't know where to start, if that's like, "Man, I'm new here. I don't know where that is," whatever it is... We have GroupConnect every month. You can jump into a Home Group and start. It's not going to happen overnight, but start. Jump in and start building those relationships.

Lastly, we're rooted in God's Word with God's people *about God's purposes*. The good news is that God sent his Son to redeem the world and create a new humanity. The gospel makes us a new creation. God is saving a people and sending them out for his mission so that Christ will be glorified in all things. The church is a regenerate people of God, saved by the power of God for the purposes of God in this world, and we don't stop being the church when we walk out of the building on Sunday morning. Instead, everything we do we do for the fame of Jesus everywhere at all times.

To grow as a disciple, you're going to have to get out of the stands and onto the field. Why? Because true spiritual transformation doesn't come from watching other people experience life in Christ. We have to embody the life of a disciple. I love this quote we use from a text in our Go Groups. It says, "Our salvation doesn't just deliver us from our sins; it also sets us free from living meaningless lives. That's the good news. That's the gospel. Through spiritual multiplication, your limited years on earth can have an exponential and enduring influence on eternity."

Are you living like a sent disciple? Are you making disciples? *You*. Not a program you're involved in but *you*, as a person. Are you actively seeking ways to share your faith with those in your neighborhood and your workplace? If you're saying, "No, I'm not, but I have no idea where to begin; that's really intimidating to me," check out opportunities like our Go Groups, where you can go and learn how to share the gospel and make disciples in your own context, your own neighborhood, with somebody who will walk with you and model it for you and teach you how to do it.

It's not an *if*; it's a *when*. This is a part where we have to push aside our comfortable American Christianity, like Matt talked about last week, that arena culture where we want to gather around and watch somebody else do it. There's a life in Christ that is waiting for us out on the field, and God has called all of us to step into it. There's so much that's waiting for you. I can't begin to plead enough, but I'm out of time. Let me close with this.

Notice that this tree planted by streams of water that is flourishing... It says the fruit comes in its season. Have you ever planted a tree and come back the next day? What do you see? The same

thing. It doesn't grow a whole lot, if any. But over time, as that tree is watered, it grows and grows and grows stronger and bigger.

I love this quote from Jen Wilkin in her book *Women of the Word*. It says, "We will not wake up ten years from now and [have accidentally] taken on the character of God." Christian holiness is not instantaneous, but I do know this, church. Our life direction is never neutral. We're always giving it to something. May we become a vast field of strong, fruit-bearing trees to the glory of God. Let's pray.

Father, I know this reality that to be that tree planted by streams of water... God, I know we could all spend hours in the study of the Word. We can get into a study. We can get into Home Group. We can listen to Christian music every day, all day, but apart from your Spirit's power, those are just going to be actions and stuff we fill our lives with.

But those filled with the Spirit of God, submitted to the Word of God, surrounded by the people of God, focused on the purposes of God... That is a life walking the path of righteousness, and in that life is the blessed man. God, would you make us that people? The reality of The Village Church is we would be these trees, towering, strong, roots that are deep.

When the storms of life come, we stand. When the drought comes, we still flourish, streams of water, and not just there for being there's sake, but producing fruit, and that fruit would be more and more and more and more and more trees. Would you make this reality? We're done with watching. We want to step in. We want to be a part of this. We want to live this. We ask that you would accomplish that in our lives for your name's sake, amen.