

Lesson 5

Chapter 3 - *The Blessed Man*

Before we delve into David's first Psalm, it might be helpful to spend a little time getting to know the man who wrote it. Let's first look at how David viewed God and how God viewed David. Then we'll examine Psalm 1 to learn the philosophy of life that helped to mold this man, the only man in all of Scripture whom God describes as "*a man after My own heart*" (Acts 13:22). (After reading chapter 5 work in preparation for this lesson.)

1. Consider, "*a man (or woman) after (God's) own heart*". Explain in your own words what you would expect to see in the life of someone described in this manner.

You may want to bring out in discussion that there are two ways to look at this statement:

- 1) It was God's heart **response** to a man who loved Him and sought to please Him.
- 2) It was God's **description** of a man whose consuming desire in this life was to please Him.

2. S-o-o what kind of a man was David? The following Scriptures reveal something of his character and overall conception of God. What do you glean from them?

- a) David's prayers in I Chronicles 17:16-27, Psalm 139
- b) his song in Psalm 62:1-2, 5-8
- c) His comments in Psalm 34:1; 9:1

a) I Chronicles 17:16-27; Psalm 139 - David was a man of great humility. His gratitude to the Lord for His love and compassion to him seemed to exceed his ability to express it. He is aware that God knows everything about him and has since before he was born. He lovingly acknowledged His deity, His faithfulness, His omniscience, and omnipotence. He had implicit faith that what God had promised, He would surely fulfill. He placed himself in the position of complete servitude, undoubtedly as a servant (or slave) of love seeing the Lord's commands as being only loving guidance for a happy and meaningful life.

b) Psalm 62:1-2, 5-8 - David had learned to trust the Lord implicitly in all types of situations and could only have made such assertions if he had personally experienced God's miraculous deliverance on many occasions. You get the impression he constantly ran to the Lord for help, protection and deliverance. He knew where the answer lay in every situation. He had learned to stand firmly on God's Word and claimed His promises in the every day frustrations, pressures and failures of his life.

c) Psalm 34:1 *I will extol the Lord at all times: His praise will always be on my lips.*
Psalm 9:1 *I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart.*

Praise seems to have dominated David's attitude toward life and toward God. He said in Psalm 22:3 . . . *You are holy, who inhabit the praises of Israel.* (NKJV) The Lord inhabits the praises of His people. In thinking through the purpose and power of *praise*, I have to conclude, God doesn't need us to tell Him how wonderful He is. Obviously praising Him must be a resource He can use in a special way on our behalf to enhance our ability to know Him and experience Him in a way that could not otherwise be perceived. Perhaps this is another piece in the puzzle that contributed to David's spiritual maturity and one that we might note for special application in our own. (Of interest, notice in the verse, *You are holy, who inhabit the praises of Israel*, the singular "inhabits" is not used, but the plural application, "inhabit", obviously referring to the *Triune* God.)

3. a) List the descriptive names David uses to describe God in II Samuel 22:1-4.

Different versions may vary slightly. From the NIV: Strength, Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, (One) in whom I take refuge, Shield, Horn of my salvation, Stronghold, Refuge, Savior, (One who) saves from violent men.

b) Consider David's tumultuous life and list some of the occasions when he would have had to draw heavily on their strength. Consider also how you might find strength in them to handle the challenges you face in your life.

David had many opportunities in his varied existence to test the Lord, to lean on His strength and protection and to rely totally on Him for courage, wisdom and consolation in the trials and crises of his life.

As a boy he protected his father's sheep against lions and bears. (I Samuel 17:34-36) His confidence and faith were obviously displayed when he, as a young lad, single handedly faced one of the world's most ominous giants and one of its fiercest warriors.

(I Samuel 17:26, 45-47)

He spent years running for his very life, hiding in caves and dodging Saul's army which hotly pursued him.

He exercised great ability as a general, responsible for the lives of entire armies.

As the supreme potentate of God's chosen people Israel, he was responsible for leading, overseeing and protecting them in secular, governmental and spiritual matters.

And personal crises and tragedies? He had them.

He had to face up to his gross sins regarding Uriah and Bathsheba, and the subsequent death of the baby born to them. (II Samuel 11-12)

There was more personal heartache when his son Amnon raped his half-sister, David's daughter, Tamar. Amnon was subsequently murdered by his half-brother, Tamar's brother Absalom, another of David's sons by a different wife. (II Samuel 13)

This was the same Absalom who led a rebellion against David, forcing him to flee the palace for his very life and go into hiding. (II Samuel 15-18)

Then there was Absalom's death and David's heart-broken lament. (II Samuel 18:33)

In the end as David lay on his death bed another son, Adonijah, tried to steal the throne from Solomon, David's personal choice to succeed him on the throne.

So, what do you think? Do you think that the pressures, heartaches and challenges that David faced in his lifetime were at least as chaotic as yours? Do you think he had adequate testings to demonstrate the practicality and effectiveness of the premise he outlines in his first psalm?

4. David's life was often used as a "benchmark" throughout the books of Kings and Chronicles. Browse through the references below and write down the descriptions used by God to characterize David as He compares him to some of the kings who succeeded him. (You may want to check different versions for broader insight.) I Kings 11:6; 14:8; 15:3; 15:11; II Kings 16:2; 22:2

I Kings 11:6 - *So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done. (NIV)*

*(Solomon) went not fully after the Lord as did David his father. (KJV/Amplified)
did not wholly follow the Lord (RSV); refused to follow the Lord completely (NLT).*

This is the negative aspect. Obviously the opposite applied to David, i.e. David followed the Lord "completely", went "fully" after Him, followed Him "wholly",

I Kings 14:8 - *God said to Jeroboam, "I ripped the kingdom away from the family of David and gave it to you. But you have not been like my servant David, who obeyed my commands and followed me with all his heart and always did whatever I wanted Him to." (NLT)*

*(David) . . . obeyed (God's) commands and followed (Him) with all his heart, and always did whatever (He) wanted Him to. (NLT)
doing only that which (what) (that) was right in (God's) eyes (NIV/RSV/KJV/Amp)*

I Kings 15:3 - *(Abijam) walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God as the heart of David his forefather (NIV) -*

*(Abijam's) heart was not perfect with the Lord his God
as the heart of David his father. (KJV);
his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God (RSV);
his heart was not blameless with the Lord his God (Amp)
his heart was not right with the Lord his God (NLT)*

I Kings 15:11 - *And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. (KJV/NIV/RSV/)* (Also Hezekiah in II Kings 18:3 and II Chronicles 29:1)

*(Asa) did right in the eyes of the Lord as did David his father. (Amp)
did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight (NLT)*

II Kings 16:2 - *Unlike David his father, (Ahaz) did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God. (NIV/RSV)* (Also in II Chronicles 28:1)

*(Ahaz) did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father. (KJV)
did not do right in the sight of the Lord his God like David his [forefather] (Amp)
did not do what was pleasing in the sight of the Lord his God as his ancestor David had done. (NLT)*

II Kings 22:2 - *(Josiah) did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. (NIV)* (Also II Chronicles 34:2)

(Josiah) walked in all the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right followed the Lord completely. hand or to the left. (KJV/Amp)
he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. (RSV)
he did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn aside from doing what was right. (NLT)

In II Chronicle 25:2 - there is no reference to David but it is interesting to look at this text because of the aspect that Amaziah did what was right, *but not wholeheartedly*, versus David who is described many times as serving God *wholeheartedly*. You may want to discuss the difference between the meaning of these two applications and how they apply to us, personally.

(Amaziah) did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly. (NIV)
he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart. (KJV)
yet not with a blameless heart (RSV)
He did right in the Lord's sight, but not with a perfect or blameless heart (Amp)
Amaziah did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, but not wholeheartedly (NLT)

5. How do you reconcile these glowing descriptions of David that God gives in these verses with the reality of his badly tarnished record that includes blatant adultery and murder?

Adultery and murder were two sins that were punishable by death under the law. Yet David disregarded this completely. He threw himself into the arms of the God he had always known to be loving and merciful, the One on whom he had always relied, the One who had been his salvation in every situation. In essence, he sought, perhaps demanded, New Testament grace, unknown and untested under the Mosaic Law. He must have glimpsed the forgiveness offered in the New Covenant, not yet fully revealed or consummated. He had complete confidence that the God who had never failed him in the past, would not fail him now. [Little did he (nor do we) have any conception of the great price that would be paid for his (and our) forgiveness.]

So, knowing the gross sins that stained David's life, how could God give such glowing accounts of his life? It's obvious that God did not see David as we do. In His eyes, David served Him with a perfect heart; his shortcomings did not exist. Why not?

As David writes so beautifully in Psalm 103:11-13:

. . . as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgression from us.

As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him for He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. (NKJV)

Knowing how badly David had failed, on occasion, it should be an enormous encouragement for us to know that David was not judged by the rule of perfection that we so quickly apply, nor are we. He was judged according to God's mercy and love and by the provision made by the blood of Jesus. From where God stood, apparently the only thing that shone through all of David's shortcomings was a *perfect* heart, a heart that wanted to please His Lord more than anything else in the world. But, with that, he was just a man, a man capable of gross sins. This is why Jesus had to come to bridge the gap for David and for us.

This should also be a lesson for us as we look at our imperfect brothers and sisters and as we look at ourselves. We should remember that God understands. He has made provision for our shortcomings. He understands that *we are dust*. He looks beyond all the melee to the heart attitude that exists behind it. It is a lesson for us not to get caught up in the weaknesses of David, our fellow Christians or ourselves. God forgives **and forgets**.

Instead of focussing on David's failures, it's important for us to look at him through God's eyes. I'm sure the attention so often given toward the negative aspect of his life is exaggerated with the help of our great adversary. Should we not spend more time focusing on the strengths he exhibited? Strengths that should encourage us all to greater heights.

6. a) Many Bible scholars consider Psalm 1 to be the key that opens the door to the entire Book of Psalms. Note: the very *first* verse of this very *first* psalm is a caution of what to avoid if we want God's blessing in our lives. It is very specific but what can you conclude about a person who associates with such company? What deeper inference is hidden below the surface?

If I were writing Chapter 3 at this point in time, I would give this verse more attention than I gave it in *The Sword*. I now see verse 1 as a major prerequisite for enjoying the blessings of verse 2 and the whole experience of memorizing God's Word.

I was taught in Bible Exegesis "Always look for the theme near the beginning.", or, "The key always hangs near the front door." David appears to be saying, in order for the blessings of this psalm (and even the rest of Gods Word) to "bless" we need to check our bearings. Who are our friends and where are they taking us? The deeper implication being: What is our motivation in life and where is our focus? Where are we headed? Are we really serious about getting to know the Lord in a meaningful way or is the appeal of the world too alluring?

b) Why would this verse be important for us to heed as we approach God's holy Word and make memorizing it a practical part of our lives?

It must be very important for us to take inventory as we seek to enter into the beauty of this psalm and of Scripture in general. David seems to be urging us to search our hearts and motives. He wants us to proceed with a sincere heart and a heart focused on knowing the Lord. You may want to look back and study the description of David's heart attitude you noted in questions 2 and 3.

Along with motivation and focus, another consideration that can be gleaned from this verse is the importance of approaching God's Word with a *pure* heart. We must take care of any unconfessed sin in our lives. If there is anything there that is hindering our open communication with the Lord, we need to confess it and be thoroughly cleansed (as was David in Psalm 51). Only then can the Lord have an open line into our heart and our thinking.

If we want to fully enjoy the blessing of memorizing God's Word, David must be saying that it is important for us to check our bearings, make sure we're aimed in the right direction and that there is nothing clogging the light and the power of God's Word focussing in on our hearts and lives.

7. a) After his comments in verse one, David launches into the heart of his psalm. (*The blessed man's*) *delight is in the law of the Lord . . .* Why would it be important for us to approach God's Word and its memorization as a delight rather than a legalistic obligation?

This is a vital point that should be dealt with thoroughly. If the *delight* spoken of in this verse is not a reality in practice, then the entire application of the psalm—and the memorization of God's Words that it focuses on—could well become just another legalistic exercise of memorizing words.

It is significant that the first two things our Lord emphasizes as we enter this psalm and this Book of Psalms are 1) a clean heart and focused life and 2) a *delight* in His Word.

In the next lesson we will delve into the aspect of Scripture memorization as part of this verse although not specifically mentioned. After the negative aspect is addressed in verse one, the *most important* thing for us to realize as we consider Scripture (and its memorization) is that it is to be approached with *delight*. The position of the word *delight* is of great significance. It is the first positive reference of the psalm and of the book thus giving it great emphasis. When memorizing Scripture, this is the ingredient that makes the difference between its being a legalistic drudgery, and a vibrant, joyful adventure.

The Psalmist, here, reveals an important aspect of memorizing Scripture in context. It should be approached with anticipation and excitement — delight — in the idea that the great God of the universe wants to communicate his love and instruction to us through the medium of His written Word. (Pg 47, Par 3)

Our ever active enemy has had significant success in his effort to cast negative connotations on the very suggestion of memorizing God's Word. To even mention the subject in conversation is often met with quick clichés in an effort to point the discussion in another direction. There is an aura of drudgery and a sense of unpleasant obligation that is often injected into the mix. Because of this attitude, many of God's people have been robbed of joy and blessing, of power and vitality that is so freely available to all who memorize God's holy words for themselves.

Even so, there are some who have glimpsed the promises and prominence that Scripture gives to this practice and have approached it with sheer determination. Although this has usually led to that dry, legalistic experience, mentioned earlier, and is far removed from the joy and delight spoken of in this psalm, there are instances where someone has begun with "sheer determination" and come out joyfully triumphant.

So, what is the ingredient that makes the difference? How should we approach the memorization of Scripture?

How would you react if you were invited to a reception for the president or potentate of your country? Would you not respond with delight, immediately checking schedules, hotels, and of course your wardrobe? Would you even consider not showing up, arriving late or coming sloppily dressed? If he/she singled you out for personal discussion would you not hang on every word and brag proudly to your friends, afterward?

I remember talking with a missionary who was serving in an African country under British rule when the queen of England was visiting. Because he was one of the few British subjects in that country he received an invitation to a reception being held in her honor. He commented that such

an invitation constituted a "command" and could not be declined. I don't know what would have happened if he hadn't shown up, but the point is obvious, isn't it? How do you think he would have responded if the queen had sent him a personal letter after she left? Do you not think he would have it memorized within a very short time? Would it not have been a source of great pleasure and joy for him for the rest of his life?

If we would give an earthly dignitary such recognition, delighted beyond measure that he/she would recognize us in even a very small way, should we not be awed that the very **God of the Universe, King of Glory** is actually seeking us out for an audience? Should we not be *delighted* beyond measure that we have in our possession a record of His very own words, expressing His love, His wise counsel, His warnings and concerns for our welfare? And should not the idea of memorizing this treasure, logically, be seen as nothing short of an enormous joy and privilege? Would it not be an insult to approach it in any other way?

It is interesting that we as people of faith under the New Covenant (with all of our freedoms, joys and assurances) seem to have such difficulty in this area compared to some who labored under the legalism and liturgy of the Old Covenant, as David. This may be a point of interest you may want to ponder in class.)

b) Starting with paragraph 4 on page 47, read through paragraph 1 on page 48. Being ruthlessly honest, and just for your own reflection, compared to playing golf, going to a garage sale, watching TV, or any of your pet pastimes, where would you place your delight in memorizing and meditating on Scripture?

It's interesting that the word used in verse 2 is "delight" - singular. This "delight" is not one of many. It is unique, far exceeding anything else. Meditating on and obeying the Word of God is the blessed man's greatest joy. It's the focus of his desire and the source of his pleasure.

How do we compare with the blessed man? Think for a minute. What is it that gives you (or me) the greatest pleasure in this world? In our list of "delights", where does memorizing and meditating on Scripture appear? (Page 47, Par 4 - Page 48, Par 1)

The Hebrew word *delight*, used here, has its roots in such words as *pleasure, desire, valuable.*

8. After reading paragraph 2 on page 47, write out Psalm 40:8 What does this Scripture suggest is the relationship between the *delight* of memorizing Scripture and the *delight* of working it out in our daily lives?

But the Word of God is more than just spiritual sustenance for the "blessed man". We're told his delight is in the law of the Lord. For the Psalmist, the implication seems to be that he not only delights in memorizing and pondering God's Word, he joys in applying its truths to his daily walk. He's fully aware that Scripture's instruction is lovingly provided to help us avoid the pit falls and heartaches of this life. The enemy strives to portray God's Word as a lackluster, laborious set of rules imposed on us by a dogmatic, judgmental God as sheer drudgery. But as John chooses to emphasize, "...His commandments are not burdensome...." (1 John 5:3) They are the way of life! The way of joy for the blessed man! (Page 47, Par 2)

Psalm 40:8 - I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. (KJV)

How often have you heard it said in regard to physical health, "You are what you eat!" Surely such an expression was never more applicable than in the spiritual realm. As we feast on God's

Word, memorizing it, meditating on it and delighting in it, it permeates our lives. It is our spiritual food. It becomes part of us. The *delight* of memorizing and meditating on Scripture grows naturally into the delight of seeing it through to completion in our everyday life.

The wording of this verse would lead us to believe that there is a cause and effect here. The delight of *doing* God's will seems to be a direct result of memorizing His Words—hiding them in our hearts—meditating and delighting in them.

After having memorized Scripture in its full context for more than a decade, and then already approaching 80 (if you can believe it), my older sister surprised me with the comment, "You are not the same person you were. Some of the sharp characteristics of your personality have softened significantly. I believe it is all that Scripture you have memorized working in your life." How exciting it was to know that God's Word in my heart was working in my life in ways I was not even aware of.

Proceed and *enjoy!*