

# ***Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life***

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★Write down one new insight you received today...

★Thinking...

- Why do you think the first psalm is a wisdom prayer?
- How could you pray to God as communication with Him about His wisdom and ways?
- If you have practiced this spiritual discipline, what effect has wisdom prayer made on your spiritual life?

★Applying...

- Seek a portion of God's wisdom through intentional reading of the Bible.
- Consider how that piece of wisdom has been revealed in your life.
- Write or say a prayer to God about this piece of wisdom in your own words.
- Quietly reflect on what God reveals to you in response to your prayer.
- Journal what you perceive God reveals to you and how it adds detail to your prior understanding.

★Praying...

- Father, your ways are better than my ways, they lead me joyfully and safely through life. Please keep me from folly, mistaking distracted fun for the complete joy you offer.

**Psalm 1** – Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, the prosper. 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 watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

## **I) The Folly of Procrastination...**

Are you a procrastinator? What kinds of activities do you delay starting? Some of us put off the big projects, the kind where once started we will be consumed by it for a long time. Some of us, though, are known as people who Get Stuff Done. These have mastered themselves and embark readily on tasks that will captivate their full attention. They live out a biblical principle revealed in this example of the first type of psalm we will examine as we learn to tap into the power of prayer.

♦**With friends like these...**: Experience suggests there are two types of students, those who always work ahead and others who wait till the last minute. Some of us are followers, willing to do as our friends. Fall in with the procrastinators and we find ourselves in the anxious moment of scrambling with no time to spare. Knowing this

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about us, God inspires this psalm as a prayer to choose our personal leaders wisely. Through it we observe that people are happy who avoid obeying, following, and joining the wicked, sinners, and scoffers (Ps 1:1). What inexperienced students may misapprehend is that this is not for the sake of submission. This wisdom is for our good.

♦**You call this fun:** Procrastinators may *appear* like they are the happy ones. They make time for fun while the studious work away. All the while that project is in the back of the mind. There is no freedom in the fun. The burden of doing the work builds until it cannot be carried. Procrastination turns into the all-nighter. Under this pressure, “the wicked are...like chaff that the wind drives away (v4).” Ideas are hastily conceived without testing. Research is limited. Thoughts are shallow. In rigorous classes, this kind of work “will not stand in the judgment,” nor will procrastinators “stand...in the congregation of the righteous (v5).” In some situations, procrastinators are rewarded, “but the way of the wicked will perish (v6).” It is not all that fun even while it lasts.

## II) The Delight of Diligence...

The studious are the truly happy. Delaying their fun, they attend to their work first. They use their time to research the subject, develop ideas until they mature, think deeply. They not only get their work done on time, they produce excellent results. When they turn to their fun, they delight in it as they are free from burdens of anxiety. Those who Get Stuff Done have learned the Truth of God’s wisdom.

♦**The Truth sets us free:** Those who Get Stuff Done are happy because they apprehend the Truth. Life demands they deliver the project. The project results will be judged. Concentrating on the project with all available resources is the best Way of life. Duties performed well, all remaining time and resource can be freely enjoyed. True “delight is in the law of the Lord (v2).” Those who live this Way have a continuous supply of everything needed to Thrive – time, energy, focus. “They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season (v3).” God asks of us that which we can achieve if we apply our first fruits, our freshest and most productive selves, to the task. If we do, our “leaves do not wither (v3)” and in all we do, we prosper. “The Lord watches over the way of the righteous (v6),” assuring we have everything we need and are protected as we become people who please Him. Those “who trust in the Lord...shall not fear when heat comes...in the year of drought [are] not anxious, and [do] not cease to bear fruit (Jer 17:8).”

♦**The fun zone:** Many of those who Get Stuff Done have experienced something psychologists call *flow*. Athletes describe this as being in the *zone*. It is a state of being in which one is so involved with an activity nothing else seems to matter. Many can persist in this state relentlessly, regardless of hunger or exhaustion. It is an immersive condition in which one feels energized by the task, enjoying the process. This is the nature of the relationship God seeks with His people. Delighting in God, “on his law they meditate day and night (Ps 1:2).” God’s law is the process of getting to know Him. Christians Thrive as they get into the *flow* of pursuing God through relentless reflection on His Word. By this pursuit, Thriving Christians fulfill Jesus’s condition, and He will grant us “living water (John 4:10),” the very “streams of water” causing them to “yield their fruit” and to “prosper (Ps 1:3).” Righteousness is honoring the Truth that joyful life is produced by living God’s Way, which occurs when we enter the state of *flow* by concentrating on God and His Ways. Entering this state begins in prayer.

## III) Wisdom Prayers...

Wisdom psalms may not appear as prayers as some know them. They are not petitions, nor praises of thanksgiving, although there are overlapping elements. Wisdom psalms are a form of prayer that unite our desire for God with His love for us. They are us communicating *with* God, receiving what He shares with us about Himself then reflecting it back to Him with desire

for it to affect our lives. These psalms are divinely inspired prayers showing us His Way to speak life-giving Truth into our being.

♦**Life-giving wisdom:** The first psalm is an example of a wisdom prayer that teaches the power of the form itself. When we “meditate day and night (v2),” on God and His Way, we clothe ourselves “with the new self, which is being *renewed in knowledge* according to the image of its creator (Col 3:10).” This *renewal* is not intellectual. It is experiential. The relentless pursuit of God and His wisdom empowers us to “lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him (Col 1:9-10).”

♦**Seek first...:** Those of us seeking the *Power* to fulfill God’s *Purpose* in our lives are taught to “Devote [ourselves] to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving (Col 4:2).” We do well to reflect on the fact that the first in the collection of divine prayers is a wisdom psalm, a prayer expressing the power of God’s wisdom, speaking its Truth in one’s own words, contemplating how to apply it in daily life. The first power of prayer is found by concentrating our being on God.