

TEACHING GUIDE

Father's Day

Like a Tree

OUTREACH

Father's Day Like a Tree

Scripture: Psalm 1:1-3 // Psalm 19:14

Write Up: A father who is a blessing to his children is one who cultivates a genuine love for God. He pays close attention to the places he goes and the company he keeps. He cherishes the Word of God and hides it in his heart. He will be like a tree planted by streams of water and it will produce deep roots and good fruit.

Think: As a father, my choices and motives will have an impact on the ones I love.

Feel: I can be the kind of father who is a blessing to the ones I love no matter what mistakes I have made.

Do: Ask yourself if your way of life will produce the kind of fruit you want. If the answer is no, consider the changes that should be made.

Sermon: Good morning church, and happy Father's Day. What an honor it is to gather this morning and celebrate all of the wonderful fathers and father-figures in the room today. Thank you for your willingness to give your best to your children, grandchildren, and young people in the church and community who are not your flesh and blood. We also reflect on the fact that God is our heavenly Father who loves us and offers us His best by giving us Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins and the restoration of our souls. Today is a stand-alone message focused on the blessing that comes to every father who puts God first and allows God's love to flow through him to his family. This kind of relationship is one that must be cultivated and tended to; it does not happen by accident.

Story: I grew up on a farm in Indiana. My grandfather and my father both farmed soybeans and corn. I spent most of my childhood in the fields picking rocks out of the dirt and driving tractors. I watched the kind of hard work that my family put into planting seed in the ground and doing everything they could to ensure an abundant harvest. They plowed the dirt. They tilled, they pulled weeds. They sprayed fertilizer. It was a lot of work to be a farmer. My family had to live with intentionality and work hard to grow something wonderful. The same is true for the men in the room who want to experience God's blessing and be a blessing to their family and community.

Throughout the scriptures there is one theme that is utilized more than any other to teach the ways of God. The theme of agriculture and farming is a mainstay because that was how most people made a living in Bible times. The authors used something familiar to their readers' daily lives to help them grow. Though our culture as a whole does not often live with their hands in the dirt, I believe there is a little farmer in each one of us.

Today I want to look at the book of Psalms. This collection of 150 writings is known as wisdom literature because it helps God's people navigate the ups and downs of life. These writings are honest and raw. I want to look at the very first chapter, Psalm 1, which is written using this agricultural language.

READ Psalm 1:1-2

The original Hebrew reads like this, "blessed is the man." To any ancient, near-eastern Jewish man reading this passage, it would have caught their attention. Blessing was one of the most important concepts within the Jewish faith. Everyone was looking for a blessing. Everyone desired a blessed life. So the writer offered two paths available to us. It is a choice we have to make. One path leads to blessing and the other leads away from blessing. The Hebrew word for blessing is the word *esher*, which means blessed, happy, a straight path. This word is not about possessions, wealth, influence, or power. This blessed life comes from living in line with the law of the Lord. This blessing comes from living in step with God's will. We experience a blessed and happy life when we allow the Word of God to direct our steps and help us choose the happy path.

POINT #1 – DON'T SEARCH FOR BLESSING WHERE IT CAN'T BE FOUND

There seems to be a warning in the first two verses of this wisdom literature. Don't search for blessing or happiness in places they cannot be found. Many of us have a tendency to convince ourselves that the blessed life can be found in something we can buy, or success we can work for, or status we can achieve. Sometimes I need to be reminded of this lesson in my life. I see it in my kids every day.

Story: Why is it that kids can never seem to locate something when it needs to be found? Like tennis shoes. More often than not, when it is time to leave the house, my children are looking for something. They could search for a week, send out a search party, release the dogs and never find the pair of shoes that are neatly placed in the closet by the front door. You know, the place they always are. Or they can't locate their toothbrush and toothpaste. Every night when it is time to go to bed, they wander around like zombies, half-heartedly searching in the refrigerator, their sock drawer, the snack cabinet. They search every place that their dental needs clearly will never be met.

As I look around me, I see so many fathers and people doing the same thing—only to find out that happiness can't be found there. The writer of Psalm 1 wanted to help us find the life that God has in store. He wrote that if we want the life God has planned for us, we must be careful to search where it can be found. He points out three mentalities and ways of living that will lead us away from blessing.

Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. The word *wicked* means restless and ungoverned passions. That is a good description of a lot of us today. We are restless. We stray easily from the path of God. But blessing is not found by walking with and seeking advice from those who the writer calls wicked. You see, the blessed life will always be out of reach when we are restless and unsatisfied with what we have. When we walk in the counsel of the wicked, we believe true happiness would be found if we had a different job, a different marriage, a bigger house, a better car, or a different set of circumstances.

Do you know why the author warns against walking with the wicked? Because he knows our ungoverned passions will toss us back and forth and keep us from seeing all that we have in life. I don't want to miss my kids now. I don't want to miss the gift that is my wife now. I want to be content with my life right now so I don't waste my time chasing something that will never fulfill.

The author also says do not stand in the way of sinners. The Hebrew word for sinner means "one who travels in the wrong direction." This passage of scripture is built around the concept of traveling paths that lead to the blessed life or away from it. Essentially, the sinner is one who makes choices in life that leads away God. They make choices that break their relationship with God and others. Standing in this negative place is easier than we think. Like a GPS, we need to constantly recalibrate and reorient ourselves to stay in line with God—to walk the straight and narrow and experience the blessed life. We would be wise to continually ask God to keep our hearts tender and to be alert to sinful desires, thoughts, and actions that take us off the path.

Lastly, the author says do not sit in the seat of mockers. This last warning given in Psalm 1 is incredibly important. In fact, I see it as a dangerous mentality that is becoming more and more prevalent. A mocker is one who ridicules what is good and holy. It has become an increasingly popular stance to see the things of God as antiquated, foolish, laughable, etc. The mocker does not just hold these feelings for themselves but influences others toward the same mentality. The mocker sees reading the Bible or praying as a waste of time. They see honesty, sacrifice, holy living, and generosity as weaknesses. They see the idea of the resurrection as a joke and the authority of scripture, the Spirit, and God as misguided. The mocker is cynical about the things of God.

We must be careful where we walk, sit, and stand. Blessing is not found in any of these places. Blessing comes from a life that is cultivated and planted in the ways of God. As men, we are the greatest blessing to our family when we keep ourselves from these three dangerous places.

Rather than being planted in these areas, we have a choice to turn toward something else. The writer says that the blessed man is one who turns to the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night.

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