

PSALMS: OBEDIENCE AND DESIRE

psalm 16: day-to-day delight

Questions for Personal Study

- Read through Psalm 16 a few times. What emotions are expressed?
- What is the situation the Psalmist is in? How do you know?
- What is David saying in vs. 1-3? What does he declare to be true of God?
- What is vs.4 about? How do you know?
- What is the difference between vs.4 and the rest of the Psalm? Why?

Questions for Study in Community

- Read through the Psalm a few times together. What stands out?
- Read it again - what is the Psalmist longing for? What does he need?
- What does David want from God? What do you want from God?
- What does David rejoice in? Why? What do you rejoice in?

Questions for Staying on Mission

- What happens to your love for others when your heart is satisfied in God?
- What can you do this week to cultivate a love for God and for people?
- What does this Psalm say to people who want joy in their life?

On Seeing Jesus in the Psalms

Whenever we read the Psalms there is a subtle temptation to apply them directly to ourselves. We need to remember that these poems come from within the Story of God and his workings amongst this people called Israel. These people had a particular experience of God that shaped their picture of Him. They had no idea that God would fulfill his promises by stepping into this world as a man, living a perfect life, and dying a substitutionary death. But we do. We know where the Story is headed, and we must read the Psalms in that light.

As you read, think particularly about how the commands, experiences, and emotions of the psalmist are connected to Jesus. Filter the verses through the cross, reflecting on what they tell us about the need for a Savior in order to bring sinful people into the presence of a holy God. Never forget that though God's grace to you is free, you enjoy your fellowship with God at a great price - God crushed his own Son in order to bring *you* into his courts with joy!

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A Study in the Psalms

The Old Testament book of Psalms is a collection of prayers, songs, and poems that Israel used in worship of the One True God. The reformer John Calvin once called the Psalms an “anatomy of all the parts of the soul,” because in them we see human emotions in all their perplexities colliding head-on with the commands and claims of God. The title of this series, “Obedience and Desire” comes from the central question posed to us by the language of the Psalms: “How is it possible to obey God in the midst of our innermost thoughts and emotions?” In this 4 week series in the book of Psalms our goal is to gain a deeper understanding of God, life, and ourselves. We approach this goal keeping these three things in mind:

First, the Psalms are instructive. They instruct us on who God is, who we are, and how we are to relate to God. The psalms are full of truth for the mind, directing us to a life of rightfully honoring and obeying God. This is the *obedience* part of our series title.

Second, the Psalms are poems. They are meant to stir us deep within and help us to channel our affections and longings for God. The psalmists are laying open their thoughts, desires, and emotions before God, inviting us to examine the status of our own hearts. This is the *desire* part of our series title.

Finally, the Psalms lead us to Jesus. The Psalms point forward to the coming of a Savior, one who mediates between God and men, one who invites us into the joyful obedience the Psalms describe. In each Psalm, we'll keep our eyes open for how we are being pointed forward to the person and work of Jesus.

The Springs of Life

To understand Psalm 16, you first have to have a basic framework for how the Bible speaks about motivation and desire. Proverbs 4.23 says, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” The bible teaches that the heart is the motivational drive of our lives. Whatever we put in our heart - that is, whatever we most desire or treasure - will determine how we act and how we feel. In Proverbs 4.23, Solomon is warning his son to be so careful

about what he allows to be most weighty and significant in his life because whatever is in his heart in that way will determine his way of life. The desires of the heart are the “springs of life,” the source of our way of living. Jesus said the same thing when he said, “What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart.”

In Psalm 16, David shows us what it looks like to keep God as the most weighty and significant thing in our hearts so that our hearts remain captivated by God and our lives reflect him in joyful obedience. David shows us how to cultivate a love for God in your heart which results in springs that flow into obedience and delight.

A Heart Satisfied in God Alone

In vs.1-3, David gives us some key aspects of having your heart satisfied in God alone. David’s prayer is that God would preserve and sustain him. It is a request for God to keep David walking the path that he is currently on, to keep David close to him, and to allow David to continue to see God for who he is. David declares that God is his refuge, the place of safety, comfort, and rest that David runs to in times of trouble. God is David’s Lord, or master, the one to whom David gives all allegiance and whose commands David obeys. David also declares that he has “no good” apart from God, a confession that he wants to find nothing more glorious, satisfying, or delightful thing than God himself.

In vs. 3, David makes a declaration about how his love for God results in love of his neighbors. David “delights” in those other godly people who worship God with the. David’s love for God leads directly to a love of those who also love God!

The Sorrows of Idolatry

Not everyone is like David. Most of us, if we’re honest, find many things more glorious and weighty in our lives than God. In v.4, David speaks to people like us who tend to “run after other gods.” David is not necessarily talking about real gods, but about things that we make into gods in our lives, things that we allow to have influence and weight in our lives that aren’t God. When we have these other things to have the importance in our hearts that only God should have, we will “multiply sorrows” and experience frustrations, anxieties, and discouragements on a regular basis. To “run after” literally means to marry, and David is not talking simply about enjoying other things, but about putting

things other than God into the place of highest importance that only God deserves. When we do that, the “springs of life” are multiplied sorrows! The point of the reference to “drink offerings” is that these gods - whatever they are - require us to sacrifice our time, energy, and resources to serve them so that we can maintain our joy in them. They destroy us by always demanding more from us. To “take their names on our lips” is to allow those things to begin to define us; in other words, we come to find our identity in these other gods.

The Joys of Worshipping God

The rest of the Psalms is about how to move our hearts away from worshipping these false gods and to get our hearts at rest in the One True God. In order to change your heart, something else has to captivate it. Something has to become more glorious, wonderful, and delightful than our current heart’s desire. We have to undermine our idol by revealing its weakness, seeing the harm that it causes in our and others’ lives, and by actually ravishing our hearts with the beauty of God.

David spends the rest of Psalm 16 looking at how wonderful, good, faithful, and all-satisfying God is. David is glutting his soul on God by simply recounting the excellencies of God. David is preaching to his heart about how wonderful God is so that he begins to see God for who he is and his heart begins to desire God above all else.

David is not content to simply tell himself to behave better, or to try to stir up his emotions to feel more loving toward God. Rather, David goes to work on his heart, the motivational drive shaft of his life, and attempts to overwhelm his heart with how much better God is than anything else he might want to run after.

The ongoing, daily work of being a Christian is to glut your soul on the grace of God by remembering, delighting, and rejoicing in God’s grace to us. In this Psalm, we are reminded of God’s goodness and the joy that can be found in him. But we also need to see that the Psalm only applies to us through the work of Jesus. The only one who deserves for God to treat him the way David is asking is the perfectly obedient one, Jesus Christ. But Jesus gets hell for his obedience, so that this Psalm can be true of me. Though I deserve hell, I get “fullness of joy” and “pleasures forever more.”