

Friday: *Established – by choice*

Read: Psalm 1:5⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Reflect:

We've already seen how the way of the righteous leads to blessing; blessing in the sense of a natural outcome. This is the type of person YHWH "knows" – the type of person He takes "delight in" as well (e.g., Ps18:19).

Unfortunately the wicked person has a natural outcome to their life as well; that of perishing. It's a Divine judgment that unfortunately will be granted to those not "in Christ" as a natural outcome of their life choices...

God requires only one thing of every person...that is for every person to make a choice. We either choose Him or we choose to reject Him. In other words, He won't "interfere" in anyone's life if they don't want Him to...and while it seems as if God has "the last word" (i.e., the damnation of an individual), in reality, those individuals have already chosen that for themselves.

Respond:

Have you been consistent with meditating on God's Word this week? What impact has it made on your life?

Obviously the choice "for God" isn't all there is to the Christian life; yet how has that initial choice impacted other choices you've made in the last two (or more) days?

Who has been a godly example, a "tree" if you will, that has greatly impacted your life? Write them a letter (and send it) expressing your thanks to them.

Pray: Pray for a softening of hearts on the part of those who aren't "in Christ" so they might choose Him. Pray for Brent and Melissa McCrory – the preaching minister and his wife. Lift up those who will be teaching, preaching, and leading in song this Sunday at NLCC.

In Hot Pursuit...

June 22 – 28

Sometimes I wonder if it's an American phenomenon... I doubt it is, but I don't really know; I've only been to one other country in my life. It would seem that we (i.e., Americans) aren't that much different from those in other parts of the world...so I would wager that what we experience, and have a desire for, is shared (in one way or another) throughout the world.

As I type this I wonder if I even have the question clear in my own head. My initial thought was the phenomenon of the underdog (not the cartoon turned movie); the story of someone rising above their circumstances while overcoming all odds. It's why certain segments of our population adore certain movies. It's why during sports tournaments we are so captivated by the "Cinderella" team(s). Unfortunately, it's also why so many people don't fully engage in their real life before them every day...because they're chasing after a "pipe dream"...or simply engaging in a fantasy.

Yet then I ask myself...what is it those underdogs typically pursue? It takes a variety of forms; a sports championship, a college degree for the first time in a family, financial success, what others have, etc...

In the 2006 movie "The Pursuit of Happiness" Will Smith played the part of Chris Gardner. Chris is now a "self-made" (as if such a thing exists) millionaire who not only endured, but persevered through a great amount of hardship in his life. While the movie takes liberty with the true life story, it's clear to see that the obstacles which Gardner faced, and overcame, more often than not lead others to give up on their hopes and dreams...

It seems that in the movie Gardner is chasing after something that others had – "happiness". The word occurs regularly throughout the show. In fact, throughout most of it "happiness" seems to elude Gardner – yet he doggedly pursues it. At one point he muses (roughly) that, "In the Declaration of Independence Thomas Jefferson wrote about Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – perhaps that's all we can do is simply pursue it..."

It's interesting to ponder – is all we can do simply "pursue" happiness? Why can't it be ours for the taking? Some say it is (there are equations on-line for it). Others say it is out of our control (it's an emotion...and we can't control those). It seems there's truth to both sides...yet my question, especially after watching "The Pursuit of Happiness," is – "Is it even a worthy pursuit?"

What is our source of delight? Upon what do we meditate? Do we view our lives as out of our control...or do we accept that we have a great amount of "control" over them? They're not easy questions to answer...at least I don't think they are.

Saturday: *Responsibility based on what's already established...*

Read: Exodus 19-20

Reflect:

What is worship? Is it a noun? If it's a noun then it's a "person, place, or thing" (thank you elementary grammar). Therefore it must be a thing...something to which we go on Sunday mornings. Right? Yet does this make it synonymous with "church"? Furthermore, does this also make it a "place"? Hmm...

Yet the very acknowledgment that we go "to" worship begs a question. What do we do once we're "there"? At this point does worship become a verb? Is it something we "do" or "give" to God? Hmm...

Adding even more confusion to all of this is how worship is often used as an adjective. E.g., "That was a worshipful experience" or how someone describes their life, "I seek to live a life of worship". Which view is right? Do they all contain truth? Will we find out tomorrow...

Respond:

It's been a month since the College Press Teaching Training; pray for guidance and discernment for NLCC's leaders to know what other training opportunities will be most beneficial.

Are you planning to help when we seek to serve those less fortunate than us by delivering groceries in mid-July? Why? Why not?

How have you prepared yourself throughout the week for the Sunday morning celebration service we'll enjoy together?

Pray: Continue to pray for the children who came to our VBS – pray for God's love for them to capture their hearts and minds. Pray we are good hosts to our guests tomorrow; ask God to send us people in search of Him. Pray the things we do tomorrow (and every day) bring God glory.

Monday: Responsibility

Read: Psalm 1:1 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;

<p>Reflect: What the world today claims to be “luck” or “good fortune” the Bible calls “blessed”. It stems from a right relationship with God. It isn’t so much something God grants to an individual (there’s a different word for that) as it is a natural outcome of a way of life.</p> <p>A wicked person is one who lives as if God doesn’t exist (e.g., Ps10:4). This type person will often neglect, and even hurt, those who are in need (e.g., Ps37:14). They, like everyone else, are known by the things they do and don’t do.</p> <p>A “scoffer” is one who has no respect for others. For this reason he will resent wise counsel (e.g., Prov15:12). This person seems too set in their ways to change. In fact, I’m quite certain that belief has made inroads into all of us...we see someone and think, “They’ll never change...”</p>	<p>Respond: There is a different word for God granting someone a “blessing” (e.g., Gen1:22; 12:2). In light of this it seems that, at times, we’re blessed simply for doing the right thing. That’s kind of nice isn’t it? What is a recent example of this in your life?</p> <p>Since a “wicked” person is one who neglects others...do you ever fit into that category of people? How can you work to change it if you do?</p> <p>Have you ever thought someone “can’t change”? At that point are you a “scoffer”? How does 2 Corinthians 5:17 fit into this?</p>
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Pray: Thank God for the privilege of worshipping Him with other believers yesterday. Confess to God any “scoffer-like” attitudes and thought processes you may have. Pray for Bob Griffin, Larry Hayes, and Roy Andrews – the elders of NLCC; pray for God’s protection of and guidance for them as they seek to continue their faithful service to God.

Tuesday: Responsibility (again)

Read: Psalm 1:2 ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

<p>Reflect: What is your view of God? Do you see Him as a “cosmic kill-joy” Who tries to take all the fun out of your life... Or do you see Him as a benevolent Father Who wants the best for all of His creation...</p> <p>How do you view His Word? Do you see God’s Word like a prison cell – it restricts your movements and actions... Or do you see God’s Word like a castle wall – it is for your protection; it’s easy and good for you because it reveals aspects about our Creator you need to know...</p> <p>The word for “law” is Torah. It represents the first five books of the Old Testament. However, it also means teaching, instruction, or guidance. Since the “blessing” of verse one is our responsibility...we’re fortunate to have a guide to that blessing – God’s Word.</p>	<p>Respond: How do you approach God when you know you’ve sinned? What does that say about how you view Him?</p> <p>The word for “delight” can be expressed by “to have one’s heart set on someone/thing”. What are the things in which you find delight? Does your life reflect them? Would others know simply by observing you?</p> <p>Meditation (defined Biblically) is to the soul what digestion is to the body; they’re both essential. How are you doing with your “spiritual nourishment”?</p>
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Pray: Tell God of your desire to delight in Him above all else. Pray for Ed Asbury, Mike Haag, and Keith Krause – the deacons of NLCC; thank God for their service. Thank God for those who are volunteering of their time to make Children’s Church a reality.

Wednesday: Established – purposefully

Read: Psalm 1:3 ³ 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.

<p>Reflect: Trees in Kansas (at least most parts) are about a dime a dozen. Generally speaking, if a tree is suddenly missing there is a good chance it won’t be missed, especially not as time passes. Yet in ancient Israel, trees were not all that common. They stood out – much like a godly person will stand out today.</p> <p>Notice again how this verse is not speaking of a reward of any type...but of a natural outcome. The tree bearing its fruit is the exact purpose for which it was created. The surprise should be if the tree did not produce fruit – then something is wrong.</p> <p>The “streams of water” are really irrigation canals. There was intent on the part of whoever planted the tree. Let’s see...this person doesn’t do ‘x’ (Monday), does do ‘y’ (Tuesday), and has made intentional preparations (today). Apparently our spiritual growth isn’t an accident.</p>	<p>Respond: Who are some godly people you can think of who “stand out” in our culture?</p> <p>If your child wasn’t growing physically you would think something was wrong and go to any and every doctor/specialist you could find – wouldn’t you? Why do we treat our spiritual growth any differently?</p> <p>What are the things for which you’d like to be noticed? Are they pleasing to God?</p>
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Pray: Pray that all believers will be intentional in their lives to establish themselves “like trees” for God’s glory. Pray for Cheryl Griffin, Betty Hayes, and Karen Andrews – the wives of NLCC’s elders. Continue to lift up to God the need for workers in His kingdom (Mt9:36-38) – both here at NLCC and in other God-honoring congregations.

Thursday: Established - unfortunately

Read: Psalm 1:4 ⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

<p>Reflect: The contrast could not be more striking. The righteous person is “like a tree”. He has substance; he is anchored down with massive roots which also provide nourishment. However, the wicked person is “like chaff”. Even the slightest breeze will disperse this kind...how tragic.</p> <p>There is a great deal of irony in these verses; people (in general) want to live lives of significance. Unfortunately wrong paths to significance are often pursued. It seems we need to distinguish between significance and recognition...</p> <p>A parent could pursue their career and receive numerous accolades – recognition. However, if their family was neglected in the process, the “time lost” is unrecoverable – significance. An individual may make a huge one time gift to charity without any other commitment – recognition. Yet another individual may regularly serve a charity despite not having large sums of money to give it – significance.</p>	<p>Respond: Read Matthew 7:24-29; what connections do you see with Psalm 1?</p> <p>Have you ever done something of significance that wasn’t recognized? Did that deter further efforts of doing what was right? Why? Why not?</p> <p>How can you focus more on doing what is of significance? What should be your guide to knowing what is of significance?</p>
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Pray: Pray for a heart that is truly concerned for those not living in a right relationship with God. Pray for Kathy Asbury, Linda Haag, and Tammy Krause – the wives of NLCC’s deacons. Pray Paul’s thoughts in Ephesians 3:14-21 for someone dear to you.