**Rhythms of Grace**

**Flourishing in 2022**

Psalm 1:1-6

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We started a new Year Series last week, Rhythms of Grace, looking at those habits/practices that produce spiritual growth. Christians do not naturally drift toward spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is the result of participating in those habits/practices that God uses to bring spiritual renewal and transformation so that so that over time we become more like Christ/flourish. We need to see spiritual growth as a long-term project, change is progressive over time. Today I want to look at Psalm one as we consider the practice of engaging Scripture as a means of spiritual growth/flourishing this year. This psalm paints a picture of flourishing as a fruitful tree because it is rooted in God and sustained by his word. Now, I recognize that all of us are in a process and are at different places spiritually. Some of us are not Christians and are considering Christ, some of us are coming back to Christ after drifting for a time, and some of us have been walking with Christ faithfully for a long time. If you want to flourish spiritually/grow spiritually then you must practice those rhythms and habits that over time will produce change and growth. My big idea is that flourishing comes from being rooted in God and sustained by his word.

**Rooted**

This psalm introduces us to the book of psalms, describing a life of faith, a faithful person, the New Testament counterpart to discipleship. Israel was full of those who pursued God and those who did not. As an introduction, this psalm describes what the blessed/flourishing life looks like. We often think of the blessed life as one full of material blessings but this psalm challenges that thinking. It describes the blessed/flourishing life as being rooted in God, the life of our triune God implanted within us, giving us new life (3). First, the blessed person is not rooted in the values of this world.[[1]](#footnote-1) We see this in verse one, 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. The blessed person is not being shaped by the influences of this present evil age, the worldviews and ideologies of our culture that opposes God. All of us are influenced by what we read, what we listen to, and what we watch.

The blessed/flourishing person is planted, rooted in God (3). The tree planted by streams of water is a picture of grace, God planting us in living water, made spiritually alive by the spirit in the new birth. The stream represents eternal life (Jn 4:10, 14; also Rev 21:6). As disciples/christians, God has rooted us in himself by his lifegiving Spirit. The tree flourishes because it is planted by streams of living water, an ever-present source of life. I want to draw our attention to two different rivers in the bible. We see a river watering the garden of Eden (Gen 2:10), a source of life for all of Eden. And then in Revelation you have the river of the water of life flowing from throne of God and the Lamb feeding the tree of life planted next to it so it yields fruit and its leaves are for the healing of the nations (22:1), reversing the curse of sin. Where are you rooted? Where you are rooted determines the fruit in your life. The flourishing person is rooted in God. Secondly the flourishing person is sustained by God’s word.

**Sustained**

The blessed/flourishing person delights in the law of the Lord, God’s word. He reads it carefully, engaging with it by thinking and pondering, coming under its influence. The person rooted in God desires and delights in God’s word. You may be thinking, I am rooted in God but I often don’t desire or delight in God’s word. Following Christ has different seasons, ups and downs, but there is one truth that is critical to understand. Engaging God’s word is the normal means he uses to create desire for his word and by which he changes our desires, and builds our faith.

Engaging God’s word sustains flourishing, notice that the tree is not just fruitful but it’s leaves do not whither. The psalm concludes with a warning. It describes those who are rooted in this world and not rooted in God so they are like chaff blown by the wind. When God judges humanity, those who are not rooted in God will perish, face eternal judgement.

Jesus is both the model and the means to flourishing. Jesus is the Christ who purchased the blessing of living water by his perfect life and his atoning death. So God plants us by living water, united to God by the Son. If you are thirsty, come to Jesus to be rooted and sustained with Spirit generated life.

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Establish/make a Plan to Read your Bible:

1. First, choose a reading plan. If you have no plan, read through the New Testament this year (260 chapters; 260 week days) or look at chronological bible or reading plans on FB page. ie shopping with no grocery list ~ junk food
2. Second, establish a regular/consistent time to read your bible. I recommend mornings because I think there is scriptural support for it but I will not be dogmatic about it.
3. Third, set aside a regular place to read your bible. Find a quiet spot, where you are alone and uninterrupted. Get rid of all distractions, including your phone, computer, etc. Hannah Welsley threw aproon
4. Fourth, establish a regular routine in reading your bible. Start out asking God to *open your eyes* that you may see wonderful things in his word and then ask him *to incline your heart* to his word. Ie my routine
5. Finally, team up with a friend to hold you accountable to your plan. Accountability is essential for consistent and long term spiritual growth. Ie D groups

A Simple Plan for Bible Engagement (H.E.A.R.)

1. First, read a chapter and Highlight the verse that jumps out to you. You can mark up your bible or write the verse(s) out. After a while, you will begin to see how God speaks to you through his word.
2. Second, Explain the text by writing out the verse (s) in your own words. Ask some basic questions like who, what, why, when, where, and how. The goal is to gain understanding and to raise your affections for God.[[2]](#footnote-2) Summarize paragraphs or chapters in one sentence. Ie~ Ie Tylar the most helpful tool
3. Third is Apply the text by taking a few minutes to think and pray and ask God how this verse (s) apply to your life. Ask God and consider ways to apply immediately and not just look to do something in the future.
4. Last, Respondby ending your bible reading praying about the verse (s) you highlighted, asking God for the strength to obey the text. Getting into God’s word until the Word gets into you will pave the way for long term spiritual growth that manifests in a life lived fully for Christ.

**Life Group Questions:**

HEAD:

1. What image comes to mind when you think of being planted, rooted, and flourishing?
2. Why do we so often think of blessing as primarily material blessing?
3. What is flourishing?

Heart

1. Are you flourishing?
2. What does it mean to be fruitful as Christians?
3. What does it mean for leaves not to whither in our lives?
4. Does the imagery of the tree describe your life? Why or why not?
5. How do you engage God’s word?

Hand

1. How is flourishing connected to engaging God’s word?
2. How often do you read your bible in a week?
3. Do you have a reading plan? Describe it.
4. Do you meditate or give focused attention and thinking when you read?
5. What do you think of the H.E.A.R. plan?

1. There is a contrast between the one rooted in the this world by the influence of those who oppose God and being planted by God by streams, a metaphor for God. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ps 119:15-16; you can see the connection between knowledge and affections in Rom 12:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)