

Today we explore how Psalmists grew their relationship with God, relating to Him in matters of the direction of their lives: where do I go? what should I do?

I recently read an article titled, **The 7 Biggest Lies Holding You Back From Happiness!**¹ Its not that I am particularly unhappy and my wife will attest to this, but everyone is peddling a happiness pill, potion or cure and I was curious to find out if there is something new on the market! I was pleasantly surprised to read the first line of the article, *Over (a period of) time, our consistent thoughts become our beliefs.* The author highlighted how, consistent thoughts can become dangerous beliefs: *Sometimes we tell ourselves subtle lies to feel better, which can eventually become our reality. It's easier to repeat these lies, than to face an uncomfortable truth that may be more painful to accept.*

The seven lies are:

1. *"He or she will change."*
2. *"I'll do it 'one day.'"*
3. *"If I had more time, I would do X, Y, Z."*
4. *"If I could just have X, everything would be so much better."*
5. *"I'm stuck."*
6. *"I'm not ready to do X."*
7. *"I'm not good enough",* is the most dangerous of the 7 lies we tell ourselves.

As an aside, I turned the page to discover the following article was titled, **25 Science-Backed Ways to Feel Happier!** Apparently, science cannot tell you how to **BE** happy, only how to **feel** happy!

¹ In "Greatist" by Susie Moore on 20 September, 2016

Coming back to the point, we human beings have a tendency of imposing on ourselves, various misleading beliefs, for two important reasons: the first is to suit ourselves, either to convince ourselves, wishing it become a reality, or convince someone else, hoping they would do our bidding, and the second reason which is significant to us is that we don't spend time finding out more about what we believe, and as a result, leave ourselves open to misleading beliefs. For example, we know as truth, the Bible contains all we need to know about how we can live well, flourish and prosper, so we take a verse in the Older Testament like the one in the book of Proverbs which says, *The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it*², and to it we add a verse from the Newer Testament which says, *I can do all things through him who strengthens me*³, and sometime in the future we wonder why life has not treated us well, **UNTIL** we realise the whole truth, which is, the Bible contains all we need to know to live well, how we can flourish and prosper, **in line with God's purpose!** Mao Tse Deng's little Red Book contained all the Chinese people needed to know to live well, **in line with Mao's purpose;** a political party's charter or manifesto contains all that the people need to know to live well, **in line with the political party's purpose,** so the Bible contains all we need to know to live well, flourish and prosper, in line with God's purpose.

The Psalmists who composed and sang these worshipful songs and hymns, offer us their rich and valuable experience of life, balancing the problems, pains and disappointment they faced in their lives, with the Word of God (promises of God), and the worship of God.

We are exploring today, two sets of Psalms, both of which are not only linked, but are intertwined.

² Proverbs 10:22

³ Philippians 4:13

The first set of Psalms, 1, 15 and 133, help us understand the circumstances which shape our relationship by which we can boldly ask of God **and** with confidence, expect Him to reply.

Psalm 1 tells us, *The Lord God watches over the way of the righteous. And who are the righteous? Anyone who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law they meditate day and night.*

So, if we spend time meditating, reading, contemplating and reflecting on the law of God, we will know what to ask of God, and God **WILL** answer our prayer, because we will be praying, in line with God's purpose.

Psalm 15 starts with the question, *who may dwell in God's sanctuary? Who may live on God's holy hill?*

In other words, *Who will be welcomed to live forever in God's house, as a member of His family?*

The answer which follows, should not be read as a checklist of conditions or qualifications to be accomplished or achieved to obtain the prize of being a *guest* in God's house, rather it addresses individual matters of our hearts, and attitudes in our spirit.

While Psalm 1 identified the *righteous*, in Psalm 15 we learn how the *righteous* are expected to live: they are to have moral integrity (2), live in fairness with their neighbours (3), honour and respect those who worship God in awe and reverence (4), keep their word (4), and live without greed (5). The Psalm ends with the wonderful promise, *those who practice to live by these standards in their lives, **GOD** ensures their enduring stability, their lasting security.*

Finally, Psalm 133 identifies the one thing which brings joy to God and melts His heart, when people live together as they should, in unity as

brothers and sisters would, concerned for their mutual well-being and looking after each other.

When we are true to God's calling, God anoints us, He makes us HOLY as the priests are made holy, when oil is poured on their heads as an act of consecration. Its not an image which excites me, that of oil being poured on my head, tricking down to my neck, but it is an act of consecration, of being made Holy, and therefore acceptable to God.

When we are true to God's calling in our lives, God's blessings remain with us even in difficult times, in the same way as little drops of dew protects, cares for and nourishes vegetation in dry season.

If *God watches over the way of the righteous*, tells us how we can live as righteous people, and delights in us when we live in harmony and at peace with our neighbours as brothers and sisters should, what should be our response?

Our response, however, is based on our relationship with God. Lets' be reminded of this: relationships are uniquely characterised by **trust**. Trust does not happen; it cannot be instructed nor enforced by law. Trust develops as a relationship **grows**, and relationships grow roots which are not visible, but yield flowers and fruits that are visible, only when the roots are cared for and nurtured.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, *the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal*⁴. Fruits and flowers come in their season, flourish and disappear, but the root, which is unseen, remains - the unseen is eternal!

Our response to God who has taken root in us, who watches over us, cares for us and nurtures us, our response is one and only, to be thankful, to express gratitude, to acknowledge, appreciate and give Him the credit for being our God.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:18

Feed and nurture the root, and fruit and flowers of a thankful and grateful heart will be visible for all to see.

The second set of Psalms, 95, 98 and 150 tell us, *everything that has breath (the spirit of God) should praise God*⁵, that obedience must follow worship⁶, and offers an invitation to “sing a new song” because God has made His salvation known to all people through the person of the Christ who is the **ONLY** access, the **ONLY** door through whom we enter into the Father’s eternal rest.

These two things go together, they are intertwined: asking God according to His purpose, and praising God for answered prayer.

You see, to ask God *according to His purpose*, is to know we will receive from Him. This is an undeniable and irrefutable fact. This becomes even more important when we receive something we do not deserve, but absolutely need: salvation from this veil-trapped world!

If today, you are praying, asking God for something, examine yourself whether you are making every effort to apply the principles of God’s laws in your life, that in the deep recesses of your heart, soul and mind, where habits dwell and live, and attitudes are fed, habits and attitudes which no one can see or hear, you are making every attempt to honour God.

Jesus meant this when He said, *When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Your Father, who sees what is done in secret (your hidden heart), will reward you.*⁷

As you make a regular habit of doing this, you will find yourself an enriching relationship with God, and praying **in line with God’s purpose.**

⁵ Psalm 150

⁶ Psalm 95

⁷ Matthew 6:6

Finally, if you are expecting God to answer your prayer, it is only appropriate that you should be *preparing* to thank Him, while waiting for Him to answer.

I am reminded of the account in the Gospel of Luke where Jesus heals 10 lepers of their leprosy, but only **ONE** returns to thank Him by falling at His feet in worship, to which Jesus says, *Were not 10 healed? The people identified by God's Name have disappeared without even a thought of expressing gratitude, but this foreigner (Samaritan) has fallen at my feet as an act of thankful worship! Where are the people known by my Name?*⁸

Thankfulness is a constant and prominent theme in the Bible. Paul instructs the church in Thessalonika, *Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*⁹.

Giving thanks in **ALL** circumstances should be a way of life for us, flowing naturally from our hearts and as expressions from mouths.

So how will we give thanks to God, even as we pray our needs to Him? How will we express our gratitude to God, for the work of His son on the cross?

Be prepared and ready with your gratitude and thanksgiving, even while you are waiting on God, for the answer to your prayers!

Lets' pray!

⁸ Luke 17

⁹ First Thessalonians 5:16-18