

\* *Blessed* \*

GUIDED SILENT RETREAT

## WELCOME MY \*BLESSED\* ONE

You are the Lord's "Blessed One." You have favored status with your Heavenly Father because you are his precious child and special in his sight. It is his great pleasure to bless you with the indwelling of his Holy Spirit who encourages you through every moment of life. He has also given you his Living Word so that you may meditate upon it, take delight in it and come to know him more intimately. His desire for you is to live a life in him that is blessed - satisfied, hopeful, full of joy and fruitful - even in the midst of trials.

By setting this time aside to be with the Lord, you have opened yourself to His welcome embrace. You have the privilege of growing deeper in intimacy and knowledge of the One who calls you his blessed child.

The practice of withdrawing for a time of concentrated fellowship with our Father was modeled for us throughout the life of Jesus on earth. During these intimate moments with his Father, Christ was heard, encouraged and strengthened. We too, can delight in these blessings from our Heavenly Father as we learn how to take pleasure in fellowship with him.

There is no right or wrong way to "do" a guided silent retreat. It is your time with the Lord. This booklet is simply an offering to help you to draw away from the daily distractions of life and find contentment in the truth and hope of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is your guide and God's Living Word your focus.

This retreat focuses on Psalm 1 and includes three meditations. Each meditation highlights verses from the theme passage as well as corresponding verses, questions and physical practices for your consideration. These are not assignments that need to be completed or followed. Allow the Lord to direct your time and be your loving Shepherd. He may lead you to meditate on one or two scriptures or reveal another passage of scripture that he knows will bless and encourage you.

Our prayer for you is that this will be a time when you find yourself simply delighting in the Lord. May his Word refresh and strengthen you.

## PREPARING YOUR HEART

As you physically step away from some of the distractions of your everyday life, you may find it challenging to let go and \*be\* with the Lord. Your mind, body & spirit may feel restless and preoccupied. If so, here are a few suggestions to help you redirect your attention to a posture of openness to receive what the Lord has for you:

- ❖ “Fast” from using your cell phone. Our cell phones symbolize connection to the world and may be a distraction to connecting with the Lord. Go old school and use a watch, printed bible, pen and journal. You will be amazed at how turning your phone off quiets your mind.
- ❖ If there are any areas of distraction, concerns, fears, or to-do’s that will keep you from being fully present to the Lord, write them down on a piece of paper and place them in an envelope. Close the envelope as a recognition that the Lord is Lord of all and fully capable of holding and handling all the challenges and concerns of your day (and life.) If any distractions continue during your retreat, you may add them to your envelope, the Lord will hold them for you.
- ❖ If you feel led, take a walk. You may want to take off your shoes and walk barefoot...feeling the ground beneath you. Often, moving your body quiets your mind.
- ❖ Depending on where you are spending your retreat time, there may be external noise or distractions. Instead of trying to force quiet, simply accept where you are today. God may use a distraction or what is causing the distraction as a teachable moment. Sometimes a jackhammer or a neighboring schoolyard can be a powerful analogy for a message God is trying to deliver.
- ❖ Part of the discipline of silence is to process emotions and thoughts with God versus talking to someone else about them. This can be a challenge for some of us who are verbal processors and may require a little extra patience.
- ❖ It is OK to rest and nap. Physical restoration may be part of the gift God has for you. Just be mindful that you don’t use sleep as an escape.
- ❖ Open your time in prayer. Take a deep breath....or two or three to quiet your soul. Consider a breath prayer, inhale a word (ex: Jesus). Exhale the words (ex: In me). When you feel you are ready, enjoy your time with the Lord.

## Beginning your retreat - BLESSED

**Psalm 1.** It is beautiful to note that the very first Psalm opens with the word “blessed”. Throughout the entire Bible God promises to bless those who take delight in him, meditate on his Word and walk in his ways. As you begin your retreat remember that God has a deep desire to bless you.

We have listed 3 different translations of Psalm 1 for this retreat. You may use one, all or another version for your retreat. Our prayer for you is that the Holy Spirit guides and directs your every moment as you begin to take great delight in his Word.

\*Read Psalm 1 slowly and gently, taking it all in.

\*Read it again until you come to a word or phrase that makes an impression on your mind.

\*Reflect on this thought and invite it to be a guest in your heart. Ask the Lord about any questions you may have about the passage. Take time to consider the promises and warnings in this passage.

\*You may choose to spend the rest of your time in prayer, confession and reflection - and/or participate in one or all of the following meditations.

\*Embrace and delight in this time, remembering that you are Christ's Blessed Beloved!

# Psalm 1

## **NIV**

“1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, 2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers. 4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

## **KING JAMES**

“1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

## **PASSION**

“1 What delight comes to the one who follows God’s ways! He won’t walk in step with the wicked, nor share the sinner’s way, nor be found sitting in the scoffer’s seat. 2 His pleasure and passion is remaining true to the Word of “I Am,” meditating day and night in the true revelation of light. 3 He will be standing firm like a flourishing tree planted by God’s design, deeply rooted by the brooks of bliss, bearing fruit in every season of his life. He is never dry, never fainting, ever blessed, ever prosperous. 4 But how different are the wicked. All they are is dust in the wind—driven away to destruction! 5 The wicked will not endure the day of judgment, for God will not defend them. Nothing they do will succeed or endure for long, for they have no part with those who walk in truth. 6 But how different it is for the righteous! The Lord embraces their paths as they move forward while the way of the wicked leads only to doom.”

## Meditation 1 - Blessed, Delight & Meditate (Psalm 1:1-2)

“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, <sup>2</sup> but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.”

**Blessed.** How wonderful it is to know that God's desire is to bless you all the days of your life. From Genesis to Revelation, God pours out his blessing on people who know him, trust him and obey his word. His blessing is not one of circumstance, rather it is a posture of contentment and joy that is found in fellowship with him.

**Delight.** Digging into God's Word and exploring all that it reveals about the glory and majesty of his character brings great delight. God has been revealing himself since the beginning of time. His desire is that you might know him, submit to his Word and experience peace and fulfillment in him. He wants you to become wonderfully aware of all that he is accomplishing in you and those around you.

**Meditate.** We are encouraged to meditate on God's law - believing his promises and obeying his commands. As you begin to discover the rich treasures awaiting you, you will be ministered to by his grace and challenged by the truth. God's Word speaks into your every condition, allowing you to find guidance, peace, comfort and clarity as he shapes your soul.

Psalm 119:14 paints a beautiful picture of the personal nature & delight of meditating on God's word:

*“I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.”*

Take time to ponder the first two verses of Psalm 1 ... you may want to consider the following questions and practices:

1. *Remembering that it is God's desire to **ble**ss us, can you think of a special time of fellowship with the Lord in the past few months that has blessed you and given you hope and joy? Take time to reflect ...you may want to write, draw or journal about how this time with the Lord has impacted your life.*

2. *As you think about a particular passage or verse in the Bible, is there one that brings you **del**ight? Why? If you are having difficulty thinking of a passage, ask the Lord to give you a new passage of scripture that will allow him to **del**ight you.*

3. *Is there a passage of scripture that you have questions about? You may want to take some time to **med**itate on that passage, asking the Lord to answer your questions and reveal something about himself.*

*“When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty.” Jeremiah 15:16*



## Meditation 2 - Planted, Rooted & Fruitfulness (Psalm 1:3)

“That person is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers”.

**Planted.** When a tree is planted there is the expectation that it will grow and be fruitful. When you are planted in Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Lord has a wonderful expectation that you will grow and be fruitful, becoming more like Jesus by displaying the fruits of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:22-23.

**Rooted.** Jesus is the reason you grow, he supplies the streams of living water that you need in order to develop deep roots, blossom and please him in every way. He promises that your leaves will never wither because He lives in you forever. There may be seasons that you feel dry, discouraged or hopeless. Yet, even during these times you have God’s promise that he has the power to prosper you for His Kingdom sake and make you fruitful.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

**Fruitful.** While Jesus was here on earth, he modeled a life that was completely dependent upon and rooted in relationship with His Father. Jesus spent time alone with his Father - asking, seeking and listening. The deep abiding relationship that he had with his Father allowed him to be fruitful in every part of his life. This may seem like a lofty and unattainable goal, yet, it can be freeing to know that if we spend our days asking, seeking and listening, we too can have a deep abiding relationship with our Father.

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” Jeremiah 17:7-8

As you think about God's plan to prosper you in every season:

1. *You may want to write or draw about the season of life you are in right now. Consider the images of a tree... its roots, trunk, leaves, fruit and its surroundings. This might help you articulate and visualize your current season.*

2. *God has planted you right where you are supposed to be today. Remembering this truth, is he asking you to depend upon him to do something that seems difficult, painful and impossible ... and can only be accomplished through him? If this is true for you, take time to write or draw about this challenge.*

3. *How do you take comfort and hope in God's plan for you? What would you like Him to produce or continue producing in your life?*

*"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor." Isaiah 61:3b*

## Meditation 3- The Way of the Righteous Psalm 1:4-6

“Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.<sup>6</sup> For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

**The Way of the Righteous.** As we move through this Psalm, we come to another powerful promise that the Lord watches over, “ the way of the righteous”. The way of the righteous involves walking by faith, standing for the principles of Jesus and sitting in His word. The righteous make a conscious decision each day - choosing to serve, surrender and allow the Lord to direct their way.

“Do not be conformed to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2” .

**Watches Over.** To watch over means much more than to simply look upon from afar and notice what is happening. To watch over someone involves active and intimate involvement. The Lord cares deeply about how the righteous walk, stand, sit. He freely gives the righteous wisdom, guidance and protection from being destroyed. What beautiful assurance you have, knowing you are being lovingly watched over and guided by the Lord of all creation, each and every day of your life.

*“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to blot out their name from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:15-18*

Consider how the Creator of all is watching over your life:

1. *As a physical practice, you may want to create the story of your life – beginning at your birth and moving to the present day. Choose moments and events when the Lord has guided, protected, interrupted, delivered, comforted or instructed you. Embrace this time of reflecting on how he has watched over you since before the beginning of time. You may draw a picture, journal, paint, write a timeline, poem or psalm, decoupage with magazine clippings, colored paper or make a collage. Be as creative as you like, REMEMBERING that you are God's glorious masterpiece & your story is His story.*

*“... I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:17-19*

## Excerpts from "The Way of the Righteous"

J.R. Miller 1912

\*\*\*"Marvin Vincent has written a delightful book on certain of the Psalms, which he has happily called "Gates into the Psalm Country." It is pleasant to notice that the gate into the whole Psalm country, the very first word in the Book of Psalms, is the word "Blessed." All who enter this wonderful enclosure are blessed. It is interesting to note also that our Lord's first sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, begins with the same word "Blessed"—the gate into the Gospel country. This country is the kingdom of heaven, the Father's house, and it abounds with blessings for all who come into it.

The "Blesseds" of the Bible shine as thickly on its pages, as stars shine in the sky. A most interesting and profitable Bible study is to go through the Scriptures to find the passages which tell who are the "blessed" ones. It is pleasant to remember that the last glimpse this world had of Jesus—that He was in the attitude of blessing. He had His hands stretched out over His disciples on ascension day, blessing them, when He began to ascend. Ever since that moment, blessings have been raining down from those pierced hands upon a sorrowing earth!"

\*\*\*A perfumer bought a common earthen jar, and filled it with attar of roses. Soon every particle of the substance of the jar was filled with the rich perfume, and long afterwards, and even when broken, the fragments retained the fragrance. So it is, that a Christian's life becomes filled, saturated with the Word of God—when he loves it and meditates upon it continually. His thoughts, feelings, affections, dispositions, and his whole character, become colored and imbued with the spirit of the Holy Word.

\*\*\* A tree consists of two parts—a root; and then the trunk, branches and foliage. The root is unseen, hidden away in the ground, and is not admired; yet it is essential. It holds the tree firmly in its place, and it nourishes it. There is also a hidden, an unseen part of a Christian life. The world does not see when you bow in prayer, when you meditate in

*secret. It does not see your inner heart—life of faith and love. Yet as the root is essential to the tree, so is this unseen life, essential to the Christian. The other part of the tree is the trunk, with its branches and foliage. This is what people see. Here is where the beauty is. Every Christian life has also a visible part—the character, the conduct, the acts.*

*\*\*\*What is the purpose of fruit? It is not merely to decorate the tree. It is not hung on the branches merely to be ornamental. Fruit is to be eaten, to feed the hunger of men. The test of a Christian life, therefore, is that by its sympathy, love, comfort, helpfulness, cheer, influence, and service in all ways—it is a blessing to others, feeds their heart hunger, makes them happier, stronger, better.*

*Entire article:* [https://www.gracegems.org/Miller/way\\_of\\_the\\_righteous.htm](https://www.gracegems.org/Miller/way_of_the_righteous.htm)

## PLANNING A RETREAT

### ***For a personal retreat:***

- *Set a timeframe for your retreat—it could be hours or a full day.*
- *Choose a location that you enjoy and offers some sense of quiet—this could be your home, a friend’s home, church setting, park or a retreat center.*
- *Print out the retreat and then set your cell phone and computer aside for the day. Use a printed Bible. It is helpful to let your loved ones and work associates know that you will be having a personal retreat.*
- *Plan your menu in advance. Shop for and prepare your food the day before.*
- *Pray over your retreat the week before.*
- *Order or buy retreat materials ahead of time. For suggested resources, see next page.*

### ***For facilitating a group retreat in-person or virtually:***

#### ***Retreat Preparation:***

- *Begin the planning for your retreat date and venue 3 months ahead of time. Designate a retreat facilitator and select a team to help organize the retreat. Specify individual assignments: registration, virtual computer manager (who coordinates an audio/visual platform like Zoom), greeter, food preparation, material/supplies, set up & clean up.*
- *For your venue, a rule of thumb is to plan on one or two people occupying common living spaces and one person per bedroom. Because of the solitary nature of a retreat, you may want to encourage people not to sit next to each other or occupy close personal space.*
- *If you are using outdoor space, make sure to take weather (heat or cold) into consideration. If it is a park or public space it is helpful to contact the managing office regarding gardening schedules or other events occurring on the property.*
- *Pray about who to invite. If you are inviting people from your church, you may want to speak with the appropriate person on how to put a notice in the church bulletin.*
- *It is helpful to email an invitation with time and location/virtual platform details 2 months out. If you have access to setting up a webpage, this is also a helpful tool.*
- *Identify how you want participants to RSVP and make payment. This can either be via a website or they can bring payment on the day of retreat.*
- *Develop a general schedule for the day. For example:*

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 8:30 – 9:00 | Arrival and Continental Breakfast available               |
| 9:00 – 9:15 | Welcome orientation, prayer into silence & Meditation One |
| 11:00       | Meditation Two  |
| 12:15       | Lunch available   |
| 1:00        | Meditation Three  |
| 2:45        | Break silence by (optional)sharing reflections on retreat |

- *Select a menu. You can order meals from a local deli or restaurant, or choose a menu that is easy to prepare ahead of time. As the facilitator, you don't want to be distracted in the kitchen preparing food when you could be welcoming participants and launching their time of silence.*
- *Purchase retreat supplies. For list and suggested resources see next page.*
- *The week prior to the retreat, spend time in prayer over the participants.*

### ***Retreat Day***

- *When you gather the participants, take a few moments to welcome them and give a brief introduction of your team. You may want to have each participant introduce themselves. After introductions, offer logistical information as well as the time frame of the retreat and when meals will be served. Answer any questions they may have concerning the retreat.*
- *Offer an opening prayer and invite participants into silence.*
- *At the conclusion of the retreat, gather the participants back for a short time of sharing. This is a beautiful way to break their silence. When people share, others can be encouraged. Often there are common themes that emerge during this sharing that bless the entire group.*

### ***Suggested retreat supplies:***

1. *Copies of "Blessed" retreat content*
2. *Colored pens, pencils, markers, crayons, pastels*
3. *Painting supplies*
4. *Canvas panel boards, art paper*
5. *Magazines and modge podge/glue sticks*
6. *Scissors*
7. *Extra journals*

*\*Email PDF of retreat material & supply list to virtual participants the day before the retreat.*

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