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The Way of Life

Vital Practices for Your Spiritual Journey

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—**

Psalm 1 (NIV)

whatever they do prospers.

⁴ Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff

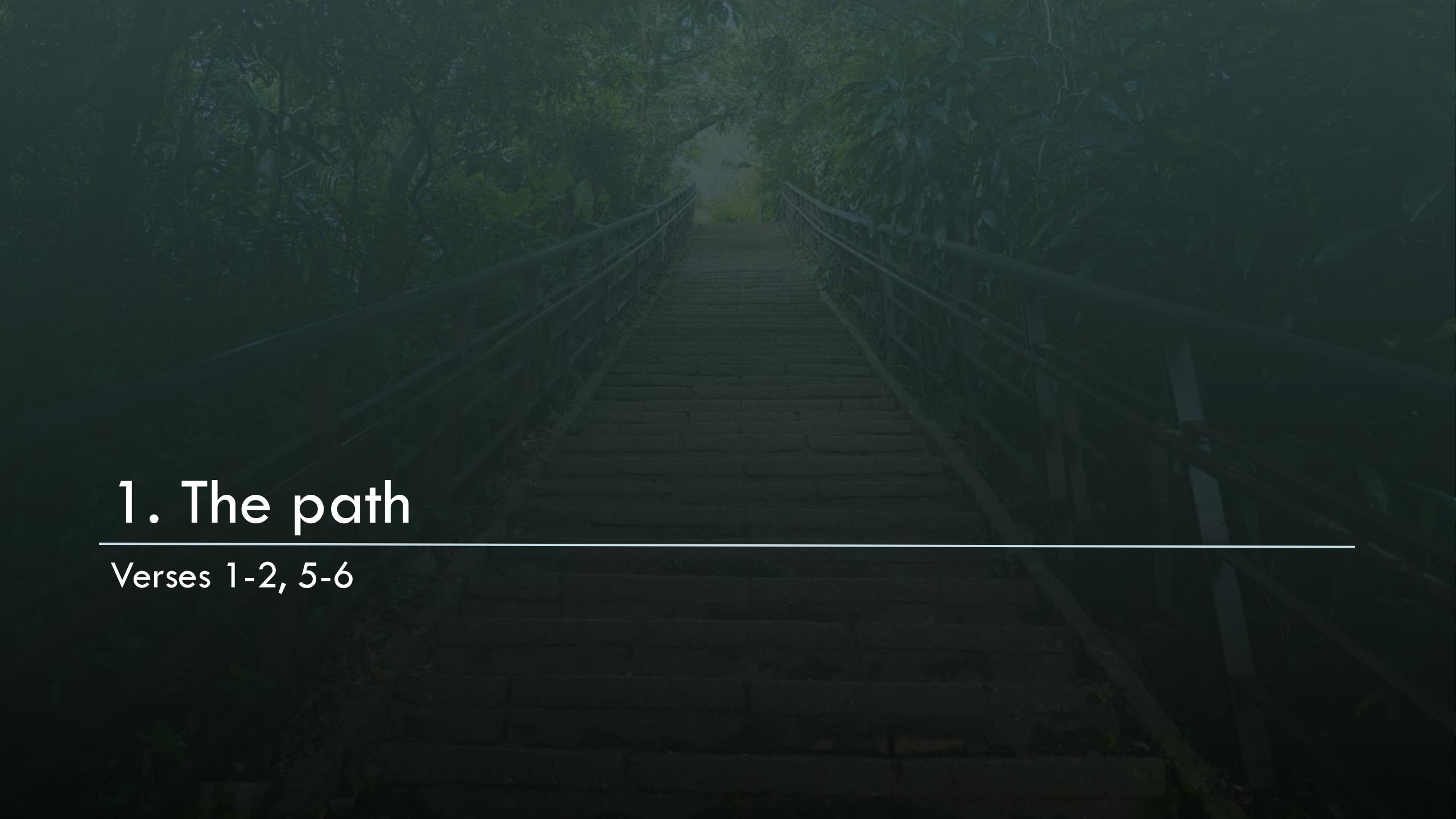
that the wind blows away.

**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 leads to destruction.**

Psalm 1

1. The path
2. The picture
3. The practice



1. The path

Verses 1-2, 5-6

1. The path

The contrasts in Psalm 1

- **Two kinds of people**
- **Two ways to live**
- **Two final destinies**

Psalm 1:1-2, 5-6

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....

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

⁶ For the Lord watches over (“knows,” ESV) the way of the righteous,

but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23 (ESV)

¹³ “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few...²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

1. The path

The contrasts in Matthew 7

- **Two kinds of people**
- **Two ways to live**
- **Two final destinies**



2. The picture

Verses 3-4

Psalm 1:3-4

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.

2. The picture

The good life in Psalm 1

- **Stability** (*like a tree planted*)
- **Vitality** (*by streams of water*)
- **Productivity** (*which yields its fruit in season*)
- **Durability** (*whose leaf not wither*)
- **Prosperity** (*whatever they do prospers*)

—from Dale Ralph Davis, *The Way of the Righteous*
in *the Muck of Life: Psalms 1-12* (p. 19)

Jeremiah 17:5-8

⁵ Thus says the Lord:

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man
and makes flesh his strength,
whose heart turns away from the Lord.

⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see any good come.

He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

Jeremiah 17:5-8

⁷ “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

⁸ He is like a tree planted by water,
that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes,
for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit.”



Early on in my paralysis — and almost by accident — I unearthed an unexpected treasure. I opened the word of God and discovered a mine shaft. I dug my paralyzed fingers into a weight of incomprehensible glory, a sweetness with Jesus that made my paralysis pale in comparison. In my great joy, I went out and sold everything, trading in my resentment and self-pity to buy the ugly field nobody else would want. And I struck gold. After decades of using the pick and shovel of prayer and Scripture, my field has yielded the riches of the kingdom of heaven. I have found a God who is thunderous, full-throttled joy spilling over.

—Joni Earekson Tada



3. The practice

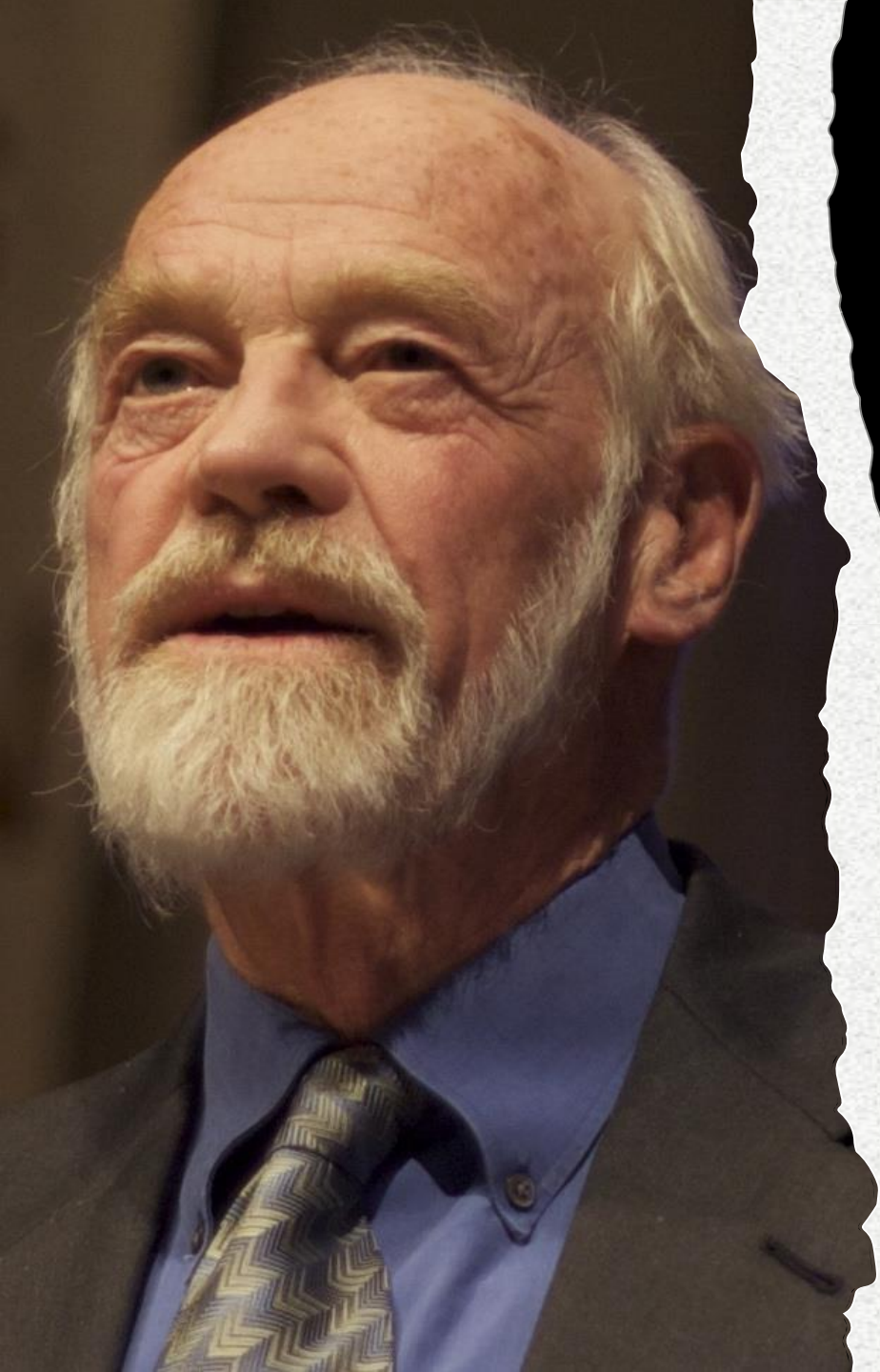
Verse 2

Psalm 1:1-2

¹ Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
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² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

3. The practice

a. What is meditation?



‘Hagah’ is a word that our Hebrew ancestors used frequently for reading the kind of writing that deals with our souls. But ‘meditate’ is far too tame a word for what is being signified . . . when Isaiah’s lion and my dog meditated they chewed and swallowed, using teeth and tongue, stomach and intestines: Isaiah’s lion meditating his goat (if that’s what it was); my dog meditating his bone. There is a certain kind of writing that invites this kind of reading, soft purrs and low growls as we taste and savor, anticipate and take in the sweet and spicy, mouth-watering and soul-energizing morsel words – ‘O taste and see that the LORD is good!’” (Ps. 34:8).

—Eugene Peterson, *Eat this Book*



By disciplined meditation I mean the art of thinking of some chosen spiritual subject in an orderly, disciplined way. . . The aim of disciplined meditation is to arouse our hearts to experience a sense of love, delight, and humility.

—John Owen, *Spiritual-Mindedness* (p. 120)

3. The practice

a. What is meditation?

Meditation is the art of engaging your mind and heart in the contemplation of God and his word.

3. The practice

b. How do you meditate?

3. The practice

b. How do you meditate?

- A time
- A place
- A plan



I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands. That is, I think of each commandment as first, instruction, which is really what it is intended to be, and consider what the Lord God demands of me so earnestly. Second, I turn it into a thanksgiving; third, a confession; and fourth, a prayer... These are the 10 Commandments in their fourfold aspect, namely, as a *school text*, a *song book*, a *penitential book*, and *prayer book*. They are intended to help the heart come to itself and grow zealous in prayer.

—Martin Luther, “A Simple Way to Pray”

Summary

1. The path
2. The picture
3. The practice



A. W. Hedges (1925-2020)