

Challenge

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PRAYER LETTER OF CHALLENGE LITERATURE FELLOWSHIP (AUST.) INC.

With the beginning of a New Year it is a good time to take stock of where we are in our spiritual walk. I think it is important to take time to transparently and honestly assess how we are travelling spiritually. A good Psalm that can help us in this process is Psalm 1, which can give us some good diagnostic questions to ask ourselves as we look at how we are growing in the grace and knowledge of God.

Psalm 1 can be broken into two easy sections because it depicts the life of the godly person and the ungodly. The life of the godly person is marked by a number of key markers in terms of his or her daily walk.

1. The person who receives a blessing: verses 1-3. I think it would be reasonable to assume that every one of us wants to be blessed but the way the Word of God uses this word and how we use it is quite different. The word blessed means to know joy overflowing, joy many times over. It is God's desire that our lives as vital alive Christians are marked by joy.

The other important thing that we need to be marked by is that we don't go to the world for advice. Sadly we see that many Christians put more importance on the counsel of the world than the counsel of the Word of God. We see Christians making decisions in areas of finance and marriage on the basis of what the world has to say. Notice how there is a progression of spiritual decline when we go to the world for counsel. We start with a walk with the ungodly and regress to standing in the path of sinners and regress further to sitting in the seat of the scornful. Taking the world's advice can be very costly indeed and do irreparable damage to our walk with God.

But notice how the godly person grows in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

He is directed by the Word of God. By implication the person who experiences joy overflowing from God is the person who is directed by the Word of God. This is the person who places his confidence in the Word of God and comes with an attitude of humility. He is the person who is yielded and surrendered to whatever God's will is for his life.

He delights in the Word of God. This tells us that the reading and study of God's Word is not a chore but a delight. I have often been surprised to hear Christians say that they don't enjoy reading the Word of God or that it is boring. I realise that there are some sections of the Bible that are not exactly riveting reading. One of the ways that I find it helpful to gain some benefit from such passages is to read devotionally on the particular section. This is a good way to help us to meditate on what we have read. The idea of meditation here is not what the world considers it. The world talks about emptying one's mind and then filling it with some mumbo-jumbo that has no meaning or makes no sense.

However, when the psalmist talks about meditating on the Scriptures it is all about filling our minds with the Word of God so that it impacts the way we think. This is why Paul exhorts us in Romans 12v2: *And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God.*

The idea of meditating on the Word of God also has the idea of memorising the Scriptures. It is the idea that David talks about in Psalm 119v11: *Your Word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you.* It is not possible to have a Bible to read throughout the day, but one can meditate on the Scripture that is hidden in the heart. Often this is the only way that Christians in China can meditate on the Scriptures because they don't have access to a Bible.

He is developed by the Word of God. So the Christian that is directed by the Word of God and delights in the Word of God is then developed by the Word of God in terms of his character and fruitfulness. He is like a tree planted by a river. The characteristic of a tree is that it is strong upright stable because its roots are deep into the deep life-giving underground water flow. Such a tree bears fruit in season. This means that this sort of Christian bears fruit at just the right time. The root development is illustrated by the fact that this tree does not have withered leaves. No matter what the weather conditions this sort of tree can handle them by not showing any outward effects of the conditions.

This tells us that the Christian that has his roots deep into the life-giving Word of God will be marked by fruit bearing at just the right time, and will not be easily disturbed when difficult times come along, which they invariably do. This sort of Christian is not marked by impatience or irritability.

Then the outworking of this is that whatever we do God is pleased to prosper it. So as a result of being directed by God's Word and delighting in it and then be developed by it, God is pleased to prosper us. The word "does" in verse 3 literally means that no matter what walk of life you come from, or whatever occupation you have God is pleased to prosper you in it.

(Please turn over)

Maybe as you have been reading these thoughts you have realised that your life is not in tune with God the way it should be. Why don't you take stock and ask God to do a new work in your life right now. The devil is the great procrastinator and would love you to put it off to some other convenient time, but don't let him dissuade you from what God wants you to be. Go ahead right now and make your life count for God and bear fruit, much fruit, fruit that remains. Have a great 2006 and may God prosper you in whatever you do.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge



Praise

1. Praise God for a very encouraging trip for Carl Carmody to Kenya and Malawi. We are seeing wonderful results with the paper distribution in Kenya and hope to get our first edition into Malawi in February.
2. We are so thankful to God for what has been one of the best years we have had for commitments we have received here in Australia. The temptation is to stop what we are doing in Australia because of the success we are seeing overseas. However, we are as burdened for Australia as we have ever been and so we want to expand our work around the nation.
3. We were very encouraged with the extra orders for our Christmas edition of the paper. We distributed almost 80,000 papers and we are trusting the Lord for a steady flow of commitments as a result of this.
4. Praise the Lord for the farmers who have given us wheat into the silo under our name. This is an incredible blessing especially for the work in Africa. We are also hugely thankful for all the folks who give regularly to our work and for those who have given from time to time. We simply could not survive unless we had these sacrificial gifts given.
5. Praise the Lord for new churches that have included us in their regular mission support program in recent days.
6. Praise God for the incredible number of responses we are seeing to the paper in Africa. Recent figures from Kenya and other southern African countries have indicated to us that Challenge is such an appropriate tool for evangelism in these places.

Prayer

1. Pray for our work in Australia this year as we want to see the work expand significantly. We are planning to do some promotion into northern New South Wales in February-March, and then later on in the year into Queensland.
2. Please continue to pray for ongoing arrangements for the production of our first language edition of the paper in Spanish for Argentina. We are working with Will Herndon from Word of Life in Argentina so please pray for him as he organises translation and printing of the paper as well as doing some preliminary promotion. We anticipate printing around 10,000 papers for our first edition, but that figure may go up as we look to doing a Soccer World Cup edition for June.
3. Please pray for our partner organisations that do a great job in getting out the good news of the gospel. Pray for Multi Ministries and their excellent staff as they oversee all the distribution of Challenge in southern Africa. Pray for NZ Challenge Weekly as they get out the paper across New Zealand. Pray for Paul Dondoh and the work of Peacemakers International in Kenya.
4. Pray for our work in general as we need to see an ongoing increase in our funding to keep and expand our existing paper distribution, plus the new areas beginning in 2006. One never likes to talk money but it is a reality that needs to be addressed especially as we see new opportunities arise overseas.
5. Another area of real need is funding for follow up to commitments made in Kenya. At the moment we are trying to get Bibles to Paul Dondoh as soon as possible because the longer it takes the harder it becomes to deal with this critical issue. One of the major problems we face is the influence of the cults with their false teaching.



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