

## Evergreen

### Songs of David: Volume 2, Part 5

#### *Psalm 1:2-6*

To millions of people, the news has been devastating. In the past few years, one major corporation or banking industry after another has had to acknowledge that their client's credit card information had been breached.

Millions of credit card accounts have been hacked and money stolen; from Target to Chase, hackers have found a way in.

I recently read that one cybercrime gang has stolen as much as \$34 million dollars in just this year alone.

\$34 million dollars!

But another group of hackers impacted 34 million lives. They hacked their way into an online business called Ashley Madison – it's an online dating site with one primary objective – to allow married people to find other married people to cheat on their spouses.

Their advertising motto is one brutal phrase, "Life is short. Have an affair."

And more than 34 million people have signed on.

The hackers wanted to shut the site down – so they hacked in and then published the names, ages, addresses, phone numbers and even personal messages that they had sent to other married customers.

Business leaders were exposed; bankers, teachers, ministers, authors, UN peacekeepers and Vatican employees were brought out into the light.

The Ashley Madison website had been nicknamed the Google of Cheating – and its president publically responded, ironically, I might add, calling the data breach "an act of criminality" – I mean how can anybody do something so bad . . . a full FBI investigation is underway.

Listen, the problem isn't cybercrime – the problem is a sinful heart, and cybercrime and stealing and adultery are simply the fruit of sin.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a medical doctor and the inventor and author of Sherlock Holmes lived in England 100 years ago. And on one occasion, as a prank – merely as a funny prank – he sent an anonymous telegram to several of his well-known, prominent friends. The telegram simply read, "All is discovered." He didn't expect the result and the scandal to follow. Within 48 hours, the majority of the people, who'd received one of his telegrams, had left the country and disappeared.

Frankly, no one – especially the believer – gets up in the morning planning on ruining their reputation, their integrity, their marriage or their lives.

And it doesn't usually happen with one decision to commit one great big sin – instead, it's the result of many little decisions – many little compromises, many sins along the way.

A few years ago, one research group asked adults who considered themselves to be evangelical Christians, which of the following

eight behaviors they had engaged in during the past week. The results were staggering.

In just the past seven days:

- 28% had used profanity;
- 20% had gambled;
- 19% had viewed pornography;
- 12% had gossiped about someone else;
- 12% had gotten drunk;
- 11% had lied about something;
- And 9% had been sexually involved with someone other than their spouse.<sup>i</sup>

In one week's time.

I say all that to say simply that no believer is never out of harm's way . . . frankly, we have the ability to commit any sin and fail in any situation. None of our sins should be managed, or hidden, but confessed and repented of.

Peter wrote to the believers and reminded them to be alert – literally, stay awake – for the devil – that old serpent – was also *like a roaring lion, roaming around seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8)*.

That verb *to devour* literally means he will swallow you whole. In other words, he can't have your soul, but he can destroy the totality of your life.

You don't flirt with a hungry lion. You don't pat it on the head and say, "Nice kitty cat . . . nice kitty cat . . . there's no such thing."

You don't turn your back on a dangerous snake either. You stay alert . . . I was driving home the other day, and a snake was slithering across the street. It wasn't dark or gray but patterned in rust and brown. I didn't think twice – I swerved over in my pickup truck and ran over it.

I didn't stop to talk to it . . . to witness to it . . . I ran over it.

Don't negotiate with sin . . . don't play with it or manage it discreetly . . . it can swallow you whole.

Let's go back to Psalm chapter 1 and remind ourselves of the warning.

*Look at verse 1. How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked* – remember that key word – to walk, which

effectively means, the godly man – or woman – doesn't merge lanes and walk along with someone who will give them wicked counsel.

Notice further, *nor stand in the path of sinners* – this refers to taking a stand – agreeing with the perspective of someone who is committed to sinning.

Don't walk with them, or take a stand with them.

Because if you do . . . notice, *nor sit in the seat of the scoffers*.

At first you're walking with them; then you're standing around agreeing with them; then sitting in the chair that endorses them.

Don't walk, stand or sit under the influence of those who want nothing to do with God and His word. It'll ruin your relationships, your marriage . . . and potentially the entirety of your life.

This is what you are *not* to do . . . **but telling someone what not to do is not enough, is it?**

*Look at verse 1* tells us what *not* to do, now *verse 2* will tell us what to do.

*Notice verse 2, But his delight is in the law of the Lord.*

Notice, the next key word to circle is the word *delight*.

Notice, *his delight is in the law of the Lord.*

The word is our joy!

It's our delight.

If you delight in a person, you want to spend time with that person; if you delight in a song, you want to sing that song; if you delight in a book, you want to read that book; if you delight in some hobby, you want to spend time with that hobby.

The blessed person delights in the word of God.

- He doesn't *walk* with the wicked – because he doesn't delight in them;
- he doesn't *stand* with the sinner because he takes no delight in them;
- he doesn't *sit* with the scoffers because that isn't delightful or even interesting to him.

*He delights in the law of the Lord.*

In the Psalms, *the law* is often used, not simply as a reference to the Torah, but as a categorical expression of the Lord's mind or will.

Which means the Psalmist here isn't referring to one part of God's revelation, but all of it.

The Apostle Paul says the same thing to Timothy – remember from our study this morning, *the word of God is inspired and profitable for doctrine (what's right), for reproof (what's wrong), for correction (how to get right) and for training in righteousness (how to stay right); so that the man of God will be entirely stocked up for the voyage of life. (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17 paraphrased)*

Progressing in life and marriage and relationships is really *all* about *all* of God's revealed truth.

Some people get a verse or two and twist it so badly they make it defend their opinion, and it distorts their perspective.

I read the funny story about a man who got a verse or two from the Bible quoted in a book written to men on how to be, you know, the real man of the house; in fact, the book was entitled, "Man of the House."

One day he was reading it during his train commute home from work. He figured it was time to try it out on his wife. He walked in the front door, pointed his finger at her and said, "From now on, I'm the man of the house; my word is the order of the day; tonight you're going to prepare my favorite meal; and when I'm done eating, you'll draw me a bath and when I'm finished relaxing in my bath, guess who's going to dress me and comb my hair?" His wife said, "Well that would be the Funeral Director."

The Psalmist doesn't say we delight in the word because we get a verse or two that supports our desires – he's implying that we delight in the totality of the word so that we end up supporting God's desires.

Delight is the first keyword to practice.

The second keyword to practice is the word – *meditate* – notice, *verse 2b, and in His law he mediates day and night.*

The Hebrew word for *meditate* literally means to utter sounds.<sup>ii</sup>

Let me point out something not as well known about meditation. The word meditation (hagah) means to mutter . . . it refers to the movement of the mouth.<sup>iii</sup>

It's the same verb used to describe an animal growling or the murmuring of a dove – even a cow chewing its cud.<sup>iv</sup>

This was the command to Joshua – *to not let the Book of the law depart from his – what? – his mouth. (Joshua 1:8)*

In other words, you're constantly thinking it over – you're muttering to yourself the implications of verses you're reading . . . you're chewing on it . . . you're talking to yourself according to what scripture says and not what your feelings dictate.

Meditation isn't the emptying of your mind; it's the filling of your mouth and mind with scripture.

I am troubled by only one more fad in the evangelical church – and it's called contemplative prayer. This is the practice of simply remaining silent and waiting to hear the voice of God.

It's a practice that tracks back to the Medieval Catholic church and the solitude of the monastery. It led to mysticism, not meaning; it led to confusion, not clarity.

Listen, we don't wait for God to speak – He has spoken. And the true idea of meditation is not sitting in silence; it's recalling and ruminating and repeating the truth of scripture because you really want to follow it.

That's the challenge – you want to obey it!

What are you ruminating on . . . what are you chewing on?

Here's how to progress in marriage, in relationships, in spiritual maturity – you are delighting . . . meditating on the word.

And the person who will sink the roots of their mind and their life into the soil of the written word with an attitude of submission and obedience – here's what happens to them.

Three words begin to characterize this individual's life, his relationships, and certainly his marriage. They are tree-like characteristics.

### 1. The first word is stability

*Notice verse 3; He will be like a tree planted by streams of water.*

The illustration is of a tree firmly rooted – it's healthy because it's able to draw from the water nearby . . . it grows strong and stable.

Paul wrote to the Colossians, *as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith (Colossians 2:6-7).*

So this person who says “no” to the dry, dusty counsel of the world and says “yes” to the thirst quenching water of the word which is the counsel of God.

The analogy is that the roots of your life will drink in the wisdom and counsel of God. Now be patient, no tree grows up overnight . . . like a tree, it takes years to build a life . . . but you can start anytime.

### 2. The second characteristic of someone who's life becomes “treelike” – is the word fruitfulness.

*Notice verse 3 again – He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season.*

In other words, roots that pull up and in spiritual truth will result in fruit that is spiritual.

And what is spiritual fruit but the fruit of the Spirit – Paul writes – and by the way, consider how these might affect your marriage – *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22)*

You say, but I've been trying. Man, I've been working at my marriage for years. You have no idea how long, I've tried.

Have you ever thought about the fact that Adam died at the age of 930; it's possible that Adam and Eve were married for 900 years.

900 years.

You're thinking, I don't have it so bad after all.

One guy came up to me years ago – he'd been married nearly 60 years, and he said to me – with absolute seriousness; Stephen, I have the secret to a good marriage.” I said, “Tell me, what is it.” He said, “On the day I was married, I told my wife, “I will not try to run your life; and I will not try to run mine.”

He had 60 years to practice that secret!

Listen, the issue is not to try to work up love and kindness and patience. The real issue is to dig down roots into the word of Christ, and the character of Christ by the river of the wisdom of Christ and love and patience and kindness become the fruit.

Stability . . . fruitfulness . . .

### 3. One more word – endurance

*Notice further in verse 3, and its leaf does not wither; and whatever he does prospers.*

When tough times come, this tree – did you notice – this an evergreen tree. It's leaves don't dry up and blow away in the heat of summer or the cold months of winter.

In fact, notice the comparison in *verse 4. The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away* – in other words, they're here today and gone tomorrow. The wicked sound so wise and sophisticated now – but notice – *they will not stand in the judgment.* In other words, the holy truth and the piercing logic of God will dismantle their defenses and reveal their defiance.

The godly person – like a tree – is rooted; the unbeliever is constantly scattering in the wind storms of this world.

I read some time ago that one of Germany's lawmakers proposed legislation just a few years ago that would legally terminate marriages after seven years. The legislation would allow couples either to extend their marriages or allow them to terminate automatically after the 7<sup>th</sup> year ends.<sup>v</sup>

The idea now called wed-leasing.

A recent Washington Post advocated the concept with these words, “Here’s how a marital lease could work: Two people commit themselves to marriage for a period of years — one year, five years, ten years, whatever term suits them. The marital lease could be renewed at the end of the term however many times a couple likes. It could end up lasting a lifetime if the relationship worth continuing. But if the relationship is bad, the couple could go their separate ways at the end of the term. The messiness of divorce is avoided, and the end of their marriage can be as simple as vacating a rental [property].<sup>vi</sup>

This is the dry, unfruitful counsel of the ungodly which turns life into chaff . . . and their unstable, self-centered lives are tossed about by the winds of life – they know nothing of stability and fruitfulness and endurance.

Let me put it into a simple sentence – **their lives never take root.**

Let me read you the difference between wedleasing and the covenant of marriage according to the wisdom of God.

In his tremendous book, *The Disciplines of a Godly Man*, Kent Hughes writes of his friendship with Robertson McQuilkin, the former president of Columbia International University. Robertson’s wife Muriel was in the late stages of Alzheimer’s when Dr. McQuilkin resigned his presidency to take care of her.

In his resignation letter he wrote, “My dear wife, Muriel, has been in failing mental health for about eight years. So far I have been able to care for both her ever-growing needs and my leadership responsibilities at Columbia. Recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time she is with me and almost none of the time I am away from her. It is not just “discontent.” She is filled with fear – even terror – that she has lost me and always goes in search of me when I leave home. It is clear that she needs me now, full-time. This decision was made, in a way, 42 years ago when I promised to care for her “in sickness and in

health . . . till death do us part. So, as a man of my word, I will do it. She has cared for me fully all these years; if I cared for her for the next 40 years, I would not be out of debt. Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more; I love her. I do not *have* to care for her . . . I *get* to.<sup>vii</sup>

This is much more than temporary infatuation when everything goes your way. This is the endurance of a man or woman who chooses the blessed pathway . . . not the easiest pathway . . . or the simplest – but a path according to the wisdom of Christ marked by stability, fruitfulness, and endurance.

That life is possible, beloved; it’s a path that runs alongside a river – where you’re invited to sink the roots of your heart and life deep into the soil and then bear fruit like this.

I remember as a kid – we had a tree in our back yard . . . perfect for climbing. A solid oak tree with branches that were perfect for four boys – and perfect for a mom who desperately needed us out of the house.

We built a tree house up in those limbs . . . it wasn’t much to look at; we nailed boards going every which way, and we finally built a little platform. Man, how we loved that tree and our little tree house.

Listen, what made that tree house possible was not our ingenuity . . . our ability . . . it was all in the strength of the limbs of that tree.

I couldn’t help but think . . . the best place to build a marriage . . . a life . . . is in the branches of a solid . . . stable . . . tree that has been planted next to the water of His good counsel.

That tree refuses the polluted water of men’s wisdom . . . but its roots drink from the river of God’s truth.

Alan Redpath was preaching to his congregation at the Moody Church many years ago; and he said to them, “I have no magic formula for your holiness; I have no hocus focus treatment to offer you; I have no shortcut to spiritual strength for any of you. All I can do is say, “Go back to your Bible . . . God back to your Bible.” For the greatest transactions in life [are between you and God in His word]; the

greatest transactions in life are made, not in church, but behind closed doors.”

Go back to the Bible . . . and drink.

And the result is . . . stability . . . fruitfulness . . . endurance.

You will be evergreen . . . not like the dry empty chaff of the world, driven by every wind of doctrine and opinion and trend . . . chaff . . . empty chaff.

But you . . . you . . . beloved . . . are evergreen.

And your marriage . . . your relationships . . . your business . . . your walk . . . your life . . . is built like the strong branches of a tree, planted by streams of divine truth.

So drink it up . . . drink it in!

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 10/18/2015 by Stephen Davey.

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i The Barna Group, “Young Adults and Liberal Struggle with Morality,” barna.org (8-25-08)

ii Donald Williams, *Mastering the Old Testament: Psalm 1-72* (Word Publishing, 1986, p. 27

iii Williams, p. 27

iv Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Falling Into Greatness* (Thomas Nelson, 1984), p. 20

v Madeline Chambers, *Glamorous politician wants law to allow 7-year itch*, Reuters (09-21-07)

vi The Washington Post, *A high divorce rate means it's time to try 'wedleases'*, Paul Rampell, August 4, 2013

vii Adapted from R. Kent Hughes, *The Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Crossway, 1991), p. 35