

Worshipful Living: A Worshipful Life
A Beautiful, Good, and True Life
Psalm 15:1-5

Psalm 15 holds a dear place in the life of ancient Israel. The Talmud (a collection of writings of the Rabbis of Israel after Christ) says, “The Israelites received 613 commandments on Sinai. David reduced them to 11 in Psalm 15.” They describe the life the worshipper lives that is pleasing to God. The Apostle Paul’s former teacher, Rabbi Gamaliel, used to weep while reading Psalm 15 because it made him aware of his own personal shortcomings. May it do no less for you and for me. What we must never do is divorce obedience from love.

What the Text Says

Read. Would you listen with your heart as I read? Which commandment is likely to make you weep like Gamaliel used to weep. Feel free to do so. It’s a good thing.

Verse 2: In verse 2 David gives 3 positive commandments of this moral life or life with God.

Living without blame. To walk in the Bible is to live. Life is a journey with God. He sets the path. We walk it. We don’t make our own path. When we do we get in the ditch just like Adam and Eve did. If you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you will disobey me and invent your own morality. They ate. God did not want Adam and Eve to decide what was right and wrong. God does not leave it up to us to figure out how to live.

Doing what is right. That’s another way of saying live from your God-devoted heart. Don’t live with a double heart. It’s impossible to serve two masters. David warns about people whose speech is smooth but they have a double heart. Their talk is smoother than butter but their minds are set on war (Ps 55:2). Isaiah blames the people for not doing what is right. They approach God with their mouth and honor him with their lips, but their hearts are far from God. It’s the good life.

Acknowledging the truth. Those who love God recognize that the God’s way of life is the true way to live. We cannot say to God “read my lips.” We must say read my heart. It is true to you. We show the truth by the way we live. When we live our life with God, When we do right by God, we know the truth that sets us free.

Verse 3: The 3 positive commandments are followed by 3 negative ones.

No slander. He doesn’t speak lies about other people, or accuse them falsely. **Why?** Because God commands not to lie and to tell the truth. Why? It’s the right thing to do. It hurts others. Telling the truth can get you in trouble or can save you from trouble. But that’s secondary. You remember the story of the Sunday School teacher who asked the class “what is a lie?” A little girl responded with: “An abomination to the Lord and a present help in time of trouble.”

Gossip hurts. Slander can destroy people. Our words have power. James says: Tame the tongue. It will cause damage and destruction. I sat with a person whose life is falling apart because for 25 years she has received so many unkind words that her soul and marriage have dried up.

Never does harm to his neighbor. He never uses words or actions to cause harm. To live this way we must weigh our words carefully. Say it with me: “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me.” Put your hand up if you truly believe this! Being careful about what we say saves a lot of heartache.

Never takes up a reproach against his friend or neighbor. This could mean don't give your friends a reason to bring disgrace on you by your actions. Or it could mean don't cast disgrace against your neighbor. Or it is unclear to allow for both possibilities. Don't disgrace anyone. Don't be disgraced by the things you do.

Verse 4: Here David turns to the company we keep, which can reveal to us our own standards and values.

Be choosy when it comes to who you closely associate with. A rabbi warns: “Woe to a wicked man, woe to his neighbor.” If the company you keep is evil, you will be affected. There are people who have charm the Bible says. But looks can be deceiving. It takes wisdom to know.

Honor those who fear the Lord. Those who live according to God's way of life are worthy of respect and imitation. The greatest honor I can give someone is to copy their life. We need good role models to show us the way to live with God. Not only do they know how to live but actually do live with God. When examined, they hold up to God's standards. They do the will of God.

Who stand by their oath even if it is to their disadvantage. They don't waffle on the oath they make. They are true to their words. Their yes is a yes and their no is a no even if they lose by their yes or their no. In ancient Israel, a vow is made when you swear an oath, usually by naming God in your oath, to do something even if it hurts you. We have a saying like this one that captures this: “Cross my heart and hope to die.” We say it when we want people to believe we are sincere.

Moses says in Deut. 23:22-24, “If you make a vow voluntarily you make sure to do what you promise.” Solomon says “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. For he has no pleasure in fools; what you vow, fulfill. It is better not to vow at all than to vow and not fulfill”

Verse 5: **Don't profit on the back of the poor and needy. Don't be bribable.**

David has in mind those people in society who live at a disadvantage because they are poor. They are in dire straights. They live at the mercy of others. The kind of people who deal with the Scrooges of our world who are too willing to abuse their God-given assets.

God warns: "If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not act toward them as a creditor; exact no interest from them. If you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you must return it to him before the sun sets; it is his only clothing, the sole covering for his skin. In what else shall he sleep? Therefore, if he cries out to me, I will pay heed, for I am compassionate." Don't be a Scrooge. Protect the privacy, freedom and dignity of those in need among you. In 1 Samuel 22, many of David's militia were people in debt. They had no choice but to fight to live. Elisha helps a widow who owed money. Her creditor was going to make slaves of her kids. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city 500 years before Christ, he was confronted with a great outcry from the common folk that the wealthy were pressing their sons and daughters into slavery for nonpayment of loans. He put a stop to it.

And no bribery. For the Lord, your God... shows no favor and takes no bribe but upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing him with food and clothing.

In other words, the life of the worshipper is to imitate the life of God. Certainly David couldn't say he lived up to these. Nor you or I?

How do we do with a Psalm 15 world?

You noticed, I'm sure, the echoes of the 10 commandments. They are not the 10 suggestions. They are the bedrock of the Western World. Some of us take it for granted that these moral laws are there for us. A new generation is growing that will only know them if they are in church learning to do life with God. A woman won't know that the baby inside her is a person made in the image of God. A man won't know that taking his neighbor's wife is wrong. A teacher can't rest assured that the children she teaches know right from wrong. Nor law keepers. Citizens couldn't be assured that their government leaders, and judges are blameless when it comes to promises and bribery in executing justice. What do you think? Do we live in a Psalm 15 society?

Our whole Western way of life works because there is a recognized way to live that is good for everyone in society. The other way is to let everyone do what is right in their own eyes. It's been tried and it was found to be stupid, foolish, and disastrous wherever it was tried.

There is an argument in philosophy for the existence of God that is called the moral argument. It goes like this: **Premise 1: If God does not exist, then objective moral values and duties do not exist.** If God does not exist then what Hitler did was permissible. If God doesn't exist, racism and slavery are OK. If God doesn't exist, child labor should be tolerated as it was in Ancient Greece, England in the 18th century, and in many other countries today. Taking advantage of the poor would be good business as it is in India. No God! No universal standards of right and wrong can exist.

Premise 2: Objective moral values and duties do exist. No one thinks that what Herod ordered done: The slaughter of all babies under 2 was anything but an evil act. No one thinks slavery is good, beautiful, and true. No one thinks what Nixon did is good. No one believes 9/11 is anything but immoral and evil.

Conclusion: Therefore, God exists. We have forgotten this beautiful, good and true way of life.

No God no moral values all will agree on. We are at a crossroads in America. Reject or accept the moral argument.

Sometimes what is legal is not moral and what is moral is called illegal. For example, we know that today "An estimated 92 percent of all prenatal babies that are diagnosed with Down syndrome are terminated before birth. This is according to research reviewed by [Dr. Brian Skotko](#), a pediatric geneticist at Children's Hospital Boston." With lots of misinformation about Down syndrome no wonder this is happening. Down syndrome is painted as the most awful thing that could happen. It's a hopeless thing. For 92% it's seen as extremely threatening to their families. It's legal to terminate such a pregnancy but is it moral, is it the right thing to do?

There were plenty of laws on the books when some banks almost bankrupted our country. You can make laws. But those who want to can make moral what isn't moral. Some of what the banks did may have passed the legal test but not the moral test. And not one banker is in jail today because of it!

How do we do with Bribery? Well, don't get me started. God knows that without him we will bribe our way, lie our way, slander our way to fame and fortune. On our own we create a morality that is not his, that is open to abuse, bribery, breaking our vows, little or no fear of God, living lives of contempt, and of questionable character at the highest levels of authority in the land.

What then is the solution to live this beautiful and good and truthful life?

In Psalm 15 God did not leave it up to David to invent his own morality. He reiterated some of the 10 commandments as the true, beautiful and good way of life. What he gave David was God's own way of being with his people. He was blameless in the way he treated them. He gave them the truth to life by. He was above reproach in his dealings with them. You couldn't bribe him with lip service or with sacrifices.

Only a fool will depend on the norms of society to tell him how to live. Everybody is doing it is not a true, or beautiful, or good story to live by. Jesus' life stood out from the lives of the Jewish leaders because of its truth, beauty and goodness.

He loved and obeyed God. He wouldn't let any temptation drag him down in to sin though he was tempted plenty. He is the only who can say I am the way to God, follow me. I am the answer to all of humanity's shortcomings. Follow me, I will show you the way to live. I will pour beauty into your life. I am the Truth. I will make you true. I am your righteousness. I am

the the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. I am the resurrection and the life. In Romans 5:9-10 Paul tells us that what saves us from our world and saves us to life with God, is not only Jesus dying on the cross but also Jesus living the resurrection life with us and in us. Read it.

Jesus taught and showed his disciples over and over again that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees. Murder not. Yes that's good. But beyond murder, don't hate. Don't lie. Yes but beyond lying, let your yes be yes and your no be no. Let your life be true. The poor will always be with you. Don't just not take advantage of them but be my hands and my feet to help them.

He didn't say you can live any way you please. He said if you love me you will keep my commandments. He said the world will know that you are mine when your love for others is like God's love for others. He called this inheriting eternal living. This is the godly way to live.

Moses gave us 613 commandments. David reduced them to 11. Jesus scaled them down to 2: Love God, love your neighbor as yourself.

What do we learn to do this beautiful, good and true life?

Jesus did his life with God. It was a beautiful, good and true life. We too can live our life as if he did if he were us.

How? Memorize this word: VIM. Three letters that represent a formula for imitating Jesus. I hope that all of us are Covenant Baptist church are convinced that we can actually live a life of imitation of Christ. What's the alternative? Live in default to our own values and standards? Which is more beautiful, good and true? Do you think?

First letter V stands for vision. We build our lives on a compelling vision. The biggest vision possible. A vision of who we can become. In Luke 6:40 Jesus is speaking in a general way that can also apply to himself and our relationship with him. "A disciple is not above his teacher but when the disciple is formed or transformed he will be like his teacher." His righteousness (his godly way of acting) will naturally reflect his teacher's. There is a condition and a promise here. Paul told Timothy: Train yourself for the purpose of godliness. By training you can become godly. You don't just become godly by trying to be godly. In Ephesians 5:1-2 Paul says be imitators of God and of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 he says to the church: Be imitators of me as I am an imitator of Christ. He is teaching that when they see him imitate Christ, they can be safe in imitate Paul.

Second, we intend the vision. A vision without intention is wishful thinking. You can wish for things to happen but if you don't make every commitment possible to make them happen they will remain just a wish. Let's say you have a vision for your life to speak French. You go around telling all your friends, I wish I could speak French. You tell your teacher I want to speak French. At the end of the day, you're no closer to speaking French than the man on the

moon. But what if you enrolled in a class that is teaching French as a Second Language. You buy the books, you go to class. That's intending you vision. That shows commitment.

If your vision is to become Christlike you must intend this vision. You hang around people who are Christlike. You spend time with a group of people who share the same vision. You make a commitment to do it. You arrange your time and your life to fit your intentions. Becoming Christlike will not happen automatically just because you made a decision or prayed a prayer wanting to go to heaven when you die.

Third, you put the means necessary in place to make the vision a reality. Let's stick with learning French for a moment. What are the means of learning a language? You attend all the classes. You do the homework assigned. You put your heart and your mind into it. You learn a ton of words by heart. You repeat certain phrases. You might even take a trip to France or Quebec to be immersed in the language. You use every means available to you to make your vision of speaking French come true.

What are the means of a life lived in imitation of Christ? Well what means did Christ use to live a holy and perfect life before God? He prayed and was constantly connected to the Holy Spirit who guided all he said and did. He fasted on more than one occasion. He studied the Scripture. He memorized the Scripture. He recited the Scriptures daily. He chose a few friends to do life with. He was in synagogue on the Sabbath. He went off to be alone with God regularly. He silenced his souls in order to hear God speaks. He didn't waste the pain or suffering he experienced. He learned through his sufferings that there is joy on the other side of pain. These are the means of intending the vision of becoming Christ like. They are the training we do in order to be godly. They get us to where David was leading us: A life in imitation of God. A good life, a beautiful life, a true life.