



# WEEK 1 PSALM 1

## SEASONS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

SUNDAY: Jeremiah 17:5-14  
MONDAY: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8  
TUESDAY: Mark 4:1-20  
WEDNESDAY: John 15:1-17  
THURSDAY: Galatians 5:13-26  
FRIDAY: Hebrews 12:1-12  
SATURDAY: Galatians 6:8-10

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[www.highrockdevotionals.com/unfiltered](http://www.highrockdevotionals.com/unfiltered)

## READ Psalm 1

## OPENING PRAYER

Father, you are my source of life and my strength. Help me to draw life from your eternal springs and bear fruit in season, fruit that will last.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.

## DEVOTIONAL Michelle Sanchez

For a portion of the time that I was in seminary training for ministry, I went through one of the darkest seasons of my life. Some of the relationships that were most dear to me were suffering tremendously, and at the same time, I was experiencing a great deal of confusion about where my vocational path was heading. During that time my spiritual life was so unfulfilling that I began to wonder whether God was still with me at all.

Psalm 1 speaks to those who are experiencing spiritual dryness or darkness just as I was at that time. Just as the earth naturally cycles through seasons which vary in fruitfulness, our spiritual lives tend to fluctuate in the same way. When we find ourselves in spiritual autumn, we reap tremendous harvests both in terms of character growth and in ministry productivity – sometimes seemingly without even trying! On the other hand, in seasons of spiritual winter, we may feel absolutely hopeless and spiritually desolate no matter what we do. In those times, we might wonder if something is wrong with us or if God has abandoned us.

And that is precisely why this psalm is so refreshing. Through the poetic imagery of a tree planted by streams of water, it teaches us that sometimes we will bear visible fruit and sometimes we may not. But either way, as long as our roots are drinking from those streams, we are still spiritually alive and growing according to God's timetable.

This truth helped me in seminary as I discovered some illuminating resources by great Christian leaders and saints such as Saint John of the Cross, resources which opened my eyes to the fact that seasons of spiritual darkness are a normal part of the Christian experience (see below for some of these resources). This brought me tremendous relief and helped me to get through those difficult days.

Nevertheless, even though they are normal, these times of apparent fruitlessness can still be tremendously discouraging. What can we do to ensure that we are constantly drinking from that stream?

According to Psalm 1, the secret is to “delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on his law day and night.” (v.2) Of course, the “law” is not something which seems terribly delightful for most of us! However, in the Old Testament, the word translated “law” (*torah*) referred to much more than just rules and regulations. Rather, it had a richer meaning which we might better appreciate today through a translation like “instruction” or “guidance.” Like the loving father that he is, God takes us under his wing and lovingly guides us in the way of life and ultimate joy. God's law is always delightful – not only because it results in God's greatest glory but also because it is for our own good.

This past year, Highrock's Friday Night Fellowship group studied a book together entitled *The Good and Beautiful Life* by James Bryan Smith. Speaking of Jesus' commands in the Sermon on the Mount, Smith says: “Jesus is not demanding we live his way in order to get his blessing or get into heaven when we die; he is simply telling the truth about reality. He warns against lust, not because he is a prude but because he knows it destroys human lives when unchecked. He tells us not to worry, not because it will give us ulcers but because people who live with him in the kingdom of God need not worry; it is a waste of time. Lust and worry, judgment and anger, retaliation and pride are never good or beautiful, and never lead to freedom. In fact, they are a flight from freedom.” (p.30)

**This week, contemplate new ways** in which the guidance of God is delightful and ultimately leads to freedom, and meditate on that throughout your day. Begin to let that delight motivate all that you do. To the extent that you do this, the Scriptures promise that no matter what things might look like at any given time, you will indeed bear lasting fruit when the time is right.

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## PERSONAL QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What spiritual season do you currently find yourself in? Why do you feel that way?
2. If you are in a season of fruitfulness, what can you do to prepare for the inevitable winter ahead? If you are in a season of winter, what can you do to restore hope for the future fruit to come?
3. What are some ways that you are tempted to sin in times of spiritual winter? What lies do you believe in those times, and what truths do you need to remember that would encourage you?

## SUGGESTED PRAYER FOR HIGHROCK

Father, as we begin this sermon series on the Psalms, we pray that you will speak powerfully to church members within all the seasons. Allow our church community to bear timely fruit that will last in Arlington and throughout the Boston area.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

### 1. CONNECT TO GOD

- Journal or pray through the various ways God's guidance is delightful. Ask for wisdom on this.
- Go to a place where things grow (such as a park or garden) or to a flowing body of water (such as a river, stream, or fountain). Relax, meditate on what you see, and be attentive to any insights from God. If you like, use these Scriptures to help with your nature meditation: Psalm 42:1-2, Isaiah 35, John 7:37-38.

### 2. CONNECT TO GOD'S PEOPLE

- Think about those within your community. What spiritual seasons do they seem to be in? Find a way to encourage a brother or sister this week in a way appropriate to the season in which they find themselves.
- Share with a brother or sister the ways in which you are tempted to sin during times of spiritual winter, and ask them to give you help and accountability when that time comes.

### 3. CONNECT TO GOD'S PURPOSES

- Adults are not the only ones who go through seasons of spiritual growth – young people do too! They need the love and guidance of older believers to help them make it through the tough winters. This year, Highrock is greatly expanding both our children's ministry (✉ [soojin@highrock.org](mailto:soojin@highrock.org)) and our youth group ministries (✉ [brian@highrock.org](mailto:brian@highrock.org)). Consider volunteering in some way with one of these ministries to help Highrock fulfill its dream of seeing young people become fruitful for God's kingdom.

## BENEDICTION

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God.

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-12