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<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

<sup>2</sup> But their delight is in the Law of the LORD,  
and on His Law they meditate day and night.

<sup>3</sup> They will be like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither;  
and in whatever they do, they prosper.

<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind blows away.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

<sup>6</sup> For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1 (NASB, *alt*)

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A story is told of a captain of a ship a long time ago (pre-electronic navigation and communication). He looked into the dark night and saw a light in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman (the person flashing a light to send a message to the other person) to send a message, "Alter your course ten degrees south." The captain promptly received a reply, "Alter your course ten degrees north." The furious captain sent another message, "Alter your course ten degrees south. I am a captain!" Soon another reply was received, "Alter your course ten degrees north. I am seaman third class Jones." The captain sent a final message, "Alter your course ten degrees south. I am a battleship." The reply was, "Alter your course ten degrees north. I am a lighthouse."

What direction are you taking in life? In your journey of life, as you reflect on your life as a 'Christian', in what ways would you say you have 'grown' as a Christian? Do you see yourself as a person who has performed many 'good deeds', and more perhaps than others around you have done? Do you feel you have acquired much knowledge of the Bible, and this is how you have 'grown' as a Christian? Do you feel that you have gone through much suffering and pain in a variety of ways (either through your own suffering, or your care of the great suffering of those you love), and you have been able to 'keep your faith in Christ', and in this way you have 'grown' as a Christian?

When it comes to 'Christian growth' and 'the life of a Christian', there is no shortage of books and works which offer various advice. And when one considers the incredible volume of works, sometimes one is reminded of the Proverb in Ecclesiastes (12:12): "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

What does it mean to truly live a 'spiritual life'? There are many things that can be said in this regard. But today we may reflect upon a couple of things.

First, and one of the simplest things to remember, is that if you wish to have a wonderful explanation of a 'spiritual life' one of the best places to go is Psalm One. Simply meditating on this word (taking it line-by-line, and unpacking the original meaning in various words) provides much food for thought. There are many resources here even if you do not know the original languages. One may go to an 'Interlinear Bible' ([CLICK HERE](#)) and seek to unpack each word. One may look at an 'Expanded Bible' or a 'Bible Commentary' to reflect on each word, or to 'unpack' the meaning of each line and verse. For example, the opening word has been variously translated as 'Blessed' or 'Happy', or 'How happy' or 'fortunate', or 'prosperous', or 'favoured by God', and in so many other ways. Each of these possible translations brings depth to meaning. One could spend hours on this task of reflecting on each word and verse, and it is certainly not without profit and blessing. But we won't do so today (that is, take hours!).

The other thing we may do is to reflect more broadly on the topic of what it means to live a 'spiritual life'. What do you think it means to live a 'spiritual life'? As mentioned earlier, some may see this in the acquisition of knowledge. Others may see this as 'doing good works'. Others may see 'living a spiritual life' is facing life's challenges with strength of inner character (like Jesus did as He set His face toward the cross). And for some today, a truly 'spiritual person' is one who receives 'great blessing in this world' including health (and miraculous healing of sickness), wealth, and much material 'happiness'.

Over the centuries, and across Christian denominations and movements, there have been many approaches to 'Christian Spirituality'. In the early centuries of the Christianity there were some people who sought to live a 'spiritual life' by 'removing themselves from the world. They are often referred to as 'The Desert Fathers [and Mothers]. The 'Desert Fathers' were early Christian hermits who practiced 'asceticism' in the Egyptian desert, beginning in the 3rd century. It is often thought that this formed the basis of Christian monasticism. Thinking they were following the example of Jesus' life of poverty, service, and self-denial, these early monks devoted themselves to vows of austerity, prayer, and work. Believers who chose to go into the desert as hermits were said to be answering the call of Christ where Jesus said (Matthew 19:21): "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow Me."

Another approach in relation to 'Christian spirituality' is to reflect upon the various approaches to 'Christian Meditation'. Again, that word from Ecclesiastes 12:12 stands out: "Of making many books there is no end..." But a couple of things may quickly be said at this point. One of the popular approaches is known as 'contemplative spirituality'. This is to take the

approach to consider one's own life, to consider one's own world, and to reflect on how God's Word may apply in your life. Contemplative spirituality also encourages the pursuit of a mystical experience with God. Mysticism is the belief that knowledge of God, spiritual truth, and ultimate reality can be gained through subjective experience. The 'process' is to reflect on oneself (what's going on), then to look for some 'word from God', and then to apply it to one's life. There is much value in 'contemplative spirituality'. But there is also a big danger here, and that is you actually can make yourself the 'centre' and essentially turn yourself into 'god' because it's about what you 'want' and 'think' and 'feel'. And so, a counter to this is what is known as 'receptive spirituality'. The process here is slightly different. One starts with the reading of God's Word (with a prayer to be guided by the Holy Spirit), and then there is mediation on that word (thinking about it), and then there is application (acknowledging also the challenges one may find in life).

What does it mean to live a 'spiritual life'? The reality is that every single person lives a 'spiritual life' (even if they may not think so). The word "spirit" has to do with the fundamental propelling forces of our lives, our most profound loves, passions and concerns. 'Spirituality' is not a thing apart from our daily lives, but rather the fundamental energy source that fuels all our emotions, relationships, work, and everything else we consider meaningful. Contrary to popular belief, spirituality is not something special or extraordinary. It is instead absolutely ordinary and completely natural. Everyone has a spiritual life. We express it in many different ways: not only in places of worship but also in work, community and family, in all our creativity and commitments.

What does it mean to live a 'spiritual life'? Would you describe yourself as a 'spiritual person'? At one level, the 'centre of 'spirituality' is the study of God's Word, that is, reading the Bible and having daily devotions. It is worshipping together with God's people. It is seeking to love and serve in the world. It is a 'way of life'. But there is something more, something important to remember...

A story is told group of tourists visiting a picturesque village walked by an old man sitting beside a fence. In a rather patronising way, one tourist asked him, "Were any great men born in this village?" The old man replied, "Nope, only babies." 'Only babies'... That is what we are. We are God's children, totally dependent on Him. If we start seeing ourselves as 'spiritually mature' or 'growing spiritually', there is a danger we start having pride in ourselves and our good works. Psalm 1 is not about 'spiritual superiority' but 'spiritual humility'.

Psalm 1 concludes (1:6): "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." The LORD *knows* the way... The LORD *knows* you...

When we read Psalm 1:6 we do not hear “The LORD knows the way of the ‘really good people’, or ‘those who say they are great in praying and meditating’ or ‘those who can recite the Bible and give big words and profound meaning’. The Psalmist simply says “The LORD knows the way of the *righteous*.”

“Way” refers to life’s course or path. And we know that life isn’t always easy, and isn’t always ‘good’. But the point is, our path or course is fully known by the Lord and He cares for us with God’s loving and providential care as a father his child and like the vinedresser cares for His vineyard (Ps. 103:13; Matt. 6:32; John 15:1f). And God cares for us because we know that Jesus gave His life for us. It is in Jesus that we are declared ‘righteous’, and not by any good work that you ‘do’.

The righteous are believers in Christ. God has foreknown us and provided for us in the complete and finished work of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul emphatically teaches us that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is anchored in Christ (Rom. 8:28-29, 38-39). The righteous cannot perish because they are in both the hand of the Father and in the hand of His Son, the Lord Jesus (John 10:28-30).

Every person in some way ‘chooses’ the ‘way’ in which they ‘walk’ in ‘life’. And those who walk in the way of the LORD are those who recognise that God ‘knows them’ as they truly are. And ‘the righteous’ are those who know forgiveness in Christ Jesus for all the times we’ve walked in the counsel of the wicked, for all the times we’ve stood in the way of sinners, for all the times we’ve sat in the seat of scoffers: We find forgiveness for all the times we’ve not whole heartedly love the law of the LORD, for all the times we’ve neglected to meditates day and night on the law of the LORD. Righteousness is not something that springs naturally up out of you. It is the gift of God for you in Christ Jesus. What matters is what God thinks of it; What matters is if you are a forgiven sinner, if you are one declared righteous in the Eyes of the LORD.

One of the delights of late summer is all the delicious fruit that we get to enjoy, fruit that the fruit trees have produced: peaches, apples, cherries. Juicy, ripe, sweet—the fruit is so delicious. But those fruit trees could not have yielded all that good fruit unless they had a plentiful supply of water. They need the water to produce the fruit. The life that God desires to give us that is filled with his abundance and life is one of faith in the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It is a life that lives by faith in this simple yet foundational truth that life, forgiveness and God’s abundance comes as a gift from Him through faith.

Every day we are challenged with a new road. Sometimes the choice is not clear. What roads are you faced with today? How will you evaluate which road leads you to God’s will? Ultimately, God’s will is that we rejoice in the righteousness, the gift of life, we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. May we always drink on this well that is true. Amen.