

## **A Meditation on Psalm 1** from Doug's *Terrifying Grace* blog ([www.hallockd.posterous.com](http://www.hallockd.posterous.com))

Psalm 1, without ambiguity, promises blessing to a man who avoids the ways and means of evil men, and who delights in and meditates on the Law of the Lord. It's not really that complicated: A man, if he avoids evil and seeks God's counsel, gets blessed. But today's post will take us away from that man and over to the "counselor" he has come to in time of distress, turmoil, hurt, or temptation.

Our imaginary man had a problem enter his life. It could be any sort of problem. And as he faces the problem, he might be mad, he might be hurt, he might want to "fix" those who created the problem, or he might be confused as to how God would have him respond. But, being a Christian, he knows that he needs another's help. So he asks you, a fellow Christian, for help in how he might handle his situation.

In this imaginary situation, you, the "counselor," will either offer to help the man get back to the promised blessings of Psalm 1, or you will not. The choice to do one or the other depends on how you, the counselor, understand your role in the life of the man who has come to you. For many counselees, unfortunately, some counselors will choose badly.

Let's think about the friend, spouse, neighbor, pastor, parent, coworker, peer, boss, fellow Christian, or psychologist that our imaginary man confides in.

Flash.

You are now that confidant . . . Our imaginary man has come to you for help. What will you offer him? Whether you recognize it or not, when someone comes to you with a complaint of any kind, you are instantly placed in the driver's seat of a "car" that will take him somewhere. The question is, where will you take him?

Will you drive him to the Father of light, mercy, wisdom, righteousness, and grace? Or will you take him to Freud, Skinner, Erikson, Adler, Jung, Glasser, or Rogers (not Mister, but Carl)? Or how about to Dyer, Oprah, Phil, or some "Heinz 57" mix of their (and others') philosophies?

Will you drive him to a place of restored peace that passes understanding, of joy that is independent of circumstances? Or will you take him farther down the road to self-pity, anger, bitterness, and envy?

Will you drive him to the Law of the Lord, and show him God's magnificence, His great supervision of all of our circumstances, and His great calling on all our lives in those God-ordained circumstances? Or will you take him to the counsel of the wicked, the way of the sinners, and the seat of the mockers?

If you're like many people, you'll actually drive him nowhere. You'll politely listen, and express sorrow or regret, or offer to help him with some detail or another, all of which are nice to do. As good as each of those things is, you may not really help him recover his footing as he tries to handle his rough circumstance.

How do we actually drive well in such instances? I'd suggest three "L's" to guide our discussion: Listen, Love, and Lead.

### **Listen to 'em:**

Listening to others is hard. We are often distracted by other things. Putting our full attention on a counselee is essential to helping him. In order to really hear what he says, we must also hear how he says it. We must practice active listening, asking questions for clarification, making sure we understand what he means.

When we've truly listened, we should know the circumstances our counselee faces, how he understands them, how he views his future in light of them, and what he sees as options for handling them. We are not done listening until we accurately know these

things. It might be good to express to our client, one by one, what we think he's said about each of those questions, to insure that we're thinking about the whole picture of his experience and struggle.

### **Love 'em:**

Love always considers our counselee's best interests. That means that sometimes, when our counselee is not thinking of what is ultimately best for him, our job will be to call him back to that thinking. In doing so, we might displease our counselee. That should not be our concern, as we're working toward what's best for him. Jesus loved enough to rightly counsel people, though it put him at risk of rejection and death. Love demands much more from us than simply being nice, affirming, or safe. Love means being God's servant who will help bring his counselee into a mindset and plan whereby he can be blessed in his efforts by God. True love offers to help restore him to the place that Psalm 1 says God can bless, which means that we must offer to help him avoid evil and consider what "the Law of the Lord" advises him in his situation.

### **Lead 'em:**

When someone's "self-counselor" has failed him, he needs you to come alongside and help him think properly about his situation. He needs you to help him think properly about what he's supposed to do in it, and why.

We counselors must go beyond affirming our counselee's discontent, beyond offering him trite platitudes, beyond handing him the ubiquitous pop psychology that floats about in our culture and Christ's Church.

We must help him see what God might be doing in his life via his trial. We must help him see how God might want to use him in this trial as a witness to others. And we must help him see how God wants to comfort, strengthen, and use him in fulfilling the purpose for which He allowed the trial. Ultimately, we must encourage him toward greater faith in God and His purposes, and then on to what Scripture calls "love and good works."

Suppose with me what would happen in a church, family, or business if every person saw this responsibility to counsel wisely and took it seriously? Would we see problems get solved more quickly and more cleanly? Would we see relations improving over time? Would we see people growing more and more patient and gracious with one another's stumbles and missteps? I believe so.

While this post described how counselors could better serve their counsees, it begs one important question. What if the counselee doesn't want to be guided in this way? What if he's not interested in love and good works, or in God's purposes for allowing the trial in his life? These questions, and others like them, are next up in T. G.

Father, we are both counselors and counsees many times in a week, and we often don't notice that we're needing help or that we're being called on to give help. Help us see our own situations through the lens of your word, and help us never turn to sin or evil as a means of dealing with our situations. And Father, help us realize each time we're called upon to help another who has come to us, that we are called by you in that moment to serve him with good counsel. Help us be better listeners. Help us love, not like the world loves, but like you love. And help us gently and boldly offer to lead them to you, your word, your peace, your joy, and your calling for their lives in their situation.