

# Psalm 37:1-6 Large Group Teaching

## Preparation

- ☞ Bring *And I Will Praise Him* & NASB Bible
- ☞ Make sure they have pens and a copy of the worksheet.
- ☞ Set up PowerPoint

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**Lesson Aims:** The student will defend, using Psalm 37:1-6, that if he truly delights in the Lord then his desires will change to match God's own; and justify to himself the value in the scriptural promise of v.4 in light of this knowledge.

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## Hook

### [slide 1: introduction]

I recently read this great book by Ron Allen about the Psalms [hold up book]. If any of you are interested in learning about the Psalms and how to enjoy them better, I highly recommend this book, *And I Will Praise Him*.

There are many benefits to reading the psalms:

- † We can use them to praise God; we can identify with the laments and then use them as encouragement to keep our trust in the Lord and carry on;
- † We can even discover a lot about Jesus in the Psalms! The psalms speak to Christ's obedience, betrayal, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension, to his deity, exaltation, kingship, lordship, priesthood, sonship, and supremacy!

The standard Hebrew title for the Psalms means "praises."

- † But the word "Psalms" comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and essentially means "sacred songs sung to musical accompaniment."
- † You could say that the psalms themselves are ways to delight in the Lord, which brings us to our key verse...

[slide 2: psalm 37:4] Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart."

- † Without thinking about it too much, quickly write down the five greatest desires of your heart, on the top right of the sheet we gave you ...
- † [wait a few minutes; fill in time with chatter] Now circle the ones that have something to do with God, spiritual growth, or serving others. How many of you circled all five? How many circled four or more? How many three or more? It's illuminating to consider how few of our greatest desires have anything to do with delighting in the Lord or his kingdom!

Still, this verse is good news, right? **Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.**

- † How do you get the desires of your heart? *Delight yourself in the Lord...*
- † What does that mean? I'll tell you, I delight in ice [slide 3: ice cream]cream. When I go out for ice cream, should I order a Lord instead? or a Yahweh? What does this mean, delight yourself in the Lord?
- † When I got to ride a friend's motorcycle [slide 4: motorcycle], I sure delighted in it ... how does that relate to this command to delight yourself in the Lord?
- † [allow them to respond] God is a "person," not an object; [slide 5: Will and LeeAnn] It might help to consider how you can delight in a person; I delight in my wife, which means I enjoy being with her, enjoy a relational intimacy with her. So, we delight in God' presence and in intimacy with God [we must know him well to have this intimacy!]

## What do you think holds people back from delighting fully in the Lord?

### Book

**[slide 6: cross with purple flowers]** Let's look at the verse in context: It is always dangerous to take one verse and make too much out of it, without seeing how it fits into the overall point the author was making. Look at the top left of your sheets. Who would like to read?

**Psalm 37:1-6 [NASB]:**

<sup>1</sup>Do not fret because of evildoers,  
Be not envious toward wrongdoers.  
<sup>2</sup>For they will wither quickly like the grass  
And fade like the green herb.  
<sup>3</sup>Trust in the LORD and do good;  
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.  
<sup>4</sup>Delight yourself in the LORD;  
And He will give you the desires of your heart.  
<sup>5</sup>Commit your way to the LORD,  
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.  
<sup>6</sup>He will bring forth your righteousness as the light  
And your judgment as the noonday.

### Do you know about the poetry of the Psalms?

- † Do you know what makes them poetry and not just songs of praise?
- † I mean, they don't rhyme – not even in Hebrew! – and they don't seem to have rhythm, so what makes them poems? [wait for any ideas they might have]
- † Parallelism: the poem is mostly made up of couplets that relate to each other.
- † For example the second line might say the same thing as the first but in different words **[slide 7: Psalm 2:1]**, such as Psalm 2:1: Why are the nations in an uproar // and the peoples devising a vain thing?
- † or the second might build on the first **[slide 8: Psalm 95:6]**, like Psalm 95:6: Come let us worship and bow down // Let us kneel before Yahweh our maker.
- † or the second might build on the first **[slide 9: Psalm 96:7]**, even using some of the same language, like Psalm 96:7: Ascribe to Yahweh, O sons of the mighty // Ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength.
- † or the second might use the first for illumination **[slide 10: Psalm 42:1]**, like Psalm 42:1: As the deer pants for the water brooks // So my soul pants for you, O God.
- † or the second might offer a contrast to the first **[slide 11: Psalm 1:6]** such as Psalm 1:6: For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous // But the way of the wicked will perish.
- † Understanding this parallelism helps us appreciate the beauty of the psalms, and to understand them.

Let's look through the beginning of Psalm 37 **[slide 12: Psalm 37:1]** ...

<sup>1</sup>Do not fret because of evildoers,  
Be not envious toward wrongdoers.

- † This is synonymous **[slide 13: Psalm 37:1 illustrated]** parallelism: they say essentially the same thing, “don't be concerned with the bad guys.”

**[slide 14: Psalm 37:2]**

<sup>2</sup>For they will wither quickly like the grass  
And fade like the green herb.

- † This is synonymous **[slide 15: Psalm 37:2 illustrated]** parallelism again. [pause]

- † Notice it also explains the first couplet [**slide 16: Psalm 37:1-2 illustrated**], so they are related synthetically. [pause]

[**slide 17: Psalm 37:3**]

<sup>3</sup>Trust in the LORD and do good;  
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.

- † This is synthetic parallelism [**slide 18: Psalm 37:3 illustrated**], with the second line explaining what it is to do the good mentioned in the first line. [pause]
- † This also begins a contrast – or antithetical [**slide 19: Psalm 37:1-3 illustrated**] – to the first two couplets, what we do instead of being concerned with the bad guys. [pause]

[**slide 20: Psalm 37:4**]

<sup>4</sup>Delight yourself in the LORD;  
And He will give you the desires of your heart.

- † This is [**slide 21: Psalm 37:4 illustrated**] synthetic parallelism again. [pause]
- † It also builds on the previous [**slide 22: Psalm 37:3-4 illustrated**] couplet. [pause]

[**slide 23: Psalm 37:5**]

<sup>5</sup>Commit your way to the LORD,  
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.

- † This is synthetic [**slide 24: Psalm 37:5 illustrated**] parallelism again. [pause]
- † And again, [**slide 25: Psalm 37:4-5 illustrated**] it relates to the previous couplet. [pause]

[**slide 26: Psalm 37:6**]

<sup>6</sup>He will bring forth your righteousness as the light  
And your judgment as the noonday.

- † Once more, [**slide 27: Psalm 37:6 illustrated**] synthetic parallelism. [pause]
- † And we again see a pattern [**slide 28: Psalm 37:4-6 illustrated**] developing as these verses relate to each other. [pause]

[**slide 29: cross with irises**]

Look at vv.3-6. What does the psalm say we are to do? Circle the things we are to do...

Let's [**slide 30: Psalm 37:3-6 first two lines highlighted**] look at them...

- † Trust, dwell in the land, do good, cultivate: for Israelites, dwelling in the land was part of their covenant with God, involving trust, especially in times of famine, war, or strife. faithfulness is man's response in the covenant, so that was good to cultivate.
- † [**slide 31: Psalm 37:3-6 commit highlighted**] Trust in the Lord [again!] and commit our way: entrust control of life to him, follow Christ.
- † [**slide 32: Psalm 37:3-6 delight highlighted**] Delight: enjoy his presence, intimacy [implies know him well]

Supposing we can do these things [**slide 33: Psalm 37:3-6 multiple highlights**], what happens? He gives us the desires of our hearts, right? We should get the things on our list, right? [**slide 34: cross with sunflower**]

- † We men want to be like Bond: live well, drive a fast car, have fun toys, go on important missions, and get lots of girls to fall in love with us.

- † [slide 35: motorcycle big] My list would be something like a new motorcycle, [slide 36: motorcycle small]
- † a big house [slide 37: house big] on the beach, [slide 38: house small]
- † influence [slide 39: city hall big] in local affairs, [slide 40: city hall small]
- † fame [slide 41: purpose driven life big] as a writer, [slide 42: purpose driven life small]
- † and the ability to stay [slide 43: ice cream big] healthy without diet or exercise... [slide 44: ice cream small]
- † and maybe a flock of young female adoring fans [slide 45: cheerleaders] following me everywhere, looking for autographs...
- † though that might upset my wife [slide 46: X out cheerleaders].
- † These are the desires we will get, [slide 47: five small pictures] if we do these things God demands, right? Well, sort of...
- † [slide 48: Psalm 37:4-6] Let's look again at what it says here:
  - <sup>4</sup>Delight yourself in the LORD;  
And He will give you the desires of your heart.
  - <sup>5</sup>Commit your way to the LORD,  
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.
  - <sup>6</sup>He will bring forth your righteousness as the light  
And your judgment as the noonday.

**What does it say God will do?** on your sheet, square the things God will do...

- † He will give us the desires of our heart, yes, but what does it look like? [slide 49: Psalm 37:4-6 highlighted]
- † He will give you the desires of your heart...
- † he will do it...
- † he will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday.

[slide 50: cross with daisy]

**See, this is a tricky promise.**

- † If you really trust in God, delight in him, commit to him, and obey him, what do you think will begin to happen to you?
- † You will grow spiritually, you will experience transformation toward Christ-likeness!
- † And as you become more like Christ, what do you think happens to your priorities, values, and – yes! – even desires?
- † They become like Christ's.
- † And what are his desires for you from this passage?
- † Righteousness and sound judgment!

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## Look

**Hmmm. Well, don't get too angry about this.**

- † Just because this means God is not promising you that new Mercedes, early retirement, or whatever else was on your list doesn't mean this is an empty promise.
- † First, I can tell you that it still feels good to get your desires even if they have changed into God's! Over the past ten years, my own desires have changed. [slide 51: five desires]

- † Sure, I'd still like to get the things on that list I gave earlier, but those things are no longer my top five.
- † Now, my top five would be to hear from God more clearly, to use my spiritual gifts to help people more, to develop a teaching ministry, to see my loved ones come to Christ and grow in Christ, and to have a blessed marriage.
- † When God gives these things to me, it is just as fulfilling and thrilling – more! – than when he gave me earthly things I wanted. [slide 52: cross with honeysuckle]
- † Second, let's look at what this looks like: God wants to give you righteousness and sound judgment. There is great value in attaining these things! [elaborate: Tiffany]

**So the question for you today is whether you think there is value in this verse, even though you won't get the Mercedes. I encourage you to be excited: not only is God going to bring your desires more in line with the ones he has for you, he promises that he will then fulfill those desires!**

**What are your thoughts right now about this passage?**

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## Took

**To delight yourself in the Lord means to delight in spending time with him and to delight in having intimacy with him.**

**And if you delight yourself in the Lord, he will give you the desires of your heart!**

- † If you delight yourself in the Lord, as that intimacy grows, he will transform you into Christ-likeness, and then your desires will match up with his, and then he will gladly give those desires to you!

**Let's end by singing a song of praise. [slide 53: lyrics]**

- † Then take the lyrics home with you to remember that we are to delight in the Lord, not demand of the Lord.

**[slide 54: Intro screen]**

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And your judgment as the noonday.

**The five greatest desires of my heart:**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**Thoughts about the teaching or passage:**

**“How Great Is Our God”**

Written by Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves, and Ed Cash; © 2004  
Worshiptogether.com Songs / Sixsteps Music (ASCAP) Administered by  
EMI CMG Publishing / Alletrope Music (BMI) / “How Great Thou Art” by  
Stuart Hine; © 1941 Mana Music (ASCAP)

The splendor of the King; Clothed in majesty  
Let all the Earth rejoice, all the Earth rejoice  
He wraps himself in light; And darkness tries to hide  
And trembles at his voice, and trembles at his voice

How great is our God; Sing with me  
How great is our God; All the world will see  
How great, how great, is our God

Age to age he stands; And time is in his hands  
Beginning and the end, beginning and the end  
The Godhead, three in one; Father, Spirit, Son  
The Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb

Name above all names; Worthy of all praise  
My heart will sing, how great is our God

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee  
How great thou art, how great thou art  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee  
How great thou art, how great thou art