

Good morning, both of you. So, hey, I'm absolutely convinced every one of you is here for a reason this morning. I'm here for a reason this morning. No one's here randomly. For those of you who decided to brave the soon to be weather, I did meet Sigh and Lori this morning.

They're from Montana and they're probably thinking, what soft Midwesterners, you know. So thanks for being here. And again, we come to church for all kinds of reasons, but whatever reason you're here is because God wants you here, so. And I'm here because God wants me here. So I'm going to tell you up front my application point and then we'll look at the sermon.

My application point is going to be this. I want to encourage you to read your Bible. If you already have a habit, I want you to encourage you to keep that habit going. Maybe hit the refresh button. If you don't have a habit of reading your Bible and trying to hear God through the Bible, I'm going to encourage you to start that habit.

So that's my main thing. So if you want to fall asleep now and hear nothing else, I have to say that's the takeaway point. Read your Bible, hear from God, hit the refresh button. If you've already got a habit, start it if you don't. But that's the whole takeaway.

So let's pray and let's be down. Go home. No, not really. So today we're talking, the series is called Flourish. That's the topic of the day.

And so I just thought, what does it mean to flourish? How do we know if we're flourishing? So over the last couple weeks I've spent reading, Flourishing is a big deal in certain circles now it's an area called positive psychology. So flourishing because they decided too much of Psychology Today is about helping people in the bad times, anxiety and depression. Let's figure out how to make it positive.

So I saw, I scanned articles from the Positive Psychology center at Penn University. Harvard University has a human flourishing program. Stanford University had a program for undergrad students about how do you flourish? Psychology Today had articles about it from the NetherlandsPositivePsychology.com they all write about what does it mean to flourish? It's a big deal today in these worlds.

So much that there's. And they say it's about Flourishing is about meaning and purpose and joy and love and, well, being, positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishments. One psychologist wrote this flourishing is the product of the pursuit of engagement, of authentic life that brings Inner joy and happiness through meeting goals, blahdy blah blah blah. Right. It's meaningful, it's helpful.

So actually, in all these different articles, there are all kinds of

these assessment questions. So I'm gonna give you a short assessment and you have to answer them questions. So go to the next slide here. So on a scale of one to seven, seven being really, really good, one being not so good. And this is a 10.

10 questions out of hundreds I've seen. All right, question number one. In general, how deeply satisfied are you with life as a whole? Number two, in general, how happy do you usually feel? We'd hope to think we're on the right side of things.

Right. Number three, are you optimistic about your future? Number four, are your relationships as satisfying as you want them to be? Alright, quickly, be honest. Right.

Number five, do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life? These questions obviously determine need more than five seconds to answer. Number six, do you even feel like you understand your purpose in life? Number seven, how would you rate your overall mental health? Again, these are questions from hundreds of them.

Number eight, do you cheer for IU over Purdue in all athletic contests? Oh, that, that. I guess if it's football season, we're all feeling seven. Last year during basketball, we were all feeling, I don't know, two. All right, that really wasn't one of the questions.

I just added that one. Make sure you're paying attention. Number eight. Number nine, in general, how do you feel about your health? Ten, do you feel you have the resources to enjoy the future?

I mean, I'm reading all these questions about happiness and physical and mental health, and you have to, if you take the pathway of improving your family life, your education life, your religious life, your education, all this stuff, and all these studies had correlations and psychometric properties and longitudinal studies about what it means to flourish. My conclusion was it's exhausting. It's overwhelming. I mean, I'm not knocking psychology, I'm kind of a psychology geek. So I think it's good.

All these studies help us ask the right questions. But in all the articles I read and things, and there's podcasts you can listen to, nobody really gave an answer of how do I flourish other than get more education, make more money, have better relationships. But how do I do that?

What's the pathway? I'll take the education pathway, take the relationship pathway. Make your relationships better. Make sure you know your purpose in life. One author I think it was from Psychology Today actually said, my word for the year is flourish.

I'm just gonna Flourish. And I'm saying to the author of the article,

how, how do I flourish? So I'm gonna give you a simple one thing to read and we're gonna read it this morning. And it's simple, but I think it's quite profound about what it means to flourish. We're gonna look at Psalm chapter one because flourishing.

I'll give you a simple definition from a Bible point of view. Flourishing is when you grow in depth of supernatural joy, supernatural peace and supernatural hope. Because flourishing comes in all kinds of different seasons of life. And I use the word supernatural intentionally because it has to be joy that comes from God. Jesus talked about that.

Hope that comes from God and peace that comes from God. So we're going to look at Psalm chapter one again. I'm not mocking psychology. It makes us ask good questions. All these articles were really insightful for me.

It's like these are really good questions to ask about. What does it mean for me or for you to be flourishing? What does it mean? The way I like to say it often is what does it mean for you to be alive, awake and free to flourish? So we're going to read Psalm chapter one now.

I'm going to read Psalm chapter one from the Bible that's in your pews. And I also know this. If you're like me, I've got reading glasses built into these glasses. With the lighting available in the sanctuary and the teeny tiny font in these pew Bibles, I've got to read my. I actually I cheated.

I printed it off in like 20 point font so I can read it. But I want to encourage, if you want to follow along, it is on page 383. And I'm going to say this too. So this Bible in your pews is called the NIV New International Version. And you may have seen niv, esv, nasb, nlt, all these different abbreviations, all they are is different ways of translating the original languages.

So it's not a different Bible. It's just throughout the years, like this one was published in 1984. Throughout the years they update the translations. Not because the Bible has changed, but the translations, modern day language, how we use it changes. So this is from the NIV New International Version.

It's just the company that published this particular translation. But I'm going to read Psalm chapter one which I'm going to say again, this is what you need to know to flourish. And it's really, really short. Forget about the pages and pages of articles I have in my backpack right now. From Psychology Today and Stanford and Harvard and all those places.

All right, Psalm Chapter one. And most people think Psalm one was intentionally written as kind of a preview of the whole book of

Psalms, an overview per se, like the teaser, if I could call it that. Blessed is a man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. Read that next line with me. It starts, but.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law he meditates day and night. One more time with that same line. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does, flourishes, prospers. All right, next slide. Not so. The wicked, they're like chaff.

The wind blows away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. Read that last line with me. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

So it seems like. Not that. It just seems like it's very clear. There's two different pathways the Bible talks about. I mean, all the research articles talk about education and more this, more that, more money, more this.

But there's really two pathways in life according to how God sees things, right? And I'm gonna. My first point is gonna be this. Take the only pathway that leads to flourishing. Take the only pathway that leads to flourishing.

I say that. Cause there's two presented in this particular psalm and actually survey the whole Bible. There's two. There's two pathways we can seek to flourish. Pathway number one, according to this psalm, is the pathway that leads to destruction.

And it says, you know, blessed is the one who doesn't stand in the council of sinners or sit in the seat of the wicked or wicked. And sinners and mockers. And those may, to you seem like strong terms, but they're essentially don't ingest what people around you believe about life who don't follow God, who don't trust God. Sinners and wicked and mockers are basically those who. They don't give God an account.

They think good is bad and bad is good. And whatever I want to do is what I want to do. So don't get too thrown off by the word wicked. It's a strong word, but it's a strong word because it's usually people that are hostile toward God. But that's one path you can pursue that path.

You can listen to your friends, you can see what you read online. And if it's not coming from perspective of people who trust Jesus, there may be some tidbits of good advice in there, but it will not lead you

to life. It will not lead you to flourishing. It will not lead you to be alive, awake and free. Romans and in the New Testament, Paul even says, don't in one translation.

Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold. And you might say, well, how do I do that? Well, you can quickly do a survey of your money habits, your friendships, and what you flip through on your phone or stream on your television. Those three things will tell you whose advice you were following about what it means to flourish. Because if you pay attention to primarily what advertisements, Instagram, all those websites, TVs, it's going to be what makes you flourish is you got to have money, have really good and sexy relationships and all these things.

And if you spend your time soaking that in and letting that shape your compass, you are taking in the road that leads to destruction. And even the psalm says, you perish. And again, those are strong words. But God has a really strong love for us. He wants us to take instead the road that leads to life, the road that leads to flourishing, the road that leads to prosperity.

The way of the righteous, it's called. And the psalm even starts off with blessed are those. And. And this kind of goes back to the series we did on the Beatitudes, the blessed life. But it's basically what joy for those who don't pay attention to the wicked and the sinners and the scoffers and how they live life, even though they look really good on the multicolored, shiny pages of magazines, that will not lead you to life.

What leads you to life. And we read this part of the passage out loud. If your delight is in the law of the Lord. Now, that phrase caught me right away when I was studying this Psalms, like, okay, what does that mean? And usually when we see the word law, we think, oh, legalism.

I mean, I grew up in a church that most people would have said was legalistic. Our spirituality was defined mostly by what we don't do, which wasn't always that life. I mean, yeah, there are things we don't do. But that was all we defined it as. But the word law here is the Hebrew word Torah.

It's what, you know, the first five books of the Old Testament, the Jews even today call the Torah. But another way to see that it's the teachings of God. So if you put that word teachings in there, his delight is in the teachings of the Lord. And then you look at the word delight. I'm just like.

When I say the word delight, I'm just like. I think of kids who delight in ice cream, right? Or my wife will say, after a really good meal, that was delightful. I can't remember the last time I've ever used the word delight in a sentence. Right?

But what does it mean then? How do you. How do I become the kind of person who delights in the teachings? How do I do that? What does it mean to delight in the teachings of Jesus?

Let me, when it comes to these pathways, take that off for now. I missed something.

I'm human, right? So when I was talking about the pathways, pathway that leads for the wicked, the pathway that leads to the righteous, it's all about, what do you use as your guide? So my father in law passed away in the last year. Really, really good man, Godly man. But he had, by his own admission, he loved to hike.

He got lost all the time. All the time. This is from his own journal that he wrote before he died. I got lost in Germany, I got lost in Austria. I'm really good at getting lost.

I got lost hiking in the Rockies. I got lost hiking in the Smokies. I was going the wrong way. I took a shortcut that ended up being a long cut. And his family got mad at him.

There was one time my wife's older brother got really mad at my father in law because he got lost in the Rocky Mountains. No compass, no phone. He refused to carry those. All right. For his retirement party, he was a physician.

For his retirement, somebody gave him a Compass. This is 25 years ago. He never ever used it. He still got lost. But the reality is, cause I know the man.

He wasn't my father, but I know him well. He had a compass in life. He grew up in a family that was not religious at all. Somewhere in his high school years, he chose to follow Jesus. And he started living his life by the teachings of the Lord.

Changed his life, changed the life of his wife. Therefore it changed the wife of all five of his children, of which I'm married to one. And because he lived his life, he worked his relationships around what scripture says about relationships. He spent his money about what the Bible says about money. He spent his time about what the Bible said about time.

He avoided things the Bible says to avoid. He changed old trajectory of a family because he Decided to go by this compass and he decided that the way of the righteous. Again, it sounds so churchy and religious, but he decided that was the way that he was gonna go, he was gonna follow. Jesus changed trajectory of his life. Living by this compass will change the trajectory of your life.

It will.

So now the delight thing, what does it mean to find delight in the teachings of Jesus? That sounds so like, honestly, I don't read the Bible in the morning and like, oh, it's so delightful. I mean if you do, I think you're weird. Sorry. But what does that mean?

Delight is kind of like the emotion of delight is usually a combination of surprise, joy and gratitude. So what does that mean that I, when I read the teachings of Jesus, the teaching of the Bible. So let me give an illustration of this.

Recently, last week I was driving home from Chicago, I was visiting my mom and I was on the Interstate 65. And you know how the side of the roads in the middle of the roads has those rumble strips? Like when you're getting out of the lane, it's really annoying, right? But if you're following me, you're glad I pay attention to the rumble strips. Cause I spend too much time trying to adjust the radio, my phone, the heat.

So I'm really familiar with those rumble strips, right?

But I delight in those rumble strips cause they keep me alive. They annoy me, but I'm glad they're there. Yeah, I should put my phone down. Yes, I should stop messing with the connection, all the buttons. But I'm glad those rumble strips are there.

So I think the Bible's the same way. I'll give you some examples of my own life. So there was one time when I was a young parent, I can't remember what I did, but I really got one of my kids. I really, I provoked one of my kids, my anger provoked them. And I right away in my mind was the passages that Paul talks about, fathers don't exasperate your children.

Rumble strip. It was a rumble strip. And I went to my then probably 7 year old daughter and I said I didn't use or exasperate cause you wouldn't know what it meant. I said, daddy was harsh with you, wasn't he? She's like, yeah.

I was like, I'm so sorry. And I walked away. I was delighted in the rumble strip of scripture. Another time, I was one of my older brothers and I one of my brothers, I am one of five, were arguing about an original copy of a newspaper article that we thought would be Valuable someday. Stupid, stupid argument, right?

I wanted the original because I cut it out. I was going to give him the Xerox copy. We argued about who got what. Stupid, right. I won the argument.

That night, I had been reading through the proverbs. And if you want

one Bible habit to start, could be you read a proverb a day during the month. So if the fifth of the month, like today, you read Proverbs 5. So that particular day, I can't remember what it was. I could look it up by looking at the proverbs.

When I got done with this stupid argument with my brother, the proverb for the day said, pride breeds quarrels. Boom. Rumble, strip, boom. I was like, God, was that what was going on inside of me? You're just proud.

You just wanted to win the argument. You didn't care about who had newsprint or who had Xerox. Boom. And I delighted in the law of the Lord. Cause he sent me back on the path to life.

Another time, there was a person in my life years ago, and maybe you have people like this.

Jesus says, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you. Maybe you have somebody like that, maybe you don't. I'm guessing you do somebody in your life that's irritated you, annoyed you. And there was one person in particular. I'm gonna call him Thomas.

And they just made my life hard. I wouldn't call them well, I would call them an enemy almost. And I felt. Then I read this passage, pray for those who persecute you. Pray for your enemies.

Rumble, strip. Rumble strip. God, I do love Thomas. I mean, I'm thinking that in my head. And God says, I want you to say it out loud.

Say what out loud? I want you to say out loud that you love Thomas. Well, God, you know that. I do. I know, but I want you to say it out loud.

I'm down in a bedroom of our house that time, and I just said out loud, God, I couldn't. God, I love God, I love Thomas. And hearing myself say that, I almost broke down crying. God, would you bless Thomas? Because the rumble strip of scripture kept me from going off into the path of destruction, which would be.

I'm really angry at him. I'm bitter. I'm gonna get revenge. But God's like, no, I want you to stay on the pathway. Last one.

Last one. I'll use with this example of staying on the pathway. And delighting is. For some reason lately, when I think of the Ten Commandments, the word coveting is something that's becoming A rumble strip for me. And if you knew what kind of house I live in, the cars that I drive, if you knew the wonder that my wife is and how proud I am of my kids, you'd be like, why are you coveting anything?

But I still felt it in my heart lately. I wish I had more this or that



or this or that. And it's kind of this rumble strip. So I just tell God I don't want to be this way anymore. So in those examples, I do delight.

I'm grateful. I'm surprised and joyful and grateful of how God keeps me in the path leading toward flourishing. He will do that for you. He doesn't want you to go down the path of be angry. Be angry at your kids, be angry at your enemies.

Be angry at your brother who wants the article you want. That's the culture tell you. You just kind of go that way. Forget them. But the path of the righteous says no.

Delight in the teachings of the Lord and you'll lead yourself toward prosperity. You will be a tree that doesn't even wither when hard times come.

Last one. And this is the original thing. I told you to start the sermon on read the Bible. This is my last point. Read the Bible, choose the Jesus way, and you will flourish.

All right? Read this out loud with me instead of you will flourish. Say, I will flourish. All right? Start at the beginning.

Read the Bible, choose the Jesus way. I. I will flourish.

Maybe it sounds legalistic, right? I'm not just asking you to read the Bible. I'm asking you to read the Bible to hear from God. Because we don't read the Bible to win in the Jeopardy category of Bible. We don't read the Bible so we can win a Trivial Pursuit categories.

We read the Bible because we want to hear from God. And all those rumble strips experience that taught me how to delight in the word of God was because I had read the Bible. This particular psalm I memorized years ago. Sometimes I've memorized passages and they come back at the most unwelcome times as rumble strips. Like, why did I memorize?

Well, what is Psalm 119? Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you. I'm hiding your. I'm putting that in me. And the word meditate in the passages.

Says, he delights in the law of the Lord and on him. He meditates day and night. Meditate doesn't mean you have to be like, meditate is just, I keep it in my head. I keep it in my Head. I read it, and then I think about it during the day, and even if I forget about it, then I try to think about it some more.

So meditation is not some kind of a. Hmm. You know, kind of a weird practice. It just means you put it in your head. You put it in your.

And you can't really put it in your head unless you read, unless you have some kind of habit. So that's why I'm encouraging you to have a habit. It's just like, if you want to lose weight, there's habits you have to do. If you want to get strong and lift weights, there's habits you have to do. If you want to listen to the voice of God through the Bible and be one of these people that find the light in the law of the Lord, your leaf doesn't wither and you prosper in all you do, then you have to have a habit.

The screen there, there's YouVersion because that's. If you're an app person. YouVersion is an app you can get on your phones, and it's just. You just search. YouVersion has multiple, multiple versions of the Bible.

If you want a version of the Bible in Russian or Bulgarian, you can find it. I would suggest the English ones first for you. Most of us, but maybe. And now I know Jim Clark on staff here has encouraged people on this to join him in a reading through the Bible. In a year, you're already five days behind.

Sorry, but I'm gonna encourage you to do that. But if you're just starting the habit, I would say don't do that, because that's like telling somebody who's grossly out of shape, go run a mile right now. They'll die. Right. Maybe you start the habit with, I'm gonna read a verse a day.

I'm gonna read a chapter a day. I mean, on the YouVersion app, they have a verse for the day. And one of my practices, I look at the verse for the day, and then I read the whole chapter that verse is in. That practice alone only takes you about seven minutes. So maybe it's.

Or maybe you just want to use a Bible Bible. If you don't have one, I'm going to give you permission, and I'll pay for it. If they're all gone, take this out of the pew and take it home. If you don't have one, do it. But read the Bible.

Find it on app. I have certain. I have a couple different apps I use that are kind of. I have the same habit every morning. I listen to the Bible on this app.

I listen to a devotional on this app for somebody who's talking about the Bible and I have the same rhythm every morning. You don't have to be legalistic about that. I'm not. But in general, I have the same habit every morning. I'm gonna encourage you to read the Bible.

Choose the Jesus way. Now I say choose the Jesus way. I'm gonna put this on the screen too. I did this a few years ago. These are the teachings of Jesus.

You might think, well, meditating the law of the Lord. That sounds like ten Commandments. That sound legalistic. But if you just go with the things that Jesus said to do, which includes the ten Commandments, these are the things Jesus said to do, right? These.

This is part of the teachings of the Lord that you can delight in. He said to do this. Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Don't judge others, forgive others.

Anybody come to mind.

Heal the sick. You should tithe. Jesus said that. Tithe 10% of your income to ministries.

Don't be afraid, don't worry. Go and be reconciled. Give to those in need. Invite the poor, crippled and blind. Don't preference those who give something to you back.

Love one another. Let your guests be. Yes. Don't lie, don't manipulate. And then keep the commandments.

So Jesus clearly was going back. He even said, I didn't come to get rid of the commandments, I came to fulfill them. So all the commandments that say things about not coveting things or being sexually pure and those things, that's on Jesus. So if you don't want to be like an Old Testament legalist person, just go to the Jesus person because he loved the Old Testament, but it puts it in a different way. So if you want to be somebody who delights in the teachings of Jesus, then we have to do these things.

And we can't do those things unless we know those things. We can't know those things unless we read the Bible.

In the next few weeks as part of this series, most of the sermons will come out of John chapter 15, where Jesus is talking to his disciples. It's the night he was betrayed, the last supper or so it's this kind of big words. But he says, I've told you these things. This is John chapter 15. I've told you these things so that you'll be filled with my joy.

And yes, your joy will overflow. He's telling us these things. He says things in scripture. He gives these commands that I have on the Screen. He tells us to obey the commandments because he wants us to have joy that overflows.

He wants us to flourish. That's what he wants us to do.

So if you don't have a habit of reading the Bible, start one. Even if it's just a verse a day, if you miss a day, pick up the next day. Don't beat yourself up. I know. I'm not against reading the Bible in a

year.

I just know a lot of people that when they start, they try to do that. And by, I don't know, January 17, when he hit Leviticus, you quit. So figure out something that's doable for you, but do it. But maybe you want to do the Bible in a year, do it. Maybe you just need to do a verse a day.

Do it. Maybe when you get on your phone to start flipping through Instagram or all the other things, first open your Bible app, read a verse. Read one verse before you flip other things. Maybe read a chapter before you start flipping other things. Find a habit.

Last thing we're going to do is this. If you don't, if you haven't already, grab the pew Bible out of the pew in front of you. Just. I want you to have it in your hands. Touch it, put your hands on it.

All right.

And there's a song. I'm just going to sing the first couple lines, and then we're going to recite it orally. But the song, it's a song that comes from Psalm 119. Put it on the screen up there. Maybe you know this song.

Thy word. Make sure you're holding it. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Sing it with me. If you know that thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my passing, then one more time, hold the Bible up.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. So, Jesus, when you were saying hard words, one of the disciples, and you said, the disciples, are you going to leave, too? One of them said, where else can we go? You have the words that will lead us to flourishing. You have the words that lead us to life.

Where else can we go?

So, Jesus, we want to be the kind of people who fill our souls with your words. Who else can we follow?

Follow people on Instagram, we can follow influencers on TikTok, we can follow all kinds of people. But if we want the words that bring us life, that bring our souls to flourishing, so no matter what we have to deal with in life, we flourish. I mean, Paul, God, you know, this Paul flourished in prison. We want to be the kind of people that can flourish in any season of life because your words are deep inside of us. So we want to be known and we want to be the kind of people who your words in us drive deep into our souls.

So we become the kind of people who bring healing and life to others.

We want to be those kind of people. Jesus. Amen.