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**Renew: Returning the Heartbeat of Hope**

“Renewing Real Life”

Psalm 1: 1-6

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**Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:**

*“Christians live by faith in Jesus Christ, and when their faith leans forward toward the coming of the Kingdom, they call it hope. The person who pursues [vocation] in hope, and who then shapes his or her life accordingly for service in the kingdom - such a person has a calling that will outlast every recession.” - Cornelius Plantinga*

*“There is nowhere we can go where God isn’t already there. There is nowhere we can leave where God does not stay. Every bit of our skin, bone, thought, imagination, and feeling, every minute pleasure of our prosperity, every glass shard of our adversity is held, governed, and seen through to us by God. Life under the sun is a God-inhabited life. The bent world rests and rebels within the arms of God. The whole earth is full of his glory.” - Zack Eswine*

*“The picture of Jesus as the coming Judge is the central feature of another absolutely vital and non-negotiable Christian belief: that there will indeed be a judgment in which the creator God will set the world right once and for all. The word judgment carries negative overtones for a good many people in our liberal and postliberal world. We need to remind ourselves that throughout the Bible, not least in the Psalms, God’s coming judgment is a good thing, something to be celebrated, longed for, yearned over. It causes people to shout for joy and the trees of the field to clap their hands. In a world of systematic injustice, bullying, violence, arrogance, and oppression, the thought that there might come a day when the wicked are firmly put in their place and the poor and weak are given their due is the best news there can be. Faced with a world in rebellion, a world full of exploitation and wickedness, a good God must be a God of judgment.” - N.T. Wright*

**Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:**

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- Psalm 1 begins with an exclamation of blessing, “O, the happiness of the person . . .!”
  - If the psalm is outlining the normal Christian life, what is the place of exuberance and joy in the Christian life?
  - When have you experienced such a shout of blessing well up for you?
- Psalm 1 draws upon the doctrine of the two ways, highlighting two divergent paths that end up in radically different destinations.
  - Is the narrowness of the two ways too simplistic for our current cultural moment? Too limiting and constraining?
  - How is it generally received in the church and the wider culture?
- The paths contrasted are the way of the “wicked” and the way of the “righteous”.
  - How comfortable are you with these stark, conflicting categories?
  - What is at the heart of the “righteous”? What is at the heart of the “wicked”? How can one distinguish between the two?
  - Are you able to use these terms outside of the church circles? Why? Why not?
- Underneath the definition of “wicked” and “righteous” are two contrasted delights.
  - What does delighting in God’s law look like? Is this a “devotional” or “quiet time”?
  - Does the call to meditate upon it day and night haunt you? Is it urgent and real for you/your household?
  - What other voices do you attend to? What other delights are alive in your heart? What else are you calling upon to shape and form you?
- The two delights bring forth two fruits.
  - What is attractive about the image of the tree planted besides streams of living water?
  - What is the effect of the contrast with the chaff? When have you experienced chaff?
- The psalm ends with judgment: How is it at once a comfort (NT Wright quote) and a challenge?