

Preparing for the New Year
Psalm 16

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Two weeks and two days; less for some of you. Soon, it all begins. What am I talking about: The New Year. And yes, I know it's not January. I know we're not starting a new calendar year. But we are starting a new school year. Somehow, this affects a lot of us. Children and young people in St. Albert go back to school on Sept 3. Colleges and Universities begin classes some of them sooner than Sept 3. Those of us with children realize summer holidays near an end. It's back to work full steam ahead. Our fall ministries start up. School teams have tryouts. Everyone gets back into more of a routine. And with every new year comes a new opportunity. Will this year be just like any other year where you have some new experiences but just let things happen? Or will you be able to look back 12 months from now and see significant growth in your life, because of choices you make now as we go into this New Year?

Our final message in the summer series on Psalms invites us to consider the direction of our lives. The Psalm leads to several questions though it asks no questions. David simply shares his choices with us. But I think we can find a question behind each choice David makes. So we're going to go through this Psalm by considering the questions I think David answers in his writing. There's 5 of them. You can ask these questions of yourself at the start of every weekday through the next year. They might serve as a great guide to your life. I pray that God and the Holy Spirit will use even just one of these questions to speak to you today. I pray God invites & empowers you to make choices today that will have great positive impact on your life through 2013/14. Then at the end of our time together, we'll have opportunity to declare our choices before the Lord.

Psalm 16

A Miktam^[a] of David.

16 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

² I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."

³ As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.

⁴ The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names on my lips.

⁵ The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.

⁶ The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.

⁸ I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.

¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

5 Questions Answered by Psalm 16

Question 1 - Monday – Where does the good come from in my life?

Have you ever stopped to think about that? I hope so because it can greatly change your perspective. If we continually focus on what's wrong, what we lack, what isn't happening or why they aren't changing, we can adopt a pretty negative perspective towards life and towards God. Whenever a tragedy happens or something goes wrong or someone suffers the questions about God arise. Where was God in this tragedy? How could God allow this bad thing to happen? Why didn't God do something?

We certainly need to face deficiencies, consequences, sorrow and suffering. As we've seen through the Psalms we've studied, God wants us to come to Him when bad stuff happens. God wants us to keep conversing with Him.

But if we only think about the bad, we can begin to believe that there's nothing good, nothing right and nothing to celebrate. We've seen David in the depths of despair this summer. We've seen some of the hard things he faced. But look at how he answers the question "where does good come from in my life?" Verses 1 and 2.

"Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." So David appeals to the Lord to preserve his life. David will run to the Lord as his refuge – that safe place he can go to when life's storms rage away. Then comes the comment on the good in his life. When I've read this over the years, I thought David was saying "only the Lord is ultimately good and apart from him there is not anything that is good. Or the Lord is so good that by comparison, the other good things in our lives don't seem good." But that's not what David says. He writes "I have no good apart from you." I interpret that to mean that every good in our lives is somehow connected to God. Everything good that has been part of our existence ultimately came from God. Think about the good people in your life. Did they just show up one day and you were lucky? Think about the good opportunities that you've had. Did they just happen because of your hard work?

"Yes, I worked hard. I saw the opportunity. I pounced on it and I earned it." Partially. But where did you get the brains, talents, skills and ability to act on those opportunities? For those of you born here in Canada, a land of opportunity, did you plan to be born here? Did you select the country before you were born? Think of our food. We eat plants that grew in the earth or animals that eat from the earth or animals that eat other animals that depend on the earth or the sea. Did anyone here put the earth in place or set up the oceans. James 1:17 puts it like this - "Every good and perfect gift is

from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” (Jam 1:17).

So here’s something you can try for Monday’s this new year. Monday is typically a challenging day to face for many because it’s the beginning of the week. We may normally start Monday thinking about what’s wrong with my life or what problem do I have to face today. How about thinking about the good God has brought into your life – even some of the good he’s brought through hardships.

Next week you won’t want to miss our service. Seven young people or young adults are getting baptized. I’ve had the privilege of reading some of their testimonies this week. So I’m going to give you just a small piece of some of them that relate to this today. One shares about the moment God opened his heart. Then he writes this

From that day on, I was never the same. I began losing resentment for past experiences, forgiving all that was pushed against me. I heard about the strangest miracles that occurred all around me in the congregation, things where the odds were stacked against them, yet only good came. I could see how these people around me, though faulted, were trying desperately to reach for better, and so I began striving for that greatness too. Suddenly I went from seeing no God around me, to seeing nothing but God.

That is the perspective of someone who and discovered God’s goodness everywhere. What good do you see in your life even today?

Question 2 Tuesday – Who are your friends?

This is about a big one especially for students returning to school or teams. Students, you’ve had a summer away from school and the people there. Will you go back to the same group of friends? Should you go back to the same group of friends? Or do you need to make a choice today that is different. In the testimonies you will hear and read next week, this theme of friends having a negative or positive influence comes up again and again.

One writes - Becoming a teenager I wanted to be accepted by my friends at the time, so I followed their examples, I did what they did. I was rebellious and disrespectful to my parents. I ended up being friends with people who had the potential to ruin my life. At this point I didn't know what to do, I was confused and distraught. My parents prayed for me continuously through this time and they suggested I break my friendship with those people and I did.

Another writes - I longed to fill the void I had created, so I look for others approval. I changed my eating habits, what I wore, how I acted, causing a downward spiral to a feeling of disappointment and lack of self-worth. I hated who I had become, but at that point that was all I knew how to be.

Still another shares - I ended up getting involved with a group of friends that were quickly headed down the wrong path.

Fair - the wrong crowd can lead to bad places. But then there is the possibility of friends having a positive influence.

I felt my life should just come to an abrupt end. In my sadness, a good friend of mine invited me to Youth Group at her church. I had heard another friend of mine say that he had a blast there and that it would probably cheer me up if I was having a bad day. So I took the opportunity, probably better than sulking at home.

Another writes - In the midst of finding acceptance with this group I met one of my best friends who was going to this thing called fast fast. This was the first time I ever heard people talk about having a real relationship with Jesus instead of just going to Church because you had to. I had the best night I had ever had in St. Albert, and was really sad when it was over.

Not long after that, I started hanging out with another friend, mostly for her accent, but she mentioned that she went to Sturgeon Valley and invited me to come to the youth worship team practice for fast fast over spring break. I started off as a microphone stand, and eventually was invited to sing with them. I spent every single day of spring break at the Church silencing all my doubts I had ever had. I

started going every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday for Church and youth group where I made the best friends I have ever had. A couple months later into our friendship, this friend and her mum picked out a Bible for me and my faith became real.

Who are your friends? Who are your companions? Who is your partner? Do they lead you away from or closer to the Lord?

Who were David's friends? Verse 3-4. "As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones in whom is my delight. The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips." David determines to hang around the saints. These are not perfect people – but people who follow after the Lord. He will delight in them.

But he will not even take the names of the false gods others worship on his lips. Isn't that an interesting aspect of friendship he brings up? Who do they worship? If you're friends worship themselves, then you will spend most of your time contributing to their self worship. If you're friends worship parties and drugs, then you'll be invited to join in that worship. If you're friends worship being cool, then you're likely to do whatever it takes to be part of the cool crowd even if that means disrespecting others, swearing, looking down on those not like you and judging. The sorrows of those who chase after other gods will multiply. But if you're friends worship Jesus, they can influence you to delight in Him as much as you delight in them. **Question 3 - Wednesday – What am I passing on to others?** If you were given an opportunity to fast forward your life to its final days, what would you hope to have passed on to those who came behind you? Money? Your Business? Knowledge? Possessions? Land? A house?

David will pass on something else to those who follow him. Verses 5 and 6. "The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance." What's David's inheritance? The Lord – He will pass on the Lord to those

who follow. David does not focus on the inheritance of land or kingship. Instead, he has inherited the Lord and in walking with the Lord, the boundary lines of his life have fallen in pleasant places.

There was precedence for this earlier in the Old Testament. If you remember the Big Story of the Bible, Jacob was the father of the nation Israel. God changed Jacob's name to Israel. He had 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel. Each tribe inherited a portion of the Promised Land except one – the Levities. From this tribe came the priests and temple assistants. They would inherit no land. But their inheritance was the Lord Himself. God would provide for the other 11 tribes through their flocks and crops. God would provide for the Levites through the offerings of the other 11 tribes. He was their inheritance.

So in the list of what you will pass on to those who come behind, is the LORD at the top of it? Will your children and grandchildren, younger brothers & sisters – younger people you have a relationship with receive from you an example of a life lived in fellowship with the Lord? Will they see how you depended on and ran to the Lord with whatever life brought? Or will they receive something of much less eternal value.

I remember a desperate father coming to visit me one time. His child had just come out as gay. This father was devastated. He saw his family tearing apart as news of this began to ripple outwards. Just before he left he said something like this. "We spent so much of our time at the lake building our dream retirement cottage. We had little time for this child. Now I'm questioning what kind of a father I was to him." At that point, all that father had passed on to his child was "I'm busy building a cottage. Go find your own life identity." What will you pass on with the time you still have?

Question #4 - Thursday – Where do I go for comfort? When you've had a hard day – when things are not going well – when you're lonely – where do you turn for comfort? Food? Friends? Vacations? Money? Porn? Stuff? Drinks? Partying? Drugs? Movies? Music? Some of these are not

bad in themselves, but do we see them as our ultimate comfort? Does whatever you place your comfort in sustain you in an ever increasing way? Or is it less & less satisfying?

Where does David turn for comfort? Verses 7 and 8. "I bless the Lord, who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken."

David turns to the LORD for comfort. In him, he finds a companion that provides counsel at all times. In fact, even in the night, David's heart receives instruction from that poured in by the Lord. He's comforted in the Lord because the Lord is before and beside Him. The Lord leads him. He walks with him. It's like Psalm 23 where David begins referring to the Lord as his shepherd who leads, guides and restores. But then in the middle of the Psalm, the Lord is right beside him walking through the valley of death "I will fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me." Where do you go for comfort?

One of our young people getting baptized next week writes - *I love my family very much, but I love my Church family in a whole different respect. I've been blessed with so many friends helping me through my faith, and not to mention most of their parents loving and treating me like one of their own. I don't think I could ever thank them enough for getting me where I am with their support and genuine love for God. That's why through all that I've gone through I've always kept Psalm 27 in mind as verse 5 says "For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in his dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock". It simply reminds me that it doesn't matter what comes my way now that I have God, because He is always with me and with Him all things are possible. I've come to know that God is what matters in life. Not the circumstances I've had to deal with, not how many friends I have now, and not even the people who have impacted my life both positively and negatively.*

There's someone who has discovered the Lord is her comfort.

Finally, Question #5 – Friday - Where am I finding hope? Where do you look for hope in life? I think Friday is a great day to ask this question. The weekend is upon you. You may have opportunity to do a little more of what you want to do. You may have looked forward to the weekend all week. It may have been the only thing that kept you going all week. What gives you hope on the weekend? I remember working in a plant with some guys and wondering what they lived for. I didn't have the guts to ask them the question at the time. But I listened. I heard that their greatest hope in life was the weekend. They'd talk about Wednesday as Apex day. We've made it to the middle of the work week. Only 2 and half days left. Or they'd say – "it's Wednesday – two more get ups before the weekend." So their primary hope was the weekend would deliver something that would charge them up enough to go through the week following.

But the problem with weekends is they end in relatively short time. Monday comes. It starts again. And weekends can't really sustain anyone through the greatest storm of life which is our death. Does whatever or whoever you're hoping in provide hope even through death?

David reveals his hope in verses 9-11. "Therefore, my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." David hopes for life beyond the grave. David believes that he will somehow experience eternal life in the presence of God.

Now wait a minute Tom, how can this be. A few weeks ago in Psalm 6, David said this "Turn, O Lord, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love. For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?" In that message, I said that in the Old Testament there is not as fully developed hope and belief in the resurrection until the later prophets. Then Lori asked me later how can that be about David? How could the Lord just allow him to believe that the shadowy existence

of sheol was all there was? I answered something like “that’s all the revelation that was there at that time.” But I was wrong.

David was despondent in Psalm 6. He was letting the dark thoughts take over. He seemed to have forgotten the insight the Lord gave him about life beyond the grave. Here in Psalm 16 he points to this great hope.

But the question then arises, who is David talking about in Psalm 16? “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see decay?” We can agree with the first phrase because we believe God took David’s soul to be with him at the moment of death. But how can we agree with the phrase “you will not let your holy one see decay?” David died and his body decayed.

Unless David is talking about someone else. Fast forward 1000 years. It’s the day of Pentecost and Peter preaches.

Acts 2:22-32.

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.²⁵ For David says concerning him,

“I saw the Lord always before me,
 for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
 my flesh also will dwell in hope.
²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
 or let your Holy One see corruption.
²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
 you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

²⁹ “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

Peter gives David prophetic status. David predicted that a holy one would not see decay. Somehow, on the basis of this holy one’s resurrection, David looked forward to his own dwelling with the Lord in His

presence forever. So in Jesus, we discover the ultimate hope. If Jesus can deliver on hope beyond the grave, He can certainly provide hope while we still have life. Who or what have you been putting your hope in?

Another of our young people writes this *This past year has changed the way I view my walk with God, and my relationship with Him. I have learned many other truths and I crave to know God more. I now know for a fact that I am sealed in Christ's blood, and I am growing in my walk with Him.*

There's someone who has placed his hope in Christ!

So now we have 5 questions we can ask ourselves each day of the week in the New Year.

Monday – Where does the good come from in your life?

Tuesday – Who are your friends?

Wednesday – What are you passing on to others?

Thursday – Where do you turn for comfort?

Friday – Who is your hope?

Maybe the Holy Spirit has highlighted one of those questions. Maybe there is something that He calls you to admit. Maybe you need to acknowledge you focus mostly on the bad and little on the good God brings to your life. Maybe you need to admit you've been traveling with the wrong friends. Maybe you need to confess that you've been passing on something negative to others or you've neglected to pass on the Lord to those in your life. Maybe you need to admit you've been turning to something as your comfort even though it provides a diminishing return. Or maybe you've been placing your hope in something shallow and temporary. Will you confess or admit that to the Lord now?

Now will you receive the Lord's forgiveness?

Now hear these questions again as you go into the New Year.

How will you regularly focus on the good God brings to your life?

Who will your friends be this Fall?

What will you pass on to others?

Where will you turn for comfort?

Who will be your hope?

Do you notice that each one of these questions can be answered by the crucified Christ?

Post prayer response

1. Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I am not my own,[1] but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death,[2] to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.[3] He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil.[5] He also preserves me in such a way[6] that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head;[7] indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.[8] Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life[9] and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him.[10]