

▲ Personal Bible Study, Part 2-Exercise ▲

The Method of Study - Psalm 37:4

ALL -

Read the passage in at least 2 translations.

What questions come up as you read the passage? (Add to the list whenever questions come up.)

Section 1

Context – “context is king”

Immediate context – what verses and topics covered just before and after the passage?

General context – where does the passage fall in an outline of the book?

What insight do you gain from the context?

Section 2:

History

What circumstances surrounded the writing of the book? (author, date, audience, purpose)

Consider using reference works to dig into the history, culture and religion of the time.

What insight do you gain from the history?

Section 3

Genre

Is it a psalm?

When was it written? By whom? About what issues?

What insight do these things give?

Section 4

Literary analysis - Use NASB or ESV for this type of study

What is the main phrase (independent clause) of the passage? (Circle it)

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (ESV)

How are the other phrases (dependent clauses) related to it?

What conjunctions tie the passage together (don't use NIV for this)? (Circle it / them)

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (ESV)

How do the conjunctions impact the meaning of the passage?

Are there special features like repetition, switches in verb tense, or switches in person/people addressed or involved (like the switch from "them" to "you")?

What insight do these answers give you into the passage?

Section 5

Word study

What are the important words or phrases?

How are they translated in different translations?

What does the word in the original language mean? (use a bible dictionary such as Strong's or Thayer's or Brown-Driver-Brigg's, available online, free)

Where else is the word or phrase used in the Bible? (TSK, cross references, concordance)

What insight does this give you into the passage?

Section 6

Parallel and related passages - TSK, or *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge* is a good cross reference tool available free online through numerous resources

What passages of the Bible parallel this or deal with the same topic?

What insight do you gain from the parallel and related passages?

Theology

Are there problems that the passage raises when set beside other passages?

How do you resolve them, assuming that the Bible does not contradict itself?

Together

Summary

In one sentence, state the basic meaning of the passage in your own words.

How does this relate to the story / history of salvation?

How does the passage correct an error or problem today?

What promise or encouragement does the passage have for you today?

Application

What concrete change is God asking you to make as a result of studying this passage?

▲ Personal Bible Study, Part 2-Exercise ▲

The Method of Study - Psalm 37:4 - Filled out

Read the passage in at least 2 translations.

ESV (The Holy Bible : English Standard Version. Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001)

4 Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

NASB (New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, 1995)

4 Delight yourself in the Lord;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.

NIV (The Holy Bible : New International Version. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

4 Delight yourself in the Lord
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

What questions come up as you read the passage? (Add to the list whenever questions come up.)

What does it mean to “delight myself in the Lord”?

What “desires of my heart” will He give me?

If this is true, why don't I have all the things my heart wants?

Context – “context is king”

Immediate context – what verses and topics covered just before and after the passage?

Psalm 37:1 Of David. Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!

2 For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

Before: Don't worry about “bad” people – they will pass away. Rather, trust God and do good.

Psalm 37:5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.

6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

8 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.

9 For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

10 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.

Trust God, wait for Him and He will vindicate you. Don't worry about “bad” people; God will take care of them.

General context – where does the passage fall in an outline of the book?

It falls in Book I (of the five “books”) of Psalms. Each Psalm is a separate unit, so an outline does not reveal any further information on the Psalm in question. The five divisions, each of which ends with a benediction, are: 1–41, 42–72, 73–89, 90–106, 107–15 .

What insight do you gain from the context?

The important thing to do is focus on God and trust Him to worry about other people.

History

What circumstances surrounded the writing of the book? (author, date, audience, purpose)

David is the author. Nothing is said of the date, audience or occasion for writing.

What insight do you gain from the history? None.

Genre

Is it a psalm? (a little bit on Hebrew parallelism)

(Wiersbe, Warren W.: Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1993)
Western poetry is often based on rhyme, but not so Eastern poetry. It is based primarily on what we call "parallelism"; that is, the relationship of the lines to each other. In *synonymous parallelism*, the second line restates the first, as in Ps. 15:1 (nkjv)—"Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?" *Antithetic parallelism* is just the opposite: the lines are in contrast to each other. One example is Ps. 37:9 (nkjv)—"For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." Psalm 19:8–9 (nkjv) is an example of *synthetic parallelism* as each successive line expands the meaning: "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

When was it written? By whom? About what issues?

David is the author. Nothing is said of the date, audience or occasion for writing.

What insight do these things give?

The passage contains synthetic parallelism, where the line, "*and He will give you the desires of your heart*" builds on the thought in the first line, "*Delight yourself in the Lord*". It shows the result of "delighting" in the Lord, whatever that may be...

Literary analysis

What is the main phrase (independent clause) of the passage?

Delight yourself in the Lord

How are the other phrases (dependent clauses) related to it?

and He will give you the desires of your heart – shows the result

What conjunctions tie the passage together (don't use NIV for this)?

v.4 *and*

How do the conjunctions impact the meaning of the passage?

The second phrase is the result of the first.

Are there special features like repetition, switches in verb tense, or switches in person/people addressed or involved (like the switch from "them" to "you")?

No.

What insight do these answers give you into the passage?

The result of delighting myself in God is Him giving me the desires of my heart.

Word study

What are the important words or phrases? *Delight*, *Desires of your heart*

How are they translated in different translations? Same in all.

Where else is this word or phrase used in the Bible?

Delight

Job 22:26 *For then you will **delight** yourself in the Almighty*

Job 27:10 *Will he take **delight** in the Almighty? Will he call*

Ps 37:4 *Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give •*
Ps 37:11 *the land and **delight** themselves in abundant peace.*
Isa 55:2 *and eat what is good, and **delight** yourselves * in •*
Isa 58:14 *then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I*
Isa 66:11 *deeply with **delight** from her glorious abundance.*

Desires of your heart

Psalm 20:5 *May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the Lord fulfill all your **petitions!***

Other instances of “heart’s desires” and similar phrases in the OT refer to greedy, lustful things.

What does the word in the original language mean?

Delight

Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament): (def.3) **delight**, enjoy, be fond, i.e., take pleasure and enjoyment in an object, implying desirability of the object (Job 22:26; 27:10; Ps 37:4, 11; Isa 55:2; 58:14; 66:11+)

Desires of your heart

Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament): **request**, inquire, appeal, i.e., ask for something which is needed or desired, implying a response is expected (Ps 20:6[EB 5]; 37:4+), note: in context these requests refer to prayers to God

Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: **request, petition**

Enhanced Strong's Lexicon: **petition, desire**

What insight does this give you into the passage?

When we truly enjoy God and take pleasure in Him, He hears our heart’s pleas – not just things we want, but things we request of Him and appeal for.

Parallel and related passages

Reminiscent of:

1 John 3:21-22 *Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*

1 John 5:14-15 *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

John 15:7 *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

But all of these come with conditions: *delight yourself in the Lord, because we keep His commandments, according to His will, if you remain (abide) in Me...* What do these things mean?

Abide =

Thayer Definition:

1) to remain, abide

1a) in reference to place

1a1) to sojourn, tarry

1a2) not to depart

1a2a) to continue to be present

1a2b) to be held, kept, continually...

Strong's: abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for)

All of these point to a focus on God, remaining with Him, taking pleasure in being with Him and taking joy in Him. When we do that, then He promises to provide what we ask for, or what our "heart's desire."

Matthew Henry said it well: "We must make God our heart's delight and then we shall have our heart's desire..."

"He has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body and the humours (sic) of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul. What is the desire of the heart of a good man? It is this, to know, and love, and live to God, to please him and to be pleased in him."

Henry, Matthew: Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Complete and Unabridged in One Volume. Peabody : Hendrickson, 1996, c1991, S. Ps 37:7

Theology

What major area(s) of doctrine does this passage fit into?

Soteriology: sanctification.

How does it affect that area of doctrine?

As we change ever more into His likeness (through His grace & our cooperation), He will grant us the petitions deep in our hearts.

Are there problems that the passage raises when set beside other passages?

Not beside other passages, just beside the experience of life.

How do you resolve them, assuming that the Bible does not contradict itself? na

Synthesis

In one sentence, state the basic meaning of the passage in your own words.

Make God the deep desire of your heart and He will grant your deep desire.

Jer 29:12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.

13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

How does this relate to the story / history of salvation?

As we become more and more on "God's wavelength" (delight ourselves in Him), we'll find our prayers and petitions answered more and more consistently and obviously (because we're praying His will more and more, and are more and more aware of His response), and that will motivate us to become even more like Him.

How does the passage correct an error or problem in you today?

I don't "delight" in Him as much as I could/should.

What promise or encouragement does the passage have for you today?

When/if I learn to, or continue to try to learn to, He will respond!

Application

What concrete change is God asking you to make as a result of studying this passage?

To slow down, focus, spend time with Him – practice *delighting* in Him – marveling in His work and His Word.

