

Personal Reflection

Psalm 15:1-5

The history of mirrors dates back thousands of years. Some cultures made mirrors out of polished brass or copper. Others used certain types of stone like volcanic glass obsidian. Glass mirrors began as early as the first century.

Mirrors come in all shapes and sizes and styles and have a variety of purposes. From very plain to elegant and decorative, they can accent a room or make a room appear to be larger. Stores have them. Gyms have them. Every vehicle has at least three. We find them in restaurants and even the dentist's office. They are an important component of technology. Cameras and lasers use them, as does science. Mirrors are used in telescopes that allow us to see deep into space or magnify the tiniest particle placed in a microscope. With imagination and ingenuity, the applications can be endless.

While there are many uses for a mirror, the primary purpose is to get a look at how we appear. It gives us a reflection of what we really look like.

The Greek philosopher Socrates urged young people to look at themselves in mirrors so that, if they were beautiful, they would become worthy of their beauty, and if they were ugly, they would know how to hide their disgrace through learning.

A couple of weeks ago, I came out of the bathroom at home and I told Robyn "I have wrinkles." Now she could have said "those are love lines" or "wisdom trails" or "memory maps". But instead, she was just like that mirror, direct and revealing. She said something like "well, you are getting old."

We use mirrors to look at ourselves when we brush or comb our hair, brush our teeth, apply makeup, shave, tie our tie, check our clothes. We want to see how we look on the outside before we head out somewhere. But one thing a mirror cannot do and that is give us an image of the heart.

There is a different type of mirror for looking inside. It's an MRI for the soul, something that looks at the motives of the heart. I hope you brought it with you this morning and look at it each day. It is the Word of

God. **Hebrews 4:12** says that the Word of God is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (ESV) or as the CSB puts it "it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

The Amplified Bible says it exposes and sifts and analyzes and judges the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.

Verse 13 continues by noting that everything about us is naked and exposed to the eyes of God to whom we must give an account. He not only sees our actions on the outside, but He also sees the attitudes on the inside.

And that helps us to understand what David is telling us in **Psalm 15** where I invite you to open your copy of God's mirror, His Word. The Bible isn't just a light to our path and a lamp to our feet to guide our steps and guard our path (**Psa. 119:105**), it is a mirror that reflects what is in the heart, the attitudes that direct our actions.

The person described in **Psalm 15** stands in stark contrast to the person we looked at last week in **Psalm 14**. In **chapter 14**, the person who says there is no God doesn't want to be in God's presence if God existed. In **chapter 15**, David gives advice for those who do want to be in God's presence. It is an invitation for personal reflection, to look within and see if he truly is in a right relationship with Him and able to come into His presence. Paul does the same in **II Corinthians 12** where he gives instructions around communion, which we will do at the end of our service. If we want to come into God's presence at communion with a right heart, he tells us we need to first examine ourselves. This psalm is a self-examination if we would come into God's presence.

Let's take a look at this psalm as we prepare for communion. Notice that it begins with a question. It asks our consideration.

I. OUR CONSIDERATION – v. 1

Exodus 20 and **Deuteronomy 5** give us the list of 10 commandments. In **Matthew 22** we have an exchange between Jesus and the Sadducees on the issue of marriage. They posed a question thinking they would in some way trap Him and convince the

people that He was a religious fraud. His response silenced the Sadducees and amazed the crowd. Another religious group was listening in. They were the Pharisees. After hearing Jesus' reply they huddled together and thought they had come up with the perfect question, which an expert in the law posed to Jesus: "in your opinion, what is the greatest commandment?" God gave Moses 10 commandments to give Israel by which they were to live. They were fleshed out in both Leviticus and then stressed again in Deuteronomy just before they entered the Promised Land. After Alexander the Great conquered Persia, a religious faction developed that became the Pharisees. As they studied the law, they made application to it by adding 613 laws that Jews were supposed to adhere to. Often when Jesus was challenged, He would respond by saying "you have heard it said" referring to those additional laws, but then He would answer with what the Old Testament actually taught.

So when the Pharisees questioned Jesus, they wanted to know which of all the commandments was the greatest. Jesus responded by giving them not one but two.

Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

He didn't eliminate eight of the ten, but instead boiled them into two. The first four have to do with our relationship with God. The last six have to do with our relationship with one another. Love God. Love others.

So when we come to **Psalm 15**, the opening questions ask if we are rightly aligned with God and the answer has to do with our relationship with others. If we want to come into His presence, we must be in a right relationship with others. **Do we love Him as evidenced in how we treat people?** Or to say it backwards, how we love others shows how much we love God.

This psalm is one of reflection. **Do we love God as much as we say we do by how we treat others and is it in such a way that I can come into His presence?** Notice that it's a question of hominess.

A. A Question of Hominess – v. 1a

"Lord, who may dwell in Your sanctuary?"

The question is one of invitation. On occasion, we may get invited to a special dinner. You may go to the mailbox and find a fancy envelope addressed to you in special handwriting, like calligraphy or some cursive script. In the upper left corner or on the back you may find the name and address of the sender. Curiously, you open it up to see what is inside. It may be an invitation to a wedding in which the bride's parents or the couple getting married are inviting you to be a guest at their special occasion. Or it may be a formal invitation to a special dinner like an inauguration.

Such occasions require that you dress up in your best bib and tucker. No ordinary clothes will do, this is a special invitation. You are going to be a guest and you want to look your best.

The opening question is an invitation to be the guest of God. You are being invited into His presence.

How should you "dress" for the occasion? And when I speak of "dress" I'm referring to our character both in conversation and conduct.

Tony Evans gives us pause to consider the importance of this invitation when he writes: **"One cannot merely profess to love God but must actually walk before Him in integrity.** (We'll see what that looks like in a moment.) **To have access to God, one's life must reflect devotion to the two great commandments: love God and love people."**

While the NIV uses the term 'sanctuary', others use the term 'tabernacle' or 'tent'. Remember that when David was writing, the permanent Temple had not yet been built. The Tabernacle was built during Israel's wilderness wandering after their exodus from Egyptian bondage. It was the place where God would reside in their midst. The interior of the tabernacle had a place called the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was housed. Only the High Priest was allowed in there and then only once a year.

Before entering the Holy of Holies there was another room called the Holy place. It had the Table of Showbread, the Candle, and the Alter of Incense.

Assigned priests went in there daily to keep the lamp and incense burning and to replace the bread. Before they entered, they had to go through a ceremonial cleansing and put on special priestly garments. Outside the Holy place were the alter and the wash basin. Worshippers bringing their sacrifice also had to prepare themselves to come into God's presence whether it was to bring a sin offering an offering for thanksgiving.

The word **'dwell'** suggests a permanent residential status. But also suggests that the right of residence is granted by the landowner. There is a hominess in this place where God has invited us to dwell. We should be happy people celebrating God's earthly presence with us. **Who is able to come into God's presence at the sanctuary?**

The second question also speaks about a place of God's presence and is a question of holiness.

B. A Question of Holiness – v. 1b **“Who may live in Your holy hill?”**

Some scholars suggest that this psalm was written shortly after David successfully brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem to reside in the Tabernacle that David had built. You may remember that on the first attempt they loaded it on a wagon. Enroute, the oxen stumbled causing the Ark to teeter a bit. Uzzah walking alongside the wagon thought it might tip over so he reached out to steady the Ark and immediately was slain by the Lord for violating the law on how it was handled. David became angry with God, but God will be treated as holy so when we come into God's presence, we are to be holy. That's what Peter writes in his first epistle (**I Peter 1:15-16**) **“But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”**

Similarly, John writes that we are to **“purify ourselves even as He is pure.” (I John 3:3)**

This is a question that is spiritual in nature. Who can come near to God? When Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to meet with God and get the 10 commandments, the Israelites were instructed that no one was to approach the mountain, not even their animals or God would smite them. **Is it your desire**

to live in the presence of a holy God forever?

The Israelites understood that coming into God's presence required heartfelt penitence by confessing sin. Entering into His presence isn't to be taken lightly. I think that sometimes we come all too casually, And while He is our Abba, Father, we have lost sight of how holy He is and how reverently we are to approach Him and so we don't seek to be holy ourselves. Uzzah didn't treat God with reverence. We can't approach God any way we want, He has a standard of holiness that we are to live by and obey.

Isaiah 6:1-7

How should a person live where God is present?

David answers the questions in the next verses. The psalmist is not laying out here how a person can be saved, but rather providing a description of how saved people ought to live if they want to be pleasing to God and have fellowship with Him. In **verses 2-5a** we see our character.

II. OUR CHARACTER – vv. 2-5a

Where **verse 1** addresses the issue of being rightly aligned with God, **verses 2-5a** address the issue of being rightly aligned with others. **Do I love God with my whole being so that I can come into His presence and then do I love others as I love myself?** John points out the same thing in his first epistle. **How can I say I really love God if I don't love others? Or we can switch it around to ask how can I really love others, if I don't love God the way I should?** The evidence, David says, is in our character.

Tony Evans writes: **“What are the qualifications for the worship of the true God in His dwelling place? The answer is the one who is aligned with God (1-2). One cannot merely profess to love God, but also must actually walk before Him in integrity (2-3). In other words, to have access to God, one's life must reflect devotion to the two great commandments, love for God, and love for people.”**

Here's where the mirror of God's Word comes in as we evaluate those relationships to determine if we are able to come into God's presence.

J. Vernon McGee gives us something to think about when he writes: **“If you really believe you will someday stand before God, you will make sure that you live your life in such a way that it will count for God.”**

Notice the first two things mentioned in **verse 2**.

A. Our character Is To Be Blameless – v. 2a

B. Our character Is To Be Righteous – v. 2b

Blameless does not mean perfect. It means to be complete or sincere (genuine). In other words, David is saying that the person who would come into God’s presence, must strive to live in obedience to God with a life of integrity. This isn’t sinlessness, but soundness of character, integrity and loyalty to God. It’s the description of Noah in **Genesis 6:9: “Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and He walked with God.”**

It is the a character of Joseph and Daniel. Under Darius, other heads of state looked for things that they could charge Daniel with, but couldn’t find anything because he was blameless in everything he did.

Paul says that a leader in the church should be above reproach. It’s the same word meaning that you can’t bring an accusation against him because of his character. It refers to having a moral quality where there is no shame or disgrace that can be brought against them by anyone either in the church or outside the church. There is a moral character of consistency in how they live no matter who they are with. While no one is sinless, the person who is blameless is free of sinful habits that would hinder a high godly standard in character. In other words, no matter where the person is or who that person is with, that person maintains a good reputation.

If we want to enter into God’s presence, then we must aspire to live a godly life.

Psalm 66:18 “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” The NIV uses the term ‘cherished’. In other words, do I love my sin. To phrase it in the form of a question: can I continue to sin and expect that God will listen to me? I can’t expect to come into God’s presence if I keep sinning.

David says we need to be blameless if we want to come into the presence of Holy God.

Additionally, David says the person must do what is righteous. In **Philippians 3:9-10**, Paul says that we have a righteousness that is not our own. The righteousness he has been given, a righteousness that everyone of us is given, only comes through faith in Christ. Only that righteousness grants us the ability to come into God’s presence.

The dictionary defines righteousness as behavior that is morally right. Got Questions adds this thought about righteousness: **“such behavior is characterized by accepted standards of morality, justice, virtue, or uprightness. The Bible’s standard of human righteousness is God’s own perfection in every attribute, every attitude, every behavior, and every word. Thus, God’s laws, as given in the Bible, both describe His own character and constitute the plumb line by which He measures human righteousness.”**

The New Testament uses the term to talk about conduct in relation to the rights of others with regard to business and legal matters, which begins with a right relationship with God. It is contrasted with wickedness that is characterized by self-centeredness that has no reverence for God or respect for others.

The Bible also describes the righteous person as being right or just and trusts God.

Psalm 33:18-22

But the Bible is also clear that no one can attain righteousness on their own. The standard of righteousness is God and according to **Romans 3:23** we have all fallen short of His standard. But the good news is that righteousness is attainable through faith in Christ and the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit who produces in us a righteousness that is not our own.

II Corinthians 5:21 “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

When Christ died on the cross, He exchanged His righteousness for our sin so that we can stand before God clothed in His righteousness. So when Holy

God looks on us, He doesn't see our sin, He sees the righteousness of Christ who lives in us and therefore able to come into His presence.

Again, from GotQuestions: **"We have received this precious gift of righteousness from the God of all mercy and grace. To Him be the glory!"**

David says the person who wants to live on God's holy hill must **do** what is righteous. How we live on the outside must align with who we are on the inside. David continues in these verses to help us see what that looks like in character both in our conversation and in our conduct.

1. The character of our conversation

Colossians 4:5-6

Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

Is how you speak when you are around fellow Christians different from how you speak when you are with those who are not believers?
Do your words build up or tear down?
Do your words encourage or discourage?
It's easy to want to fit in with the world and be like the world and so start to talk like the world.

I attended my brother's graduation ceremony from boot camp. After a brief conversation with his drill sergeant, my brother headed to the car. I overheard his drill sergeant say to another drill sergeant that he never heard one curse word come out of my brother throughout boot camp. **How is our conversation?**

Notice from our passage specific things that mark blameless and righteous conversation.

a. We are to speak the truth – v. 2c

Leviticus 19:11 "You shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another."

Zechariah 9:16 "These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other..."

Ephesians 4:15 "Speak the truth in love."

Warren Wiesbe writes: **"Truth is the cement that**

holds society together."

Truth is a characteristic of blamelessness and righteousness.

But so is speaking without slander.

b. We are to speak without slander – v. 3

Slander is making a false statement about someone that will damage their reputation. Slander is simply lying about someone intending to cause others to think poorly of that person.

Psalm 101:5 "Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence."

Proverbs 10:18 "Whoever spreads slander is a fool."

Exodus 20:16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

Among the things listed in **Colossians 3:7-8**, slander is one of the characteristics of the old nature that we used to do before being saved. It can come from bitterness, unforgiveness, unresolved hurt, and jealousy. The righteous person does not hurt his neighbor with his words. Slander should not be a part of a person whose life stands in and has been transformed by the righteousness of Christ.

How is the character of our conversation?

David also talks about the character of our conduct.

2. The character of our conduct

I Peter 2:12 "Live such good lives (conduct) among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us."

Philippians 1:27 "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

What conduct does David include that would exhibit the character of righteousness?

a. We are not to harm others – v. 3b

The KJV uses the word 'evil' and speaks of moral depravity, corruption, and lewdness. Each day we see how people treat others with little regard for their well-being. From the increase in murders to

theft by assault, road rage, anger that lashes out in verbal attack on others. And there seems to be little or no consequences to such brazen behavior. Several weeks ago the news carried the story of five illegal immigrants who beat two NY police officers. Last week there was the murder of a nursing student in Georgia. Last week there was news from the Genesee County sheriff's department regarding a case of an adult propositioning a minor.

A person who seeks to be in God's presence will not harm others.

b. We are to hate evil – v. 4a

The word 'vile' refers to something that is useless. It was used to describe the dross or scum that surfaced through the refining process for gold or silver.

Paul tells us in **Romans 12:9** to **"hate what is evil; cling to what is good."**

What is our response when we see or hear about evil happening? Do we just shake our head and walk away? Ignore it? When I hear of someone caught in a sin, do I respond by saying they got what they deserved or do I stop and pray for that person? Are we appalled by evil? I don't do this near enough, but when I hear about someone who has committed some crime, I try to remember to pray for that person.

c. We are to honor other believers – v. 4b

We are to lift up those, who like ourselves, fear God and love Him, and want to obey Him in character.

How do we honor other believers? I think we honor them when we practice the one another passages.

Love one another
 Serve one another
 Pray for one another
 Edify one another
 Encourage one another
 Comfort one another

d. We are to keep promises – v. 4c

We should take the example of God, who, according to **Numbers 23:19** never lies, but keeps His promises.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-7

Numbers 30:2 "If a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said."

e. We are not to take advantage of others – v. 5a

Don't take advantage of others by charging interest on loans to others. Don't rip people off when you loan them money. The Old Testament law gave specific instructions about not charging interest.

Exodus 22:25 "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest."

Leviticus 25:36-38

f. We are not to take bribes – v. 5b

A bribe is an unethical or illegal action paid through goods, money, or services to influence someone in favor of a decision or action toward the person giving the bribe. **Deuteronomy 27:25** says that a man is cursed who takes a bribe.

Exodus 23:8 "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous."

Warren Wiersbe rightly says that **"there can be no justice in a society where money tells the court what is right and wrong."**

Your righteousness is seen in how you treat your neighbor both in conversation and conduct. If you are rightly aligned with God, you will be rightly aligned with your neighbor. And such blameless and righteous character gives you confidence to come into the presence of God. You will stand unshaken in His presence. The term speaks of being unmoved and stable as if built on a rock. Jesus says that person is wise.

III. OUR CONFIDENCE – v. 5c

It would serve us well to ask if we can dwell in God's sanctuary and live on His holy hill. This passage is a mirror into our attitudes and actions. If we are rightly aligned with God and others, then we can come confidently into His presence.