



Psalms of David (Part 6)
Prayer for our Homes and Nation Psalm 101
Pastor Ted Cunningham

If you are new to our church, we're in the series "The Psalms of David." If you really want to take a step up in your prayer life, I want to encourage you to start praying the Psalms of David wherever you are in a bible reading plan. If you're not in a Bible reading plan, get on the Bible app or download a printable reading plan. And as you go through the Bible, include the Psalms daily and pray these psalms meant to be sung. Great prayers.

Today, we are going to be in Psalm 101. So, if you have your bibles and want to turn there, you can pull that up on the app. We are going to be talking about our homes and our nation. This is Veterans weekend, so to start our time together here and across campus, if you served in the Army, Navy, Airforce, Marines, Cost Guard... Amy's grandfather would always say, "Don't forget the Merchant Marines."

If you served in any of those, would you stand so we can give honor where honor is due today. Thank you for serving. Space Force, that's one we have to get in there. I just want you to know there is not a city in the nation you can be at that is a better place right now than Branson, Missouri. And we are glad you're here and look forward to celebrating you all this weekend and into Veteran's Day, so thank you for serving.

Hot off the presses, I got a 2026 Rand McNally road atlas. Do you know how hard it is to find one of these things? Let me explain to the young people on the front row. These are maps of every state in the United States.

I want to ask... North, South, East, or West. How many of you, right now, where you are sitting, can tell me which direction you are facing. Would you raise your hand. Look

around at these human compasses. You know what direction you're facing. How many of you need to be outside with the sun? That's me. How many of you say it doesn't matter; I have no idea which direction I'm facing?

I was on the phone with an insurance adjuster a couple of weeks ago after that accident in Minnesota. He said, "Ted. When you pulled out of the church parking lot, did you head North or South on 20th Avenue. I said, "Well let me ask you a question. If you turned right out of the Church parking lot, what direction would you be headed in? He said, "South. I said exactly. That's the direction I was heading. *You're like this guy is as dumb as a box of rocks and I'm listening to him for my life's direction?* Anyway... Listen. After I explain this, young punk... After I explain this, trust me, you are going to leave your iPad at home on your next trip to Florida because this is going to give you hours and hours of fun. Before we had Apple Maps, before we had MapQuest... And there are senior adults in Branson this week who had someone fax directions from MapQuest to them.

But before all of that, we had this atlas, and it entertained us for hours and hours on family trips as we went down the highway.

So, my wife's grandfather was a farmer most of his life in Owatonna, Minnesota. When he retired, he went to work for the Minnesota Department of transportation. He took care of the rest stops just south of the city down to the Iowa border.

You know I love asking people, whatever their job is, to give me the funniest story, the best story you've got for me. He said once he walked into the rest area and he saw these two senior adults looking at the map. They used to put these maps up on the wall so you could find out where you were. He said, It's Owatonna, Minnesota. They're looking at Owatonna, Minnesota. They are looking at this map and having a conversation. They looked confused so Roland stopped by and said, "Hey, how Ya'll doing? They said good. "Where are you from?" "Western Iowa." "Where are you headed?" They said, "Texas."

See, I have to explain to these people here what that means. An Atlas would help you understand that.

When they got to Des Moines, they went left instead of right and just kept on going because they didn't have Apple Maps telling them to reroute. They ended up a state away.

They could have been in Oklahoma, but they were in Minnesota. I hope they went on to Duluth and just had a great time.

I want to know that I'm headed in the right direction. I've had times where I've been maybe a mile or two off course, maybe a block or two off. I've never been a state in the wrong direction. You had Apple maps, and you still ended up in Minnesota anyway.

The term we will often use is *Am I in the will of God*. I want to know I'm living my life in the will of God. I want to know I'm pleasing him, following after his heart, going in the right direction.

Here's good news for many of you here today. You are not going in the right direction and your are states away. Here's the good News. Ecclesiastes 9: 4 says anyone who is among the living has hope. And today, you can turn around wherever you are in your journey and turn toward Christ and find hope and grace and freedom and forgiveness, and you can change, but we all want to know we are headed in the right direction.

I'm going to show you a picture right now. I don't know why I got on such a transportation illustration this week, but it's where I was at. Maybe sitting in traffic in Branson. It was heavy this week.

I want to show a picture. Before I show this picture, what I want you to do is you are going to see a problem... in the first gathering all sorts of answers were thrown up. I want you to yell out what the real problem is with this picture right here. Okay, I heard it. It's Alignment. You can get new tires, and you are going to be right back here in a little bit if you don't get an alignment.

Here's where we're headed today with Psalm 101. I have had so much joy in studying Psalm 101 this week. Here's the question we are going to be answering: How do I know I'm headed in the right direction and aligned with God's heart, Word, and Values.

David, a man after God's own heart, was aligned with God's heart, character, will, and Word. How do I make sure, in my life, that I'm headed in the right direction and aligned? I want to know I'm going in the right direction and pleasing the Lord of my life.

Let's jump into Psalm 101: 1, 2 – We've spent a lot of time on just the first half of Verse 1. Now, remember, he is going to sing. These were written to be sung. We can read them as prayers as well. But he said, ***I will sing of your love and justice;***

to you, Lord, I will sing praise. This is God's character – Love and justice. And in this church... I've had this conversation twice already this morning. There are those who speak of God's love. And this is what we should be focused on, and we should be known for, but then they downplay justice. We know God's love toward us is boundless, but his justice means he is going to hold us accountable. His justice is that the wicked in the land will ultimately be held accountable. So, if you focus on love and downplay justice, you end up tolerating sin and wickedness and evil.

But then there are those who are about the justice of God, the wrath of God, and they downplay on the love. This is when you can become cruel and demanding. He hears praising, love, and justice that come from God. And this is key because you are going to see this thread throughout this. It starts with him then his home, his court, the city, and the nation. But it starts with taking personal responsibility, with making sure David has aligned his heart with God's heart. And he wants to rule the kingdom in the same way God rules – Love and justice.

I will be careful to lead a blameless life— when will you come to me? I will conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart. This is, in affect, David saying he will remove wickedness from his life, from his home, from his court, from the capitol City of Jerusalem, and from the nation. God rules with love and justice and David is saying, "I am going to do the same."

Now, what you are going to get in Psalm 101 is him removing wickedness from the land. He is saying there will be no place for wickedness in my kingdom. There will be no one serving in leadership positions in the kingdom with a wicked, evil heart. I want those who serve this nation and those who serve in this city to be aligned with God's heart. I will conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart.

And I know we live in a day... I ruin almost every morning for Amy because she does quiet time before I even get up and then I get up and read and study, but then I'm the first to turn on the news which just takes her day right down. She like, "Oh, don't turn that on too soon." What she's saying is when I think about all that's going on in the world, I know I need to be aware, and I know I have a responsibility as a citizen of the United States of America. I know I have a responsibility, but when it comes to my home, this is pretty much all I can handle throughout the day, and I sometimes burden myself. Here's what I want to tell you. before you get fired up over who is leading in the Whitehouse, be sure you are leading in your house. Make sure you and the affairs of your home are aligned with God's heart, God's character, his will and his values.

Before you cry out for major changes in our city, nation and world, which we should. We have responsibilities there as citizens. It doesn't end there though. It starts in your home. And that's where he starts with this Psalm. The question for us then becomes is God reigning in your home? Is he ruling in your life? Deuteronomy 6: 4-7 says whatever we are going to put onto the hearts of our children, it's starts with our hearts.

And David says this clearly – I want to lead a blameless life. And then I want to conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart. Is he on the throne of your heart and home ***I will be careful to lead a blameless life***

Psalm 101:3

I will not look with approval on anything that is vile. Now if you had the English Standard Version, it translates that as worthless, wicked works. But I was reading some devotionals this week on Psalm 101, and I get it trying, to apply it to our daily lives and more of a devotional reading, but some of the devotions were what he's talking about here which is *don't let anything distract you from following God*. The word *vile* is stronger than distraction. Even though that can apply, the word *vile* means worthless and wicked. He's saying, I will not have anything to do with anything that is worthless and wicked. I'm not even going to look upon it, but then here's the key: ***I hate what faithless people do; I will have no part in it.***

I love this language a mentor of mine has been using with me. He says, "If you want to head in the right direction and you want to know you are going in the right direction, you have to make some pre decisions. You have to decide now, long before you even get in the car. You have to decide what you are going to align your life with? What are you

going to be all about? And this includes... and you are going to see this in Psalm 101. This includes the people you hang out with, the company you keep. He's saying, "I even have to choose now."

Young people, please hear this as we read through this. You will only go as far in life as the people you hang out with. Some of you need to dump your friends. Some of you have some terrible influences. You're going, "But I feel like I could really be a good influence on them." How is that working for you thus far? Are you headed in the right direction with them. Are they on the same path with you? Because David is going to say, "If they're not on the same path with me, headed in the direction I'm headed, they are just going to take me off course. And I won't have it. You have to decide."

As a family you have to decide what you stand for. So, I've been thinking all week about this idea of alignment. Many of you have businesses. With a business you have to be aligned, you have core values or mission statements for what your company is all about and your employees, staff, and team members have to align with that or it doesn't work. If you can't say with sincerity "My Pleasure" you are probably not going to make it at Chick Fil-a. You have to align with that if you're going to work there.

Sports Teams, it's the same thing. 11 players on the field today and if one decides not to be aligned with the play that was just called, it all falls apart. So, teams need to be aligned. Churches need alignment. Churches need to be aligned, and this is why we say there are essentials and non-essentials. This is what we are aligned with. I'm in churches speaking throughout the year and every year, one or two pastors will say something similar to this... I'll go in and I'll ask them if there are any topics I need to steer clear of, anything going on in the church I don't know about. Any jokes you don't want me to tell? Several times, pastors will say to me, "Hey Ted, just keep the ball in the middle of the fairway because they know my golf game. They know often times I go over here and I go over there. And often with my preaching sometimes. What is the middle of the fairway? Keep it about the cross of Jesus. Stay focused on the main thing. Keep the main thing the main thing."

Marriages need alignment. That's all marriage counseling and coaching is. Couples are no longer on mission together. They are no longer aligned around what they said they believed at the beginning and what they would do for one another. That's why I believe in solution-focused coaching. It's telling them, "Hey, the solutions is here with the two of

you. I'm not going to tell you what to do." We are going to study your strengths and weaknesses and the resources that you have, and we are going to bring that together. And get you two aligned and back on the same team.

And families need alignment as well. You take a vacation, and you have a plan and one knucklehead family member decides to go in a different direction and it just takes everything off course. So, there's alignment.

I want to talk about that for just a moment with families because that's where we're starting in Psalm 101. David said, "I want to lead with a blameless heart, and I want the affairs of my house... I want wickedness far from it. So, what can you do as a family to be sure you're aligned as a family. What do you align your family around? Josuah put it this way and this is true for me. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

I just want to remind Mom and Dad and Grandma and Grandpa. You look at what's going on in the world. I vote, I pray, I do all the things I'm supposed to do, but at the same time, I can look and go, "Man, I just don't have really any influence on making major decisions nationally, or even statewide or even locally. But let me tell you where I have great influence and that's my home. You have great influence.

I want to remind Mom and Dad today. You are the primary author of your child's heart. You are the primary author. What's on your heart will eventually find its way onto the hearts of your children. That's Deuteronomy 6.

I want to give you the really simple... it's going to be fast. When we started having our kids, over 20 years ago, Gary Smalley, an elder at our church said, "You need a family constitution. This is where you get alignment as a family. If you have a business or a ministry, you know this is true. *This is what we stand for, this is what we believe, and everyone has to align around this.* Families need the same thing. This is who we are going to be, so we say, *what do the Cunninghams believe? What do the Smiths believe? What do the Raders believe?, what do the Brawner's What do you believe and what are we standing for?*

We have ten points. Our kids are grown now so we don't have family meetings with it, but one day when grandkids arrive, I look forward to saying this is part of your family heritage and legacy. Here are the first five on our family constitution.

Taking seriously my responsibility to be an influence in the life of my children.

Number one at the top of the constitution is we will love the Lord with our heart, soul, mind, and strength. This is Deuteronomy 6: 4-5. Hear o Israel, there is a God, there is only one God.

Four truths we wanted our kids to get: There is a God, there is only one God, he is the Lord, and he is our Lord.

Verse 5 Love the Lord. So, this was a decision each of us had to make individually as part of our salvation that we stand true on this.

2 – we will read and memorize scripture together. It’s a big part of our children’s ministry here. We want families to open the scripture together, to read together, to find scripture passages to memorize. I tell families to start with memorizing Proverbs 4: 23 Above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life. Teach your kids that every word you speak and every action you take flows out of your heart and this family is going to constantly be talking about your heart

Mom and Dad, don’t obsess over behavior of your children, obsess over the heart of your children. That’s where all the behavior comes from.

3 - we will pray together every day. This is a big one for us. We pray at mealtimes, we prayed before bed, we prayed when they left the car. They knew from the time we got up in the morning to the time we went to sleep at night, as we walked along the way, and as we sat at home, we were going to have times of prayer.

4 -This is a big one if you knew Gary. His thing was honor. We will speak words of high honor over each other every day. The world is throwing plenty at us. When you come into this home, there is no name calling. There is no tearing people down. We are going to call out the value that is in you because you are an image bearer of almighty God. And we are going to remind you of that value every single day.

5- I love number five. We used to ask our kids, “Do we allow mistakes in the Cunningham home? Yes we do. What do we try to do to avoid at all costs? Making the same mistakes

over and over again. That's a dog returning to it's vomit. We don't want to do that, so we will offer grace for mistakes and avoid repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

6-10 – We came up with this long before you heard the name Dave Ramsey. We will work hard, give generously, save wisely, and spend sensibly, in that order. I just want to remind you... Where did we get that? That came from a guy called Ron Cunningham, who taught me how to tithe. I tithe at 51 years old. That's on my heart because it's on my parents' heart. This is how family discipleship works. Aligning our family. The affairs of your household. We will love, support, and serve our church. You want kids who love Jesus, then you serve the church. Let them see Mom and Dad serving the church.

Probably the greatest joy of my life right now is two adult children and a son-in-law who serve this church. I want that for them, but I want them to see Amy and I passionate about it, not running the church down when I pull out of the parking lot. We will take 100 percent personal responsibility for our emotions, words and actions.

I would come into the Family Room to see what's going on and I would hear, "He started it! "Well, he licked me first!" Okay, listen. Who is responsible for your heart? "I am responsible. How much are you responsible? I'm 100 Percent responsible. How much is your sister responsible? She is zero percent responsible.

You are 100 percent personally responsible for your heart. Next we will live in the moment, not on technology. Rand McNally, right? And when you get bored with rand McNally, look for license plates. I can keep you occupied for 12 hours down the road.

But we have things happen in our home and we used to be, like we should probably record that. We should probably take a picture... No, how about this is just for us. Nobody needs to know what just happened.

Next is a big one for me as you can imagine. We will laugh together every day. We want joy to mark our home. So, I tried raising comedians and it stuck for the lot of them.

Verse 4 - ***The perverse of heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with what is evil.*** The company you keep determines a lot of it.

And then he's going to give us three examples. David calls out three very specific practices of wicked people. So we are not left guessing. Wickedness... what's he talking about with wickedness and he's going to call out slander, arrogance, and deception.

As we read this... Let me just ask. Is it too much for us to ask for our local state and national leaders to be honoring? Is it too much to ask for them to be humble. Is it too much to ask for them to be truth tellers. Because David said, "I don't want anybody who is a slanderer, gossip, an arrogant, proud person, or a liar. I don't know if you've ever known a lying, arrogant politician, but I've known some.

I was watching an interview the other night. Amy was watching with me, and the lady was asking the question of this Politian: "Did you hear what so and so called you?" I'm thinking, *is that where we are at. I'm wasting my time. What are we 6 years old. What is with all the name calling.*

He's going to be really clear. He says, "Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence. They will have no place court or in my city. They won't be leading. Whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I'm not going to tolerate that. We saw it this week with politicians speaking. Wicked, political platforms. And then tagging their speech with "I'm proud of this." I'm one guy that I want my home to be aligned with God. I want to live in a nation aligned with God's heart. And I'm here today and I know from friends and peers and those people I lead going, You can't want that... that I want Godly leaders, I'm never going to shy away from that. I don't want liars; I don't want slanderers. I don't want gossips. I don't want arrogant people leading me.

David says, "it ain't going to happen here; I'm moving them out.

My eyes will be on the faithful in the land that they may dwell with me. The one whose walk is blameless will minister to me. in other words, I need to be around people who are teaching me, modeling for me, influencing me toward righteousness, toward love and justice as God reigns. No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house. No one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence. Slander here – speaking falsely to harm a person's reputation.

Proverbs 20: 19 says, ***He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, therefore do not associate with a gossip***

Arrogance – that haughty eye looking down your nose at someone, thinking you are better than them. If You have a Politian that’s like that, they can be of no help. Why? Because the job of our leaders is to leverage their authority and influence for the blessing and benefit of other people. That’s what it means to be a leader. He says you can’t do that with haughty eyes and a proud heart

Proverbs 6: 16 – 19: ***there are six things the Lord hates. Seven that are detestable to him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.***

David is saying, “I can’t be around that person and rule with love and justice,

Deception: Deceiving others by twisting the truth, telling half truths, covering up the truth. Proverbs 12: 22 The Lord detests lying lips but he delights in people who are trustworthy.

Then the last verse of Psalm 101: ***Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the Lord.***

Now, some of you may have in the footnotes of your Bible or a commentary that you have will say cutoff could possibly mean capitol punishment. But most commentaries are in agreement that this is speaking directly of there is no place of service for these people in my kingdom... period. And I want to end today in a different way. I heard Chuck Swindoll pray this prayer years ago. It’s a prayer from 2007

I usually don’t recite prayers as we end services, but I’ve added to it and personalized it for myself. I’ve been praying it this week and I’m going to invite everyone across campus, everybody at home watching. I’m going to invite all of us to stand. I’m going to invite you to bow your head with me, close your eyes. I’m going to pray this prayer on behalf of myself, my home, my city, my state, and my nation.

Almighty God, we pause to reflect on your character as we seek wisdom for such a time as this. You are the creator and sustainer of all life. The psalmist declares that the earth is yours, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it. We know you rule with love and justice. Help us as parents to steward our influence in the home as the primary authors of our children's hearts, guiding them in your ways. In these unsafe days, you remain all powerful and able to protect. We seek your guidance. In these uncertain times, you remain all-knowing, so lead us aright. In the unprecedented events we are facing, you remain absolutely sovereign. Our times are in your hands. Therefore, our dependence on you is total, not partial. Our need for your forgiveness is constant. Thank you for your boundless, unconditional love for us. Our gratitude for your grace is profound. Our love for you is deep. We ask that you guard and guide our president, congressional leaders, the senate, our governors, state legislatures, mayors, aldermen, City officials, first responders, school board members, administrators and teachers. May they guide us with uncompromising integrity, keeping the wicked far from them. May the truth and their uncompromising integrity mark their lives and the way they lead.

We also ask that you unite us as truly one nation under God. May genuine humility return to our ranks and to our leaders. May that blend of integrity and humility heal our land.

It's in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen