

# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH



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Sermon 1-27-2008  
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“Dwelling in the House of the Lord”

Psalm 27: 1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

- One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.
- For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.
- And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.
- Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
- When thou saidist, “Seek ye my face;” my heart said unto thee, “thy face, Lord, will I seek.”
- Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

Holy One, may my words and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

It was only after choosing the title of this sermon, based on what stood out for me about this Psalm, that I realized how completely appropriate it is as the Director of HopeWorks to talk with you about dwelling in the house of the Lord. This church is home to HopeWorks. We love working here.

HopeWorks is an interfaith outreach. We provide hope and help to young people and their families through counseling and education. We are a small organization; for the past 30 years, at least, our home has been in this church. Currently we are on the third floor. We provide individual and group counseling at Hall and Conard High School. We support staff in the schools. We work with individuals, groups and families here in our offices at First Baptist. For the past two years we have been growing our community

outreach out of our recognition that there are needs on the community level that we can meet. We have a monthly public access TV show. Families and young people who come here to work with us are touched by the warm welcome, the Presence within this building. There is definitely good energy at First Baptist. This is a house of the Lord.

As I reread this Psalm, it speaks to finding within oneself a perpetual place for God in one's life, feeling constantly at home with God, wherever we are.

This week I got an email with the following riddle.

Background info: When asked this riddle, 80% of kindergarten kids got the answer, compared to 17% of Stanford University seniors.

“What is greater than God, More evil than the devil, The poor have it, The rich need it, And if you eat it, you'll die?” More about that later.

What would happen if you decided that you wanted to dwell in the house of the Lord all your days? What would that mean? How would it change the way you live? What distracts you from the awareness of God? (silence) From my experience we must learn to be comfortable with silence to know the Presence.

With a staff of 4 people, I am more often involved in administrative than therapeutic activities these days. I still however do counseling. My secret weapon in my twelve years as the Director of HopeWorks, is my faith. I consider it to be my greatest gift. Sometimes when providing counseling, sitting with a person or a family, it feels impossible to move forward. We are up against such a tight place that my heart pounds in my chest and I remember to pray silently, “Sweet Jesus, help this person, this family, me. We are stuck; we need your love and your light, Amen.” Then I wait and answers do come.

My faith is built on the experience of very clear evidence of God's Presence whenever I remember to look, to listen and to open my heart to the Holy.

What would happen if we decided that we wanted to dwell in the house of the Lord all our days? What would that mean? How would it change the way we live? What distracts us from the awareness of God? (silence)

As the 27th Psalm said in verse 4 “One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

These are questions we all need to keep asking ourselves. I don't have the answers to these big questions for you. Each of us must find our own answers. I can share something that has been helpful for me. If we dwell in the house of the Lord would there be room in our awareness for whining and complaining? As seekers for a home in God, I suspect we need to lose the habit of complaining.

Last summer someone sent me information about the “A Complaint Free World” bracelet. As people of faith, I am certain we need to be grateful.

Here are the rules:

1. Begin wearing the bracelet now, on either wrist.
2. Every time you complain, gossip or criticize move the bracelet to the other arm and begin again. Keep moving the bracelet from wrist-to-wrist until you keep it on the same arm 21 consecutive days. (This is based on the theory that it takes 21 days to develop a new habit.)
3. If you see someone else who is wearing a purple bracelet complain, you may point out their need to switch the bracelet to the other arm; BUT if you are going to do this, you must move your bracelet first because you’re complaining about their complaining!
4. Stay with it. It may take many months but when you reach 21 days you will find that your entire life is happier, more loving, more positive and more abundant.

My experience wearing my bracelet: I have been wearing it since Christmas. It has been challenging. In a month, I have made three days in a row without complaining. I have already noticed I have more energy, improved relationships, more gratitude, more awareness of the way complaining drags me down and I have more hope. I have more time to dwell in the house of the Lord. Contrary to popular belief, complaining is not helpful.

How do we seek God’s face? I promised when I began to get back to the riddle:

“What is greater than God, More evil than the devil, The poor have it, The rich need it, And if you eat it, you’ll die?” And the answer is (pause for audience response)  
“Nothing.”

There is nothing greater than God. Thank you! Amen!