

## Becoming (Week 5): Future - Summary

1. Human beings have an inexact, you might even say misguided, relationship with the future.

- Our personality types have inherent strengths and weaknesses in regard to the future: planners try to anticipate it but fail to control it, those who live in the moment are often surprised by it, and so on.

- "Affective forecasting" is what psychologists call our unconscious instinct to overestimate the joys and sorrows of the future.

- "A lack of self-continuity" is what psychologists call our penchant for acting like our present self is real, but our future is not. (The remedy for this is to imagine or visualize your future self in its setting and in great detail.)



2. Scripture cover to cover tells us that the future can be like clay in our own hands. We looked at two such ways Sunday, both in the Psalms (and we'll write about a few more in the Midweek Minute email on Thursday):

2.a. We shape the future by waiting for new instruction from God that we've not received previously (Psalm 32.8). o This means we do not currently know what we will need to know down the road: our current perspective and learning is guaranteed to be inadequate in the future. The one sure way to forgo this promise of timely, new divine guidance is, in the ever-subtle verbiage of the Psalmist, to act like a untamed, stubborn donkey (Psalm 32.9).

2.b. All of Psalm 37 (which you can read in full below) makes this basic, general claim, sounding a lot like Proverbs: there is a future or hope for the righteous, blameless, generous, meek, upright, and peaceable, and there isn't for "the wicked," basically those who choose to live in an opposite sort of way. The point here is simple enough: character, and the lack thereof, is destiny - character can be the foundation on which the future is built, and the road on which you travel to that future...or a lack of it can be the pothole you fall into as you head into whatever comes next. Using the controlling metaphor of the whole series, if the future is clay, our character is the potter that shapes it. So if we lack hope in the future, this psalm would tell us - that's ok, turn your attention to your present character and its development.

## **A Prayer For The Week (And The Future)**

Adapted from Proverbs 3.5-8: I will trust in the Lord with all my heart, and won't rely on my own insight. At every turn I will acknowledge God, and He will make my paths straight. I won't be wise in my own eyes, but will respect God in the utmost and turn away from all evil. And as I do all these things, I know that I will be healed, refreshed, and made whole, amen.

## **Exploring More This Week**

- Read all of Psalm 37 this week: [Psalm 37](#)
- Choose character over personality: A Culture of Character - United Church of Christ (ucc.org)
- Character development through the eyes of a Christian counselor: [Christian Character Defined: A Christian Counselor Speaks](#)
- Character in the New Testament, and specifically Paul's writings, vs. how it was understood in the ancient world: [Paul and Christian Character \(N. T. Wright Q&A\)](#)
- David Brooks has written extensively on character development.
  - Here's a short video on just one part of his work - [David Brooks: Should you live for your résumé ... or your eulogy?](#)
  - Here's a 20 minute presentation on the "five levels of character" - [David Brooks - The 5 Levels of Character](#).
  - Here's a long form presentation and interview on his book - [David Brooks on the Road to Character](#)
  - And, last, here's a link to the book itself - [The Road to Character: Brooks, David](#)