



LESSON 1: TWO WAYS TO LIVE LIFE

PSALM 1

BACKGROUND

Psalm 1 is considered to be an introduction to the entire Book of Psalms because its theme of contrasting God's ways with human ways and godly behavior with ungodly behavior is found often throughout the Book of Psalms. This Psalm teaches us that choices have consequences and that everyone will reap the choices of their consequences.

Because Psalm 1 gives us direction and instruction on how to live life, we call it a wisdom Psalm. This Psalm assumes that everyone wants to prosper, not fail, in life, and according to Psalm 1, everyone may prosper! If we could sum up the Psalm in one sentence, we might say: *Decision determines direction and direction determines destiny.*

As you read **Psalm 1**, look for the word pictures of *tree, water, fruit, leaves, chaff, and wind.*

DISCUSSION STARTER

- When you wake up in the night and can't go back to sleep, what do you usually think about?

PREPARATION

1. Before you read Psalm 1, **ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth** (John 16:13). You may want to use the prayer of the well-known 19th century missionary, Amy Carmichael, as your prayer throughout this course: *Holy Spirit, think through me until your ideas become my ideas.* Or, you could use King David's prayer from Psalm 119:18: *Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your law.*
2. Read **Psalm 1** slowly and thoughtfully in at least two translations. (The Scripture handout for this lesson provides four versions of this Psalm.) As you read and reread, mark any words or phrases that you like.
3. Give this Psalm a short **title** OR summarize the Psalm in one sentence.
4. **Write out** at least one verse from **Psalm 1** that you like. (When you write out scripture, you will often see details and words that you miss when you just read it.)

QUESTIONS

5. In the chart below, give a name for the two types of people mentioned in **Psalm 1** and write what the ultimate consequences of their actions will be as found in **1:6**.

Who:	Who:
End result:	End result:

- ♥ Do you think it is simplistic to put all people into one of two groups? Why or why not?
 - ♥ Is there a third group (or way to live)? Why or why not?
6. List the progression of activity (verbs) you see in **1:1**. What is the significance of this progression?
7. Does **1:1** mean that the godly are not to associate with the ungodly? Why or why not? Form your answer after you read **Matthew 9:10-13; John 17:15-18, 23; 1 John 2:15-17**.
8. What images or ideas come to mind when you think of someone who is "blessed" (**1:1**).

BLESSED – to receive good things from another. The word "blessed" implies that there is one who gives the blessing and one who receives it. In the Bible, to be blessed means that one receives goodness and favor from God and experiences a sense of well-being that results in happiness, contentment and joy. Blessings can be both spiritual and/or material and all blessing ultimately comes from God (James 1:17). Blessed means living a purposeful and productive life in close relationship with God. Scripture is clear that God's long-term purpose for the humans that he created and then redeemed, is that they should be **blessed**. God not only gives life, but also enriches it – especially to the one who chooses to live life God's way.

9. If we are "blessed", does that mean nothing "bad" will happen to us? Consider **James 1:12** and **Matthew 5:4** in your answer. How can we be "blessed" even in difficult circumstances?

10. Who is the person in **Psalm 1:2**, and what does that person do?

♥ What was the "law of the Lord" at the time this Psalm was written (King David's day) and what is the "law of the Lord" for us today?

MEDITATE – the conscious act of reflecting on God and his Word. The word "meditate" actually means to reflect, consider, ponder, mumber, sigh, moan, mutter or talk to oneself. It is the combination of reviewing, repeating, reflecting, thinking, feeling and enjoying. To meditate on God's Word means to take a word, phrase or sentence from Scripture and then constantly turn it over in our minds, pondering it and questioning it, even while busy doing other things (or laying awake at night)!

Meditation is **not** just a technical exercise that only engages the mind as we think about and try to understand God's Word. It is **not** just analyzing a verse, trying to rationally understand it or "figure it out" by thinking about it long enough to "come up with some ideas" about it. Meditation is a heart activity, where, as we ponder God's Word, God communicates with us, giving us his thoughts, ideas and insights.

The human was created and designed **by** God to meditate **on** God – his character, his word, his works, and his ways. Meditation is probably the most neglected of all devotional practices, yet the most powerful. When we choose to meditate on a portion of God's Word, we **will** receive God's wisdom and his personal word to us.

Meditation is a delight because God's Word contains God himself (**Hebrews 4:12**). Pondering God's Word will bring love, joy, peace and the presence of God himself into your heart. This is what the prophet Jeremiah meant when he said, "Your words came, I **ate** them; they are my joy and my heart's delight" (**Jer. 15:16**).

God's Word is "Honey for the Heart." Try it! You'll like it!

11. According to **Psalm 119**, what are some blessings you can expect if you choose to meditate on God's Word?

119:11	119:98
119:24	119:99
119:28	119:105
119:52	119:130

♥ Share with your small group a time when God's Word gave you one of the blessings listed above.

12. What **one word** describes the godly person's attitude toward God's law in **Psalm 1:2**?
Write a word that describes **your** attitude toward God's Word.

♥ If pondering God's Word is not a delight to you, what would help change your attitude?

♥ Is it possible to meditate on God's Word day and night? Why or why not?

♥ What difference do you think it would make in your life if you made it goal to meditate on God's Word as much as possible?

♥ Are you more influenced by the thinking and lifestyles of people of the world or by meditation on God's Word?

13. What four things are promised to the one who does not follow the advice of the wicked but instead delights in God's law? (**1:3**)

14. List as many characteristics of a tree planted by water that you can think of. Then, carry over the meaning to your life. What would be true of your life if you were like "a tree planted by streams of water."

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TREE GROWING BY WATER	CHARACTERISTICS OF MY LIFE

♥ How did this tree get to be by the water? (1:3) Who did this? What does this say about the character of God?

♥ According to **Isaiah 61:1-3**, what is the purpose of our being like a tree?

15. What kind of *seasonal fruit* do you think you would have in your life if you lived life God's way? (1:3)

16. What is the difference between "bearing fruit" and having "leaves that don't wither"?

♥ How would you describe someone whose leaves have withered?

♥ Of the four promises in 1:3, share with your small group which is more meaningful to you and why.

♥ What connection do you see between being "blessed" and "prospering in whatever you do"?

♥ What does **Jeremiah 17:7-8** add to the image of a tree by water?

17. How are the ungodly described in **Psalm 1:4**?

Compare the effect of windy weather (adversity) on a "tree" and on "chaff".

RESPONSE

18. Read Psalm 1:6 in all four versions of Scripture and describe another benefit of living God's way.

How does this make you feel? Write a short prayer expressing your feelings to God.

19. Choose a *word, phrase* or *sentence* from **Psalm 1**. Meditate on it until you do the next lesson. Write down anything that God shows you as you meditate on this Scripture this week.