

Psalm 1 (ESV) – Like a Tree Planted by Water

Main point: We are blessed when we listen to and follow God.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: This is the first psalm of David. It's a psalm of two parts: first, the blessedness of the godly person, and second, the state and character of the ungodly person.

Focus of the study:

Blessed is the man [*Hebrew: godly person*]

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

²but his delight is in the law [*Hebrew: instruction*] of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

³He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

⁴The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

⁶for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Questions:

1. The writer is setting up a description of a godly person. *What is the first thing he says about this person?*
 - a. v. 1: He is *blessed* – *what does that mean?*
 - i. Happy, content, peaceful
2. *First, the negatives: What does the psalmist say this person does NOT do?*
 - a. doesn't walk with and listen to the wicked
 - b. doesn't stand in the way of sinners
 - c. doesn't sit with scoffers
 - i. *An interesting progression: walk, stand, sit – I wonder what this means? What's it like when you are conversing with someone, just walking along? How about standing with them and talking? How about sitting down and talking in depth?*
 1. Going from bad to worse!
 - ii. Continuous acts of the will; a choice
 - iii. Blessed person doesn't imitate them, doesn't associate with them

3. *Positives: What does the writer say that a godly person DOES do?*
 - a. v. 2: delights in God's instruction
 - b. thinks about God's instruction day and night
 - i. how often is "day and night"?
4. *What is it like when you submit to someone else's wise instruction? Think about your parents... if they were wise, how did it feel to be led by them when you were a child?*
5. *What is the result of thinking about God's direction?*
 - a. v. 3: "He is like a tree planted by streams of water" – I wonder what this kind of tree looks like? Is it a wild tree?
 - i. No; planted, considered, cultivated
 - ii. Deeply ROOTED
 - b. *What are streams of water like? How is it different than, say, a pond?*
 - i. continual, reliable
 - ii. A pond can eventually dry up
 - c. *What happens with this kind of tree?*
 - i. yields fruit in its season
 - ii. leaf does not wither
 - iii. the person, like the tree, prospers: beautiful, productive
6. *How do you think this kind of tree "feels"? Is it a happy tree? What does that say about us, when we follow the Lord's instruction and guidance?*
7. *What kinds of instructions does God give us? [name as many as possible]*

[could stop here; skip to question 11]

8. v. 4: *What is the contrast with the wicked person?*
 - a. "like chaff that the wind drives away" – *what is chaff? Anyone here who grew up on a farm, with wheat? Chaff blows away like dust; lightweight, insubstantial*
 - b. not solid, not rooted, not firm in foundation
9. v. 5: *What does the psalmist say happens to the wicked?*
 - a. not with God – a choice
10. *Back to verse 1: Why is the righteous person blessed?*
 - a. v. 6: "The Lord knows his/her way"
 - i. *What is it like to be known by God?*
11. *I wonder why this was placed as the very first psalm?*
 - a. set up as a preface for the rest; the distinction between following God and not following God
12. Ask for prayer requests for today.
13. Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
14. End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace