

## Psalm 1 (ESV): Like a Tree Planted by Water

**Main point:** We are blessed, rooted, and nourished 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 godly person [*in Hebrew, the word often translated as "man" means "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;

<sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law [*Hebrew: law = instruction*] of the Lord,  
and on God's law he meditates day and night.

<sup>3</sup> The godly person 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.

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

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

<sup>6</sup> for 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 very first thing the writer says about this person?*
  - a. v. 1: That person is *blessed* – *what do you think "blessed" means? How do you feel when you're blessed?*
    - i. Happy, content, peaceful
2. *First, the writer talks about what this godly person does NOT do, so let's start there. What does the writer say this person doesn't 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. *That's kind of an interesting progression, isn't it? The writer uses the words walk, stand, sit – I wonder what this means? (You can act this out; **walk around a bit while you talk; then stand next to someone, then sit closely next to someone...**) 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. The conversation gets closer, more intimate, more connected with the wicked, sinner, or scoffer
2. Going from bad to worse!
- ii. *Does this kind of conversation, especially sitting with someone, happen by accident?*
  1. Continuous acts of the will; a choice
- iii. *So, what is the result of NOT choosing this kind of company?*
  1. Blessed person doesn't imitate or keep close company with the wicked
3. *Now, on to the positives: What does the writer say that a godly person DOES do?*
  - a. v. 2: delights in God's law. The Hebrew word for "law" means "instruction."
  - b. *How often does this person think about God's instruction?*
    - i. "Day and night" – in other words?
4. *What is it like when you follow someone else's wise instruction? Think about your parents... if you had good and wise parents, how did it feel to be led by them when you were a child?*
5. *What does the writer say 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. *So, let's think about this in terms of our lives today. What kinds of instructions does God give us? [name as many as possible: love others, be generous, don't fear or worry, etc.]*

[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? Did anyone here grow up on a farm, with wheat? Can you tell us what chaff is like?
    - i. Chaff blows away like dust; lightweight, insubstantial
    - ii. not solid, not rooted, not firm in foundation
9. v. 5: *What does the psalmist say happens to the wicked?*
  - a. Will not be with God – a choice
10. *In contrast, in verse 6: Why is the righteous person blessed?*
  - a. "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. It sets up the rest of the Psalms, starting with the distinction between following God and not following God
- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
  - Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
  - End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

## Psalm 1

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nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- <sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.
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