



BRINGING **THE** PSALMS **TO** LIFE

VIDEO SERIES
STUDY GUIDE

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PSALM 1

HAPPY IS THE ONE



Psalm 1 is about those who will flourish. Will it be those who pattern their lives after wicked people, or those who devote themselves to the instructions the LORD has given? Psalm 1 shows us that abiding in the LORD's instruction ultimately leads to true flourishing. Even though the wicked may flourish for a short while, they ignore the LORD and will ultimately perish. Those who flourish in the end will be those who followed the LORD's instruction. Following the LORD's instruction is worthwhile.

PSALM 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The book of Psalms begins a new division in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible is structured into three divisions: the Torah (*Law*), the Nevi'im (*Prophets*), and the Ketuvim (*Writings*). The last book in the Prophets is Malachi, and the first book of the Writings is Psalms. Consequently, Malachi is literally the “context” for the opening of the Psalms.




One of the main themes in Malachi is the question: Who really is happy, or blessed? As Malachi is writing, it seems that the arrogant are the ones who are prospering, the ones with a life worth admiring. Seeing Malachi as the background to Psalm 1 enables us to see the ongoing conversation about who is really “*happy*” and helps us consider more carefully what is truly worth celebrating.

POETIC FEATURES

- ⑧ Flourishing
- ⑧ Two Journeys
- ⑧ Day & Night Meditation

PSALM 1

PSALM STRUCTURE

v. 1	Happy is the one	...who has not taken a stand in the way of sinful people, but follows the way of YHWH's instruction. He will flourish like a tree !		admiration
v. 2				
v. 3				
v. 4	Not so the wicked	When judgment comes, they will be blown away like chaff and will not stand with the righteous.		contempt
v. 5				
v. 6	Because YHWH	...cares for the way of the righteous, and the way of wicked people will come to an end.		confidence

PSALM 1

- 1

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.
- 2

But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night.
- 3

They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.
- 4

But not the wicked!
They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.
- 5

They will be condemned at the time of judgment. Sinners will have no place among the godly.
- 6

For the Lord watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

PSALM 1

GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 In three words, what are the typical ways people define success?
- 2 Read Malachi 3:13-15, 18; 4:1,4. What kind of thinking did Malachi's prophecy confront in the Israelites? How does Psalm 1 interact with that thinking?
- 3 Read Jeremiah 17:5-8. What distinctions between the wicked and the righteous does Jeremiah make? What is the foundation for these distinctions?
- 4 What two images does the Psalmist use to illustrate the destination of the two journeys? How would you summarize the results from these images?
- 5 What's the significance of the reality that the path of faith does not look glorious in the beginning? What does it require of a person who wants to follow it? How do Deuteronomy 6:7 and Psalm 1 guide us toward that kind of intentionality?

PSALM 1

GROUP DISCUSSION

- 6 Read Genesis 39:20-23. What do you think Joseph's story shows about God's involvement in flourishing? How does this challenge the ways we typically think about flourishing/success?
- 7 How does Jesus' teaching in John 15 support the vision of the righteous in Psalm 1? What comfort and challenge does it bring to know that "the Lord knows the way of the righteous"?

PRAYER

O LORD, we praise you because you care for the righteous. We rest in the righteousness of Jesus, knowing that his righteousness is now ours as a result of your grace. We thank you that you have transplanted us into a new kingdom and are tending us toward true flourishing, as we daily are nourished and daily grow, becoming more like Jesus. As we seek to walk in your ways, help us to submit to your instruction, meditating on it as our daily food, delighting in your Word, remembering always our end destination, and bearing fruit in each and every circumstance. All this you will make happen for your people, because you are with us always. Amen.

PSALM 1 FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

This section is meant to extend the conversation and draw you into meditation and prayer throughout the week. Read Psalm 1 each day. You may even challenge yourself to memorize the text. After reading, reflect on the day's question, allowing God's Word to shape your heart and guide you into fellowship with him. Below is a version of Psalm 1 rendered in an English poetic form. Notice what strikes you differently compared to a direct translation. As your mind and heart align with the flow of poetry, what do you observe about the harmony between the words and the truth they carry? Let that beauty draw you into deeper reflection on the Psalm's truth.



Favored is the one, that one, not marching to the wicked's beat, nor standing on the sinner's street, nor sitting in the scoffer's seat. Instead this one has pure delight in probing God's word day and night, absorbing it to gain insight. This one will be just like a tree. Each season precious fruit you'll see. In all that's done—prosperity. How full and verdant—its leaves and shoots, for near a stream are fixed its roots. By the stream comes forth good fruits. Contrastively are wicked shown to be like chaff that wind has blown, like chaff that wind has blown. When judgment day is full at hand, the wicked ones, they will not stand—no, not with the righteous band. Yes, GOD guides well the pure one's path. The wicked's way just leads to wrath—a fatal path that leads to wrath.¹

PSALM 1
DAILY QUESTIONS

DAY 1

Psalm 1:1, Malachi 3:13-15

“Happy is the one” introduces us to the kind of person worth admiring. As we envision this person, the psalmist begins by telling us what this person does not do. The righteous do not participate in the company of the wicked. This introduction provides a contrast to Malachi’s question of “How long will the wicked prosper?” It sets the stage for explaining why the righteous (and not the wicked) are to be considered “happy,” as in blessed or admirable.

- Where in your life are you asking your own version of Malachi’s question, “How long will the wicked prosper?” Ask the Lord to open your eyes to his truth, as he defines the right distinctions in life.

PSALM 1
DAILY QUESTIONS

DAY 2

Psalm 1:2, Jeremiah 17:5-8, Deuteronomy 6:7

Instead of following the path of wicked scoffers, this person follows a different path—devotion to the LORD’s instruction. God’s Word becomes central, daily, and transformative, grounded in trust in who God is and what he has done.

- Where are you prone to listen to the advice of the world rather than the wisdom of God? How are your daily habits shaping whose voice you are listening to?

PSALM 1
DAILY QUESTIONS

DAY 3

Psalm 1:3, Genesis 39:20-23

The path of the righteous leads to a garden. In the ancient world, kings would transplant trees into royal gardens and carefully irrigate them so they could thrive. This picture echoes the flourishing tree of Psalm 1, where flourishing is rooted in the LORD’s care, not in specific circumstances. Joseph’s story in Genesis 39 makes this clear: even in slavery and prison, “the LORD was with him.” He was fruitful even in the face of difficulty because God was faithfully present.

- ⊗ How does reflecting on the LORD’s instruction as a river that leads to fruitfulness reshape your perspective towards your day-to-day circumstances? How does Joseph’s example encourage you to cultivate faithfulness under God’s care?

PSALM 1
DAILY QUESTIONS

DAY 4

Psalm 1:4-5, John 15:4-6

For grain to grow healthy and strong, it needs the protective covering of a husk. But once the harvest comes, the husk, now called chaff, has served its purpose. Through threshing and winnowing, the grain is gathered, and the chaff is carried off by the wind. This image of chaff is the reality of the wicked. When testing comes, the chaff proves useless and futile, and is ultimately discarded. The wicked “will have no place among the godly.”

- 🕒 How does the vivid contrast between a flourishing tree and futile chaff help answer the question, “How long will the wicked prosper?” According to John 15:4-6, what makes the difference between a life that bears enduring fruit and one that proves empty in the end?

PSALM 1
DAILY QUESTIONS

DAY 5

Psalm 1:6, James 1:2-6

The final verse explains why the righteous (and not the wicked) are truly “happy.” The LORD is personally involved. He watches over the way of the righteous. With the LORD, circumstances fade into the background, because he is more powerful than circumstances. The LORD is like a gardener-king, the one who prepares the water channels and transplants the tree so it can flourish. This is how he cares for the righteous. True flourishing is found in submitting to the LORD’s instruction and trusting his care and presence.

- Where do you need the LORD’s instruction today? How might submitting to his Word help you recognize his care more clearly in your current season?



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