



# Community Group Discussion Guide

The Psalms: Psalm 1 – June 2, 2019

## I. Starter Questions:

- What brings you delight?
- What are the sweetest truths of Scripture that you sink your roots into?

## II. Discussion of Scripture: (forty-five minutes)

**Background on Psalms:** This summer, we're opening up the book of Psalms. Throughout Psalms, we discover mountain after mountain of praise for the Lord. In fact, the title of this book in Hebrew, "Tehillim", translates to "Praises", and this is appropriate! Ephesians 1:6 illuminates God's ultimate purpose in rescuing us — "to the praise of His glorious grace."

The Psalms, however, spill over with much more than just thanksgiving and adoration, our usual categories of praise. As we study, we see not just thanksgiving and adoration, but the full range of every emotion. John Calvin said that the Psalms contain "an anatomy of all the parts of the soul," continuing to say that, "there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror." As John Piper says, "You can always find yourself in the Psalms."

How can every emotion possible, be praise? How can our tears, regret, affliction, hopelessness, anger, and despair praise Him? 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." If eating or drinking, or whatever you do, can be done to the glory of God, to the praise of His glorious grace, then so does our idea of praise need to expand as the Hebrew title would suggest. Indeed, even your pleas for help in times of trouble praise God when offered to God in worship.

This is probably why many people call the Psalms their favorite book — you can find yourself in there. God speaks to you in His word, whatever your situation may be, whether that be on top of Mt. Everest or mired in the Mariana Trench. But, more importantly, you find God in there, in a picture more complete, some would say, than any other book of the Bible. No other book details as many attributes and acts of God than the Psalms.

Let's praise God together in the reading of the Psalms!

## **Psalm 1**

### *The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked*

- <sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man  
    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 of the Lord,  
    and on his law he meditates day and night.  
<sup>3</sup> He 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.

**Background:** This psalm can be summarized as this:

The righteous man is blessed by delighting in God's Word (Jesus) and His word (Scripture). The sinner, on the other hand, is cursed through the rejection of these.

The first psalm introduces us to the Bible's two basic categories of people — the righteous, and the sinner.

#### **For Discussion:**

**1. In verse 1, what does "blessed" mean?**

*Help: "Blessed" means delighted, joyful, deeply contented, enjoying God's favor.*

**2. What does "law of the Lord" mean in verse 2?**

*Help: For us, we tend to think of "Old Testament commandments", or the law of God as recorded in the first five books of the Bible. However, the "law of the Lord" expands to the whole of the Bible. We see that Jesus and Paul refer to passages within Psalms as "law" (Romans 3:10-19, John 10:34, John 15:25), and Psalm 19 contains many synonyms that point to "law", such as "testimony", "precepts", "commandments", and "rules". The "law of the Lord" can generally be interpreted as "God's instruction", or for us we can safely think of the whole Bible as "the law of*

the Lord”.

**3. What does “meditate” mean in verse 2?**

*Help: The Hebrew word for “meditate” carries additional meaning — here it means ponder, whisper, a low growl, a low repetition, a low murmur. You can imagine someone in early times reciting Scripture to themselves over and over again to capture the word of God in their minds since access to a written form was more difficult.*

*When the psalmist says, “on his law he meditates day and night”, he means that the blessed man is carefully and seriously considering and thinking on God’s word.*

**4. Is this psalm teaching that you can gain righteousness if you read the Bible — in other words, following rules?**

*Help: Thankfully, no! We read and delight in the Bible because in it we read that we have gained righteousness if we are in Christ.*

*Psalm 32:1 says, “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” The psalmist didn’t know how this forgiveness would ultimately be accomplished, but we do. This forgiveness isn’t accomplished through following rules, but through the work of Christ on the cross.*

*Like the passage Craig preached from last week says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9). That’s good news — news to delight in!*

- 5. What does the life of a righteous man look like, given the imagery in verse 3 of the tree planted by water?**
- 6. If the roots of your thoughts and meditations are fed by “streams of water” (God’s instruction), you will yield fruit (verse 3). What are some examples of fruit this might produce?**
- 7. What does it mean if a leaf *does* wither (verse 3)? Carry the imagery further in your explanation.**
- 8. When the psalmist writes, “In all that he does, he prospers” in verse 3, what does that mean? Does that mean that if you’re a righteous person then you’ll always be healthy, you’ll be wealthy, your business will flourish, you’ll climb the corporate ladder to the top, your family will always get along, and your kids will always**

## **behave?**

*Help: Psalm 44:22 (quoted by Paul in Romans 8:36) says, "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." That doesn't sound like prospering!*

*1 Corinthians 15:55-58 clues us in to what prospering looks like.*

*"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."*

*Our labor, our pains, and our death isn't in vain. We have been given victory through Jesus. What does that victory look like? Luke 14:13-14 says, "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

*Cling to the prosperity that is guaranteed and eternal. Our prosperity always looks like spiritual blessing now, and is always given as unimaginable reward in heaven later — and only sometimes looks like material blessing now.*

### **9. How can you identify the prosperity gospel? What are some biblical passages that its proponents ignore?**

*Help: The prosperity gospel says that if you have enough faith, you'll be healthy, you'll be wealthy, and you'll prosper in all your earthly endeavors. Proponents ignore passages like Proverbs 30:7-9, Matthew 6:19-24, Mark 10:17-25, Luke 12:13-15, Luke 12:16-21, 1 Timothy 6:5, 1 Timothy 6:6-8, 1 Timothy 6:9-11, Matthew 6:24.*

### **10. What does it mean that the wicked "are like chaff that the wind drives away" (verse 4). What's chaff? What are its characteristics?**

### **11. What does it mean that "The Lord knows the way of the righteous"? (Verse 6)**

*Help: "Knows" here means "approves", "affirms", "acknowledges".*

### **12. What does it mean to "perish"? (Verse 6)**

### **13. Now that we've looked at all of Psalm 1, would you consider yourself righteous, or a sinner?**

**14. How do you become righteous?**

**15. In what ways is this psalm a praise?** We have chosen this theme for all of Psalms for the background info (see the intro of this SDG) is to steer us away from how people can turn Psalms too much into its primary purpose “being just about me”, rather than primarily focused on God. It is good to turn the psalms back to its primary purpose of praising His glorious grace.

**III. Responding in Prayer:**

1. Pray for our middle schoolers, youth leaders, and volunteers as they return from camp this week. Pray for a delight in the word of God as they have studied the reason Jesus came — “to seek and save the lost.” (Luke 19:10) Pray that many would believe the Gospel, and in so doing would be counted as among the righteous like we see in Psalm 1.
2. Pray for our church, that we would continue to be a church committed to sending deep roots into biblical truth. Let us delight in His word as David writes in Psalm 19: “More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.”
3. Thank God for our Recovery Ministry’s 20 years! Pray for Chris Gibson and our leaders, pray for the many who have found hope through it by God’s grace, and pray that many more would find recovery to the glory of God.
4. Continue to pray for your one, that the Lord may save the souls of the folks we have written on the back walls of our church.