



Psalm 1

Two lifestyles – Leaders version

For a one hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

*1. What is the big picture message of Psalm 1?

That there are two responses to God which result in two different lifestyles and eternal destinies.

What does the passage say and mean?

60 minutes

Read Psalm 1

2. Verse 1 describes someone who is not backsliding in their faith. Have you ever 'backslidden' in your faith? Can you remember how or why it happened?

Nb, it's worth pointing out that you have to be a Christian to backslide! We're not talking about people who just don't live the Christian life, we're talking about people who have made a profession of faith and then drifting from living for Jesus.

3. What do you think it means to walk in the counsel of the wicked?

To walk alongside and follow the ways of people who reject Jesus. To seek and follow their advice, and make decisions under their influence, rather than that of the Bible, with the counsel of mature Christians.

4. What do you think it means to stand in the way of sinners and sit in the seat of mockers?

It doesn't mean to 'get in the way' of sinners, but to stand alongside them – to hang around them, be influenced by them and copy their ways. Someone standing has stopped moving and the image shows an even higher degree of influence than when walking alongside the ungodly.

Sitting in the seat of mockers is settling down with those who reject God and living their way, living life without reference to God.

***5. How is v1 a picture of backsliding from faith in Jesus?**

It shows someone who starts to listen to the advice of non-believers, then starts to live like them and then stops living for Jesus altogether. It's a gradual process – the man is gradually getting more comfortable. This is how we back-slide – it's often subtle and we don't notice until we're sitting with the mockers. (Clearly, in order to share the gospel, we need to be with unbelievers. It's not being with them that's the problem, it's becoming more and more like them that is the problem).

6. What does v1 tell us about the person who does not become like the unbelievers?

He's blessed (happy, fortunate, his life has a sense of worth etc).

***7. STICKERS:** How do we stop ourselves from backsliding?

Don't try to answer this – you will unpack it later. Just let them put their stickers on the flip-chart.

Questions 8-10 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

***8. SDL:** What do v2-3 tell us about the blessed man?

*He delights in the law of the Lord, he meditates on the law, he is like a tree planted by water, he yields fruit, his leaf does not wither, he prospers. He is known and loved by God, and he knows and loves God.
(nb 1. 'man' means person, 2. 'the law' refers to God's instructions to the Israelites about who he is and how they were to live as his people, not to criminal law!)*

***9. SDL:** What do you think these things mean today?

That we, as Christians, delight in Jesus (since Jesus fulfilled the law). If we delight in Jesus we want to know him better, which means we read the Bible, memorise it, seek to work out what it means and how it applies to our life. We have spiritual nourishment from listening to God and act on what God says through the Bible, so our lives becomes more and more Christlike as our roots go deeper into him. We shares the gospel with others. And so we don't backslide because we are spiritually nourished and in contact with God. To 'prosper' means that our life is obedient to God's call, it's not a promise of protection from trouble or of material wealth.

***10. SDL:** Why can you not be both the backslider of v1 and the blessed man of v2-3?

They oppose each other – it's not possible to listen to and follow the counsel of fools and that of believers at the same time. You cannot delight in the Bible and follow the way of unbelievers at the same time etc.

After you download the Self-Directed Learning answers, go back to the stickers from Q7, and review them. Ask the Q7 again, and explain that we need to look after our souls – we need to stay in God's company (read the Bible, pray, meet with other Christians etc) and stay away from bad company. As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit of Jesus living in us and helping us to do this.

11. Who are the wicked? (v4)

Everyone who is not a believer in Jesus. (When David wrote this Psalm, Jesus had not yet come, so 'the wicked' referred to those who did not follow God. However, from our side of the cross, it refers to those who do not accept Jesus as their Saviour).

*12. **STICKERS:** Do you believe that Jesus will judge us when he returns to earth?

When you have read out their answers, you need to explain that the Bible makes it very clear that Jesus will return as judge of all – e.g. Acts 17:31.

*13. As judge, Jesus will give a verdict – what are the two possible verdicts that he will give and what are those verdicts based upon?

Guilty and forgiven, based upon our response to Jesus during our lifetime.

14. What will happen to the wicked (v4-6), and what does this mean?

They will be blown away like dust and will not be able to withstand God's judgement. They will be separated from the righteous (those who are made right with God through trust in Jesus' death in their place) and they will perish. This refers to hell – eternal separation from God.

15. What is the promise to the righteous in v6?

The Lord watches over them. (nb, this study was written from NIV 1984, and the answer relates to that translation. Other translations eg ESV will have a somewhat different answer to this question!)

*16. What does the promise to the righteous in v6 mean?

God never takes his eye off us – Jn 10:28. The righteous will ultimately live i.e. have eternal life in heaven with God. Our present experience and our eternal destiny is dependent on how we respond to God – this is a good time to gently challenge the group to think about how they have responded to God.

How can I live according to these truths in my life?

20 minutes

1. Do you understand what Jesus did for you on the cross and have you trusted in him?

2. Do you know what it means to gain spiritual 'nourishment' and 'refreshment' from reading your Bible? How can you be encouraged to read it more regularly?

3. Are you aware of any ways in which you are walking in the counsel of the wicked, standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of mockers? If you are, what are you going to do about it?

Check out – with the group sitting in a semi circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.



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3. What do you think it means to walk in the counsel of the wicked?

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5. How is v1 a picture of backsliding from faith in Jesus?

6. What does v1 tell us about the person who does not become like the unbelievers?

7. **STICKERS** How do we stop ourselves from backsliding?

8. **SDL:** What do v2-3 tell us about the blessed man?
9. **SDL:** What do you think these things mean today?
10. **SDL:** Why can you not be both the backslider of v1 and the blessed man of v2-3?
11. Who are the wicked? (v4)
12. Do you believe that Jesus will judge us when he returns to earth?
13. As judge, Jesus will give a verdict – what are the two possible verdicts that he will give and what are those verdicts based upon?
14. What will happen to the wicked (v4-6), and what does this mean?
15. What is the promise to the righteous in v6?
16. What does the promise to the righteous in v6 mean?

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