

The Way of Righteousness

HOW DOES WHAT WE TAKE IN AFFECT OUR FAITH?

Focal Verses • PSALM 1:1-6

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXAMINE the meaning of righteousness, feel ENCOURAGED to live righteously and SHARE at least one truth about righteousness with another believer this week.

In Focus

Cheryl loved her family, but every time she would get together with her cousins, they would spend time gossiping about their other family members and friends. There seemed to always be something to be picky about and a lot of unresolved conflicts from when they were younger. Her cousin, Tamika, was the ring leader, talking about her sister Darlique and why she always dressed so revealingly, making fun of her own Aunt Miriam who was bald from chemo, and how their cousin Breana “can’t get a man.” The more they talked and drank, the worse the gossip would get. One day during the Christmas holiday get together, Tamika asked her cousins if they wanted to go for a walk, which really meant smoke and gossip as usual. Cheryl responded that she would sit this time out; she didn’t really feel like listening to more family drama.

“Probably because you think you’re so perfect, with your HBCU education and your fancy job,” Tamika snapped back.

“I’m just not interested in keeping your misery company. We all know you just gossip to distract from your own drama,” Cheryl responded calmly.

Why do people who are making bad choices feel like they need people to join them? How can we stand on God’s Word instead of joining in with negative activities?



Keep in Mind

“For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (Psalm 1:6, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in

his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

The People, Places, and Times

David. King David is considered to be the author of the majority of the psalms. King David was the grandson of Ruth, a Moabite woman. Many scholars argue that Ruth was a woman of color; therefore, her mother, father, or both were also people of color. King David was anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the next king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:12–13). David was an unlikely candidate for king; even his father did not consider him as a choice for ruling over Israel. However, God told the prophet Samuel that God looks at the heart, not the outward appearance (1 Samuel 16:7). King David would replace King Saul, who was disobedient to God.

Psalms. The Hebrew word means praises, is sometimes called “a book of praise or psalms.” In Greek the book’s name means a collection of poems, prayers, and praises directed to the God of Israel by various individuals. The book begins with Psalm 1: “Blessed is the man,” or, as some may have it, “Blessed be the man,” and ends with Psalm 150: “Praise the Lord.” Thus, it begins with a blessing directed toward human beings and ends with praise directed toward God. The book is part of what has been called the writings. The psalms are grouped into five books: Book 1: Psalms 1–41, Book 2: Psalms 42–72, Book 3: Psalms 73–89, Book 4: Psalms 90–106, and

Book 5: Psalms 107–150. Some psalms are imprecatory, which means they address feelings of anger or vengeance. Some psalms are referred to as Royal Psalms, which address the King’s greatness and exalt the Lord as a majestic ruler. Other types of psalms are Thanksgiving, Lament, and Historical Psalms.

Background

The psalms have figured prominently in Jewish and Christian liturgies as they provide a window into the heart and mind of the believer and who God is to His people. The psalms have also inspired many people to write psalms like prayers and hymns for both public worship and private devotion. Indeed, no other book in the Bible was more well-known to medieval Christians; even today, the psalms have a unique place in the hearts of many Bible students. Scholars argue that at least six authors contributed to the book of Psalms. However, King David is credited with writing the most psalms.

God has put this book in the Scriptures to provide instruction, healing, joy, and love for His children. Thus, the psalms are a source of comfort for all believers, no matter our personal struggles.

Why is it helpful for believers to include emotional poems and songs in the Scripture?

At-A-Glance

1. The Ingredients of a Righteous Life
(Psalm 1:1–3)
2. The Characteristics of an Unrighteous Life
(vv. 4–6)

In Depth

1. The Ingredients of a Righteous Life (Psalm 1:1–3)

We are not given the author of Psalm 1. Some argue it was composed by David after his confrontation with Nathan, or when he was forced to flee Jerusalem during his son Absalom's short reign (see 2 Samuel 12–18), or that it was composed by an unknown author during the end of the Israelite's exile from the promised land. Yet, whoever wrote Psalm 1 clearly understood God's requirements for being in the right relationship with Him and desired to share these requirements with the people of Israel.

The writer begins with the word "blessed" (Psalm 1:1), which has several meanings, including "successful," "prosperous," "ethical," and "happy." In this context, the psalmist uses the word "blessed" to affirm that blessing comes from godly relationships. The psalmist affirms that we must be careful about who we associate with.

The writer describes three kinds of distractions that can disrupt our God-given blessings and cause us to be led astray from the Lord's path for us. The first distraction is "the counsel of the ungodly." The psalmist conveys that we must watch our company because bad influences can corrupt even the most zealous person.

The "counsel of the ungodly" is often subtle and not so direct. Those whose lives are wicked and profane do not care what God has to say about any given subject and don't want anyone else to obey the Lord. They may try to talk us out of living godly by inviting us into compromising

activities. They will say things like, "There's nothing wrong with it. Everyone else is doing it. I go to church, too, but you don't see me getting so religious." That's why Paul says we are not to associate with people of unethical or immoral behavior (2 Corinthians 6:14–17). They will try to turn our lives away from the truth.

The second distraction is "the way of sinners." We know that all sinners are subject to the judgement of God. However, there is a difference between those who have a sinful nature yet are seeking the Lord, and those who intentionally and consistently disobey God's commands. Here, the psalmist is telling us that we need to get away from "spiritual criminals" who love to wallow in their sins and give no thought to confessing and forsaking their actions before God. Unfaithful people would love nothing more than to lead others down the same destructive path they follow.

Finally, the psalmist warns us not to sit in the "seat of the scornful." Scornful means to be mocking. Solomon affirms that "fools make a mock at sin" (Proverbs 14:9, KJV). Believers need to be careful not to entertain what we know is sinful, harmful, or hurtful. We must stand up for righteousness and truth no matter whom we may offend.

Once we decide to follow God, we will not be happy or blessed by living immoral or sinful lives. True happiness comes as we meditate on God's Word daily and apply the principles to our lives. Meditating means "pondering" or "taking in and digesting" God's Word, which is vitally important if we intend to stay away from ungodliness and immorality. Once we know what God says and means, we don't have to be influenced by those who choose a sinful lifestyle. We can be assured that God will direct us in His Word so that what we do pleases Him "day and night" (Psalm 1:2, KJV).

Godly people are described as "a tree planted by the rivers of water." Here, the psalmist uses

biblical symbology to help us understand the characteristics of righteousness. A tree is one of the most important elements that God has ever created. Trees provide food, resources, and shelter as part of nature. So when the psalmist uses a tree to symbolize the righteous person, he is affirming just how important we are to the plans of God.

A tree that is planted by water is strengthened by a strong root system that makes the tree extremely rigid and sturdy in the face of violent storms. Once the roots are firmly in the ground, feeding on the water and other nutrients, the tree can produce fruit in the season (and in the way) God intended. A strong and firm tree will not “wither” and will prosper in the way for which it was created.

Similarly, righteous believers who are planted in God’s Word and living lives pleasing to Him will produce spiritual “fruit” and prosper in the things of God (see Galatians 5:22–23).

How can you tell if you are bearing good fruit for God?

2. The Characteristics of an Unrighteous Life (Psalm 1:4–6)

In case people are not clear about the distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous, the psalmist spends the following few verses giving us a clear description of the characteristics of the ungodly.

Unlike the righteous, the ungodly cannot be compared to a tree. Instead, the symbol the psalmist uses is “chaff.” What does the psalmist mean by this figurative language? In biblical agriculture, chaff is nothing more than the residue of matured wheat that falls to the ground and is useless to the farmer. It is so light that a good wind can blow it away from the crop once harvested. Like chaff, the unrighteous and wicked person falls to the ground. Any wind of doctrine can easily blow them away. They see no reason why they should yield their lives to God,

and therefore, they become useless to the plans and purposes of God.

Because of their wicked and unrepentant hearts they will not be able to claim any of God’s promises like the righteous. The psalmist makes it abundantly clear that God watches over the righteous and helps us make wise decisions that are pleasing to Him. However, for the ungodly, if they choose not to repent and live obediently, their end will be destruction.

How do we see how wickedness leads to destruction in our world today?

Search the Scriptures

1. How does the psalmist describe the person who is blessed? (Psalm 1:1)
2. What element in nature does the psalmist use to describe the godly? (v. 3)
3. What happens to the ungodly? (vv. 4–6)

Discuss the Meaning

1. Can a person become righteous without God’s Word? Why or why not?
2. Why does the psalmist use the tree symbol to describe the righteous?

Liberating Lesson

Our society is full of people who disdain God yet seem to prosper in every aspect of their lives. Discuss what it means to prosper with Psalm 1 in mind, and write down specific truths that you can use to help someone in your family or neighborhood know that riches, fortune, and fame do not guarantee prosperity and success.

Application for Activation

This week, spend as much time as you can in the Word of God. Allow the Scriptures to speak to you so that you can be assured that you are following a righteous path. Make any necessary corrections, and thank God for His willingness to help you with those corrections.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Say It Correctly

Congregation. kahn-gri-gae-shun

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 92

2 Samuel 8-12

Psalms 38:9-16

DAY 93

2 Samuel 13-15

Psalms 38:17-21

DAY 94

2 Samuel 16-18

Psalms 38:1-4

DAY 95

2 Samuel 19-21

Psalms 39:1-6

DAY 96

1 Kings 1-5

Psalms 39:7-13

DAY 97

1 Kings 6-9

Psalms 40:1-4

DAY 98

1 Kings 10-14

Psalms 40:5-8

Notes
