

## Prayer

Give us peace, Lord God we pray. Peace within our hearts to praise You, peace within our lives to serve You, and peace within our souls to live for You. Save us from the distress and trouble of selfish living, and help us live a life of active, peaceful and faithful service. Thank You Lord Jesus, AMEN

## Prayer Suggestions

### Prayer ideas

*Praise God for your salvation. Give Him thanks for what He has done to save you and for His continued help and sustenance*

### On-going prayers

- **Pray for Afghanistan.** *Pray for the countries that surround Afghanistan, and pray for the security of the country's borders.*
- *Give thanks for sleep and pray for those who do not sleep well*
- *Pray for the people who are designing next year's new technology*

## Meditation

This is Your work O Lord our God,

to give enduring love and purpose  
to a world that has lost its way;

to shine Your light in the darkest of places  
so that all the people might see;

to challenge all evil wherever it is found  
and confront it with love and truth;

to overcome troubles, trials and distress  
with the beauty of harmony and peace;

to offer healing and perfect wholeness  
to all who are ravaged by illness;

to bind up what has been broken apart  
and give real hope to the despairing;

to give back hope and confidence  
to those who struggle with life;

to mend the broken in soul and spirit  
with the love of a Saviour who cares.

Continue to do Your work, O Lord, forever.

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## Bible passage - Psalm 1

<sup>1</sup> Blessed are those  
who do not walk in the counsel of the  
wicked  
or stand in the way of sinners  
or sit in the seat of cynics.

<sup>2</sup> Rather, they delight in the Law of the Lord,  
and they meditate on His Law day and  
night.

<sup>3</sup> They are like trees  
planted by streams of water,  
which yield their fruit in season  
and whose leaves do not wither.  
Whatever they do, they prosper.

<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not like this!  
They are like chaff that the wind blows  
away.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

<sup>6</sup> For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the wicked will perish.

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## Bible Study

### Review

***Psalm 1 is a powerful description of faithful living that is pleasing to God. It contrasts the dire consequences of worldly living with the fruitfulness of godliness, and offers the Lord's protection to the faithful.***

The book of Psalms is a collection of poems used for centuries as the hymn book of God's people. For all this time, it has given spiritual expression to their thoughts and feelings, and it is quite different from any other book of the Bible. The Psalms bring us close to the faith of real people in all the circumstances of life, in joy, sorrow, thanksgiving, trouble and anguish; and throughout the ages, people have found that the Psalms help them understand both God Himself and the life He has given them.

Psalm 1 begins with thanksgiving to God for His 'Law', which defines godliness and right living (1:1-3). Christians are not used to thinking about the Law in this way because Jesus has shown that the Law cannot save. However, the Law still has a place in God's plan, and Psalm 1 explains what this is.

In the Old Testament, 'Law' means far more than mere rules and regulations, for God's Law describes what the world is like and why. Today, we turn to science with such questions; for example, the law of gravity describes why we remain on the earth and do not float away into space. However, ancient peoples saw the world from a very different perspective. They believed that God was present in the world they experienced, and He had created it according to certain spiritual, practical and moral principles. In the Bible, this is conveyed in different ways; in stories such as that of Creation or the life of Abraham, and in regulations such as the Ten Commandments and the moral laws found in Leviticus (e.g. Lev 19).

This psalm also presents people with a clear choice. They either accept God's Law and live by its light (1:1) or live according to human desires, characterised by sin and wickedness (1:4-6). Consequently, those who choose God's way enjoy His favour and the on-going benefits of His world, '*they are like trees planted by streams of water*' (1:3); but those who choose their own ways have decided to walk away from the Maker of the World. They have nowhere to go and their lives are fruitless (1:6).

Some do not like the way that this psalm speaks of judgement, and they baulk at the idea of God dismissing people (1:4-6), even the wicked. The psalm has also been dismissed by those who say that it is clearly untrue, because wicked people appear to have lives that are no better or worse than those of anyone else. This is to miss the point, however, because the psalm is not talking just about earthly life. It describes life from the perspective of God's eternity. It says that those who live according to what God has revealed will benefit from their obedience, but those who reject God have given themselves no future. All this is most obvious in verse 6, which contains a strong word of caution for those who reject God, and a beautiful promise for those who seek the Lord and long for good to prevail!

Psalm 1 offers an inspiring message for those who seek the Lord, and it paints a vivid picture of God's blessing. Firstly, it describes the things of God such as His Law as a delight to the soul (1:2), and dwelling on this will fill the mind with godliness and all that is good. Next, it contains a dynamic picture of growth leading to fruitfulness and prosperity; a tree is planted and watered, and in these perfect conditions will definitely bear fruit (1:3). Lastly, it confirms God's watchful care in the midst of a sinful world (1:6).

These are precious promises for God's people of any age or place, and they connect strongly with the New Testament. For example, Jesus talks about a tree that bears good fruit (Matt 7:17) and Paul famously describes the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). All together, Psalm 1 provides God's people with a straightforward spiritual assessment of the path of faith. It also confirms the truth about God and His moral authority, and it promises His sustenance and counsel for this life. As such, it is a powerful and succinct song with which to praise God at the beginning of the book of Psalms!

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## Discipleship

### **Questions** (for use in groups)

1. What is meant by the phrase '*the counsel of the wicked ... the way of sinners*' (1:1), and how does this tempt people away from God's path today?
2. Look at verse 3 and discuss in your group what this picture tells you about God's blessings.
3. Consider whether '*the judgement*' (1:5) is something that happens in the present or the future?

### **Personal comments by author**

*This Psalm has reminded me afresh that the 'two paths' are always there before me, and yet I frequently do not perceive them. I often see only one option in life and carry on as if there is nothing to do except follow the path before me. However, this is a little blind. I need to realise that at all time I face choices to follow the Lord's ways or become trapped by my own, and I need a full and godly perspective on everything that is before me. Looking back, I have faced far more 'right or wrong' decisions than I perceived at the time. For me, the message is that I must ensure that I am more acutely aware of the Lord's presence with me at all times. Then, I will be able to check out what He requires of me at each step of the way.*

### **Ideas for exploring discipleship**

- *Try to pick up one or two things from the psalm that suggest how better you might live for the Lord and keep close to Him in everyday life. For example, spending time meditating on Scripture, and ensuring that you are consuming the spiritual food God gives.*
- *Pray for those who have lost their way with God. Pray for any individuals you know, and do your best to be of practical help to these people if at all possible. Make yourself ready to be a means God can use to bring a person back to faith.*

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## Final Prayer

Eternal and ever loving God, You have been the help and refuge of Your people for generations. May we live in Your presence, love all that is good and true, and serve you throughout our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

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