

THE LOOKOUT

OCTOBER 2022

Unit: Psalms (Part 1)

Theme: Rooted

Overview: “Texts have tunes,” preacher and professor Fred Craddock said. That is especially true of Psalms, the hymnbook of the Bible. Most biblical psalms were sung or prayed. They are poetic in genre and speak to every human emotion. Psalms (the book) consists of five sections—Psalms 1–41; 42–72; 73–89; 90–106; and 107–150—which makes it similar to the five books of the Pentateuch and the five discourses of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. The main imagery of the book of Psalms coincides with a Middle Eastern agrarian culture, and the main characteristic of Psalms is parallelism (rhetorical pattern of likeness). In October, students will learn how righteousness, reality, repentance, reason, and worship are “rooted” in God.

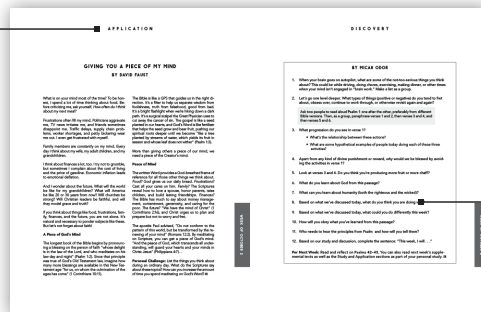
HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Arrows point to the vertical tabs on the right side of the page, labeled 'LESSON 1' and 'LESSON 2'. The text says: **Arrows indicate the week of each lesson.**

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Arrows point to the 'DISCOVERY' section. The text says: **Use the Discovery questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.**

WEEK OF OCTOBER 2, 2022

LESSON AIM: **Root your life in God's righteous way.**

UNIT: Psalms (Part 1)

THEME: Rooted

LESSON TEXT: Psalm 1

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Psalm 112; Revelation 20:12-15; Job 1:6-10

ROOTED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

BY MARK SCOTT

The title of this Bible book in Hebrew means “praises.” These praises can be sung, prayed, cried, chanted, or shouted. These psalms are divided into five separate sections (or books) and span a time frame of close to 1,000 years. Psalm 1, in typical Wisdom Literature fashion, contrasts the way of the wicked with the way of the righteous. Psalm 150, the final psalm, shouts praise from someone who “had a song in his heart and a pen in his hand to tell everyone what he thought about God,” according to Christian minister David Erickson. Three contrasts exist in this psalm for those who are rooted in righteousness.

The Way Versus the Law*Psalm 1:1-2*

At first pass way does not seem to contrast with law. But the root to the famous Hebrew word *torah* actually means “to throw or cast,” as in throwing something in a certain direction. *Torah* occurs 221 times in the Old Testament and essentially means “teaching,” but it is the idea of the teacher saying, “Go this way.” So, the contrast here is between the wicked going one way and the righteous, being taught by the Law, going another way.

Blessed is not the normal word for praising God; rather, it is the normal word for blessing someone else, such as “goodie for you” or “happy for you.” The *New International Version* takes a little liberty by translating “man” as *one* because it is the Hebrew word for male; in its largest application, it perhaps would apply to all human beings.

The happy man keeps his distance from *wicked* people (as in people guilty of a crime). They are also called *sinner*s and *mockers* (scoffers). Notice the progression—walk, stand, or sit. In other words, the person who follows the law keeps his distance from the way of the *wicked*.

In contrast, the righteous person *delights* (takes pleasure) in the *law of the Lord*. He even *meditates* (muses, groans, or mutters) *on his law day and night*. The righteous person has an emotional connection to Scripture (see Psalms 19 and 119). The righteous person does not get trapped in the steps (counsel) of the wicked or his ways, or the company he keeps.

The Tree Versus the Chaff*Psalm 1:3-4*

Every significant person in the Bible is associated with a tree. (See Dr. Matthew Sleeth’s *Reforesting Faith* and Shane Wood’s *Between Two Trees*.) It should come as no surprise then that in this very famous beginning psalm we see a contrast between a tree and chaff. The person who follows the law of God is *like a tree planted by streams (rivers) of water*. This same image is seen in the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 22:1-2). Water is a precious commodity in the Middle East; quite simply, trees that get moisture produce *fruit* (offspring). Their leaves are healthy (do not *wither*—fade away or shrink). They are fruitful (*prosper*).

The wicked are not so blessed. *They are like chaff*. The chaff from plants is the disposable part. *Wind* can blow it away. John the Baptist used this same imagery when he described the Messiah coming and clearing his threshing floor with his winnowing fork (Matthew 3:12). The chaff does not just blow away in that instance; it is burned with an unquenchable fire. The righteous person is like a fruitful tree, but the wicked person is just striving after wind (Ecclesiastes 1:14, 17).

The Unknown Versus the Known*Psalm 1:5-6*

Make no mistake about it, God is omniscient . . . he knows all. He certainly “knows” (*watches over*) the way of the *righteous*. When we speak of God “not” knowing someone (e.g., Matthew 7:23), we simply mean God does not recognize that person as belonging to him. He knows the *righteous* (the Hebrew word *tsad-deek*, meaning those who conform to God’s standard). The wicked are not known to God as being in his family. That is why the text says, *the way of the wicked leads to destruction* (that which perishes). They are the unknown.

But the known will not have to *stand in the judgment* with the wicked. (The Hebrew word for *judgment* is *mish pawt*, meaning not to stand in the presence of God in the end.) The known will be part of the *assembly of the righteous*, of which no sinners will be allowed to participate. To be forever excluded from the congregation of the righteous essentially is hell (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The contrast between the wicked and the righteous could not be clearer. ■

APPLICATION

GIVING YOU A PIECE OF MY MIND

BY DAVID FAUST

What is on your mind most of the time? To be honest, I spend a lot of time thinking about food. Before criticizing me, ask yourself, *How often do I think about my next meal?*

Frustrations often fill my mind. Politicians aggravate me, TV news irritates me, and friends sometimes disappoint me. Traffic delays, supply chain problems, worker shortages, and petty bickering wear me out. I even get frustrated with myself.

Family members are constantly on my mind. Every day I think about my wife, my adult children, and my grandchildren.

I think about finances a lot, too. I try not to grumble, but sometimes I complain about the cost of living and the price of gasoline. Economic inflation leads to emotional deflation.

And I wonder about the future. What will the world be like for my grandchildren? What will America be like 20 or 30 years from now? Will churches be strong? Will Christian leaders be faithful, and will they model grace and truth?

If you think about things like food, frustrations, family, finances, and the future, you are not alone. It's natural and necessary to ponder subjects like these. But let's not forget about faith!

A Piece of God's Mind

The longest book of the Bible begins by pronouncing a blessing on the person of faith "whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night" (Psalm 1:2). Since that principle was true of God's Old Testament law, imagine how many more blessings are available in this New Testament age "for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

The Bible is like a GPS that guides us in the right direction. It's a filter to help us separate wisdom from foolishness, truth from falsehood, good from bad. It's a bright flashlight when we're hiking down a dark path. It's a surgical scalpel the Great Physician uses to cut away the cancer of sin. The gospel is like a seed planted in our hearts, and God's Word is like fertilizer that helps the seed grow and bear fruit, pushing our spiritual roots deeper until we become "like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither" (Psalm 1:3).

More than giving others a piece of our mind, we need a piece of the Creator's mind.

Peace of Mind

The written Word provides a God-breathed frame of reference for all those other things we think about. *Food?* God gives us our daily bread. *Frustrations?* Cast all your cares on him. *Family?* The Scriptures reveal how to love a spouse, honor parents, raise children, and build lasting friendships. *Finances?* The Bible has much to say about money management, contentment, generosity, and caring for the poor. *The future?* "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), and Christ urges us to plan and prepare but not to worry and fret.

The apostle Paul advised, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). By meditating on Scripture, you can get a piece of God's mind. "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

Personal Challenge: List the things you think about during an ordinary day. What do the Scriptures say about these topics? How can you increase the amount of time you spend meditating on God's Word? **L**

DISCOVERY

BY MICAH ODOR

1. When your brain goes on autopilot, what are some of the not-too-serious things you think about? This could be while driving, doing chores, exercising, making dinner, or other times when your mind isn't engaged in "brain work." Make a list as a group.
2. Let's go one level deeper. What types of things (positive or negative) do you tend to fret about, obsess over, continue to work through, or otherwise revisit again and again?

Ask two people to read aloud **Psalm 1** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then, as a group, paraphrase verses 1 and 2, then verses 3 and 4, and then verses 5 and 6.

3. What progression do you see in verse 1?
 - What's the relationship between these actions?
 - What are some hypothetical examples of people today doing each of these three activities?
4. Apart from any kind of divine punishment or reward, why would we be blessed by avoiding the activities in verse 1?
5. Look at verses 3 and 4. Do you think you're producing more fruit or more chaff?
6. What do you learn about God from this passage?
7. What can you learn about humanity (both the righteous and the wicked)?
8. Based on what we've discussed today, what do you think you are doing well?
9. Based on what we've discussed today, what could you do differently this week?
10. How will you obey what you've learned from this passage?
11. Who needs to hear the principles from Psalm and how will you tell them?
12. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "This week, I will . . ."

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Psalms 42–43**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■