

# SAMPLE of Leaders Guide for Traditional Study



## Pray, Praise, and Give Thanks:

## Favorite Psalms of God's People

by Stephen Melso

### Leader's Guide

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### Leader's Notes

The book of Psalms is a collection of 150 hymns that were inspired by God for the enjoyment and edification of his people. The Hebrew title of this book is *tehillim*, which means "Songs of Praise." Our English Bible lists this book with the title "Psalms" because the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament for the early Christian church) used the heading *psalmos*. *Psalmos* is the Greek translation of a Hebrew word that means "song" or "a song accompanied by a stringed instrument." That was the title Jesus also used for this book of the Bible when he appeared to his disciples on the first Easter evening.

Martin Luther said that the 150 psalms could be arranged into five basic types of psalms. Although some psalms include verses that are of more than one type and thus cannot be put into just one category, Luther suggested the following five types:

1. **Messianic psalms**—those that speak about the life and work of Jesus. In his commentary on the book of Psalms, Professor John Brug refers to "direct," "typical," and "intermediate" prophecies found in the messianic psalms. Some are direct prophecies, which can refer only to Jesus. Typical prophecies refer to a person or event in the Old Testament that point ahead to Jesus or an event in his life. We refer to the Old Testament person as a type of Christ. An intermediate prophecy is a prophecy that looks to two future events: one is a partial, incomplete fulfillment while the other finds complete fulfillment in Christ.
2. **Didactic, or teaching, psalms**—those that emphasize doctrine. They are usually about God or about his law, that is, the Scriptures.
3. **Comfort psalms**—those that bring comfort to God's people. They especially emphasize God's goodness.
4. **Psalms of prayer and petition**—those in which the psalmist asks for something from God. He may seek God's help for himself or for God's people, or the psalmist may ask God to destroy his enemies.
5. **Psalms of thanksgiving**—those in which the psalmist recounts the goodness of God to his people.

Whenever we study portions of Scripture, it is wise to look at a text in its context and to compare cross references from the rest of Scripture. In this study, we will scour the rest of Scripture to get a clearer understanding of these nine precious psalms that we have grown to love; then we will apply them to our own lives. May God bless our study of his Word.

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## PSALM 1

### The Promise of Blessing to Those Who Delight in God's Law

#### Worship

Read responsively Psalm 1.

1. Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,
  - 2. but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.**
3. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.
  - 4. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.**
5. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
  - 6. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.**

Prayer: Oh, teach us, Lord, that we may teach  
The precious truths which you impart,  
And wing our words that they may reach  
The hidden depths of many a heart.  
("Lord, Speak to Us that We May Speak": stanza 3)

#### 1. What type of psalm is this?

(Refer to the Leader's Notes for a listing of the five types of psalms.)  
Didactic, or teaching.

#### NOTES



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## NOTES

2. Verse 1 warns against following in the footsteps of wicked unbelievers. As it does, it describes a progression of falling farther from God and his Word. Put the three stages of the progression into your own words.

- Walk in the counsel of the wicked.

Don't accept the values of those who have turned from God.

- Stand in the way of sinners.

Don't hang around with them and join in their sinful actions.

- Sit in the seat of mockers.

Don't make yourself at home with them—don't get comfortable with their sin.

3. The first three verses identify three characteristics of believers. What are they?

Verse 1: They resist sin by avoiding those who delight in doing evil.

Verse 2: They love God's Word. Verse 3: They produce the fruits of faith.

4. How might those characteristics be demonstrated in the lives and actions of believers today?

Answers will vary. For example: They will not be influenced by the prevailing postmodern thinking that there is no real truth or surround themselves with people who are self-absorbed.

They will be regular in worship and Bible study and will read the Bible privately. Their faith will bear fruit as shown by their words and actions.

5. Romans 12:2 reads, *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.* What does this verse have to say about the importance of the source from which we derive our values?

We must derive them not from the world but always from God's Word—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

6. James 1:25 reads, *Whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.* List the three things a person who delights in God's law does.

He or she looks intently into the perfect law, doesn't forget it, and does what it says.

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7. What are some ways that we can shape our lives according to God's Word? (We can't expect to be shaped according to God's Word if we hear it one hour a week and then chase after the things of this world and fill our lives with worldly entertainment the other 167 hours.)

Daily devotions; Bible study at church and at home; think about God's Word day and night.

8. Jeremiah 17:7,8 echoes the thought of Psalm 1:3: *Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.* What advantage does a tree have that is planted by streams of living water—even when a drought occurs?

That tree is strong and produces fruit. The believer also has nothing to worry about, even when bad things happen and things look bleak.

9. Matthew 6:25-34 helps us apply these words to ourselves and our own lives. Give three examples of ways that believers might handle challenges very differently than unbelievers.

Answers will vary. For example, believers facing difficult surgery sometimes surprise doctors by their calm attitude as they face the procedure. A sudden, drastic drop in the stock market may leave a retired unbeliever in a state of panic, while a believer may trust God's promise that he will provide.

10. Why isn't there always a difference between the way a believer and an unbeliever view challenges to their lives?

Our sinful nature doesn't trust God or believe his Word. That is why we need to take the words of this psalm to heart. If we connect ourselves too closely to the ungodly and their way of thinking, we will end up sinking our roots away from the streams of water that give and sustain life.

11. Explain how Psalm 1 provides not only a warning but also a promise of what it means to be blessed (literally, happy).

The psalm warns us not to conform to the ways of the people of the world. It also promises that when we do follow God's Word, we will be blessed. Think of the happiness that is ours in our forgiveness through Jesus Christ and our happiness in the way we view God's Word. We view even his law not as a threat but as a source of blessing that provides opportunities to serve our God.

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12. The final verses (vv. 4-6) are a call to repentance to the ungodly (unbelievers). How do these verses describe the outlook for them on judgment day? Read also Revelation 6:16,17.

They will be blown away from God's presence like chaff; they will not stand. Or, as described in Revelation, the unbelievers will bow in terror and be cast from God's presence forever. They will not be with believers.

13. Read Luke 21:28. Why does the message of Psalm 1 become very pertinent when we think ahead toward judgment day?

Believers will look up with anticipation because we will know that our redemption is drawing near. Psalm 1 reminds us of the goal that is most important for us during our lives on earth.

NOTES

## Conclusion

Two roads stand before us in life. We can either follow the path of least resistance (the road of rebellion against God and his ways), which leads to hell, or we can take the narrow path guided by God's Word, which leads to heaven. There are no other options. Nothing is more important in life than traveling the right road.

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