

January 4, 2026

Psalm 1:1-6

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;² but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;⁶ for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Scriptures for further study:
Psalm 119:16

Psalm 119:24

Psalm 119:47-48

Psalm 119:15

Psalm 119:97

Psalm 119:148

“The first word of the book of Psalms is ‘blessed’, which is the key word that runs throughout the Psalter...those who are blessed enjoy a state of happiness...the Psalms are about how to experience this ‘blessed life’...this ‘profound happiness’...which comes through having the LORD as your God.”

-Mark Futato

“What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”
-Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 1



Roots for the Blessed Life

Psalm 1:1-6

BIG IDEA: Because Christ has secured for us the blessed life, the path of flourishing now opens before us as we delight in and meditate on God’s Word by the power of the Spirit, refusing the empty way of the wicked.

The Gospel moves me to flourish in Christ by delighting in Scripture!

OUTLINE

1. The Blessed Life

2. The Word-Centered Life

3. The Wicked Life

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. The word “Blessed” is used a lot in casual conversations, on t-shirts, bumper stickers, and decorative plaques. What is the picture that comes to mind when you see or hear the word? Does a cultural view of “blessed” differ from Psalm 1?

2. Try inserting the pronouns “I” or “me” in the blanks of Psalm 1:1-2. Does personalizing affect how you think about this passage?

Blessed am __ who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but __ delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law __ meditate day and night.

(Refer to Psalm 1:2) How does one live a blessed life? What is the manner in which the righteous live?

3. The Psalmist uses the words “delight” and “meditation.” Spend time meditating on Psalms 119:16, 24, and 47-48 and on Psalms 119:15, 97, and 148. What invitation do you find in these verses? Is there anything that prevents you from enjoying the life the Psalmist describes?

4. What type of spiritual growth does Psalm 1 call for? How does Christ make spiritual growth possible?

5. Refer to Psalm 1:4 and John 15:16. If there are aspects of your life that aren’t bearing fruit or may even be dry and brittle chaff, why not spend time confessing that to the Lord.

“The Christian’s motto should not be ‘let me obey and endure,’ but ‘let me obey because I love.’”

-J.I. Packer

“Holiness is not a grim duty but the blossom of joyful communion with God.”

-Sinclair Ferguson

“God’s ‘knowing’ is a commitment—a covenantal claim on your life. It means the Lord lovingly watches over your path and guarantees the end of your journey.”

-Tim Keller

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Book of Psalms isn't one single book written by one person at one time. It's a collection of 150 songs and prayers (we call them psalms) gathered together over many centuries. Individual psalms were written across a huge stretch of history, some before the Babylonian exile (when Israel was taken captive), some during the exile, some after the Jewish people returned home.

For example, Psalm 90 is one of the oldest (traditionally linked to Moses), while Psalm 137 was written during the exile in Babylon—that's roughly a thousand years apart! The whole collection as we know it today was probably put together and finalized sometime after the exile, likely by around 400 BC or a bit later.

Do we know when or why each Psalm was written? Not really. Only about 14 psalms have headings that mention a specific event in David's life. For the vast majority, we have no idea of the exact situation that inspired them. The language in the psalms is often poetic, full of images and repeated phrases, rather than straight historical reporting. That makes it hard to pin down "this happened on such-and-such a date." The vagueness is actually a huge strength. The psalms aren't tied to one specific moment in history so that people in every generation—including us today—can keep using them in worship. They're general enough to fit all kinds of life situations: joy, sorrow, anger, gratitude, fear, you name it. As one scholar puts it: "The psalms are deliberately nonspecific so they can be used again and again in both personal prayer and community worship." Because they're not locked into ancient Israel's exact circumstances, we, in our very different world, can still pray and sing them honestly.

Who were they written for originally? Most of these psalms were meant for public worship in the temple. They were written for the musicians, singers, and choir leaders to perform, and the whole congregation was invited to join in singing praises to God. This is seen in psalms like Psalm 100, which calls everyone—"all the earth!"—to come before God with joyful songs, glad shouts, thanksgiving, and praise (verses 2–4). The Psalms are ancient, but their lack of specific details keeps them timeless and perfect for worship, whether in a temple 2,500 years ago or in your own quiet time today.

Praise to Jesus – Father, we praise you this morning for the one true Psalm 1 man, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior! We praise you that every blessing in this psalm is a gift of grace, won and kept by Christ for His people. We praise you for this blessed life!

Repent through Jesus – Father, we also confess that the root system of our lives often taps into places other than your streams of living water...that we have often delighted more in worldly voices than in your Word...and we have sought to flourish in our own efforts. Father, for these things and many more, we repent and pray for your renewing grace in our lives.

Consecration for Jesus – Father, we pray that you will set us apart for a greater commitment to delighting in Scripture rather than duty alone. To the slow, rooted, fruitful life of faithfulness. To resist the counsel, patterns, and cynicism of the wicked.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. What does it mean to be happy? What do you do to be happy? (The word used in this Psalm that is translated “blessed” could be described as happy. Although not happy in the sense that our world uses it in which it depends on our circumstances, and it fades away. The Psalmist is talking about living according to God’s design and purpose.)

2. How does this psalm describe the blessed person? (The blessed person rejects the way of sinners and depends on God’s Word. This person bears Godly fruit in his life like a tree planted by water. Consider going outside to look at some trees and ask your children about what makes a tree grow. Also in this psalm, this blessed person is known by God, which indicates a close, loving relationship. Make sure to point out to your children that we cannot make ourselves blessed. It is only given by the grace of God. God must give us a new heart, which leads us to repenting of our sin and putting our trust or faith in Jesus.)

3. What role does God’s law and Word play in the blessed life? What does it mean to take delight in God’s Word? What does it mean to meditate on God’s Word? (God’s Word is central to the life of a believer in Jesus. The description that he delights in God’s Word means that he loves it and takes joy in it. This is not a belief that is only in his mind but also in his heart. To meditate on God’s Word is to focus and pray on it such that it fills our mind and heart. This will lead to us living according to God’s Word. When our world talks about meditation, it usually uses this term from Eastern religions. This means that we empty our minds, which is the opposite of Biblical meditation.)

4. How does this psalm describe the “wicked” or “sinner”? (This person is called wicked, a sinner, and a scoffer. This person does not bear fruit in their life; instead, their life produces “chaff” that is blown away. This is a way of saying that when we don’t live according to God’s purposes, then our lives will not produce anything that glorifies God or lasts for eternity. The sinner is also described as not being able to stand at the judgment of God.)

Scriptures for further study:

Proverbs 3:5-6

John 10:10, 14-15

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Galatians 5:22-23

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:
Proverbs 3:5-6

Proverbs 4:14-27

John 15:1-11

Jeremiah 17:7-8

1. Psalm 1 opens by describing the “blessed man.” In your own words, how would you define what it means to be “blessed”? How is the Psalm’s definition different from how culture uses the word?
2. Verse 1 describes three progressive steps away from the blessed life—walking, standing, and sitting with the wicked. How do you see this downward path at work in the world? Where are you tempted to compromise in thought, behavior, or belonging?
3. According to verse 2, the blessed person “delights” in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night. What does it mean to truly delight in God’s Word? What makes this hard or unnatural sometimes?
4. The image in verse 3 compares the blessed person to a tree planted by streams of water. In what ways is this a powerful picture of spiritual stability and fruitfulness? How are you cultivating your “root system” in God’s Word?
5. Verse 4 describes the wicked as “chaff that the wind drives away.” What do you think this image is meant to communicate? How is a life without God ultimately empty or unstable?
6. Psalm 1 ends with a sobering reminder in verse 6: “The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.” How does this verse encourage you to persevere in the life of faith? How does it also call you to examine your direction?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. While our righteous behavior as believers is important, we must first of all avoid reading Psalm 1 in a moralistic way.

Reflect: It is only by Christ's perfect righteousness and obedience to the law that we can be made righteous and find true blessing. And it is only as He changes our hearts and gives us His Holy Spirit that we now have both the desire and the strength to live in joyful obedience to Him as believers.

2. Some Christians have falsely taught that when we become believers, we should expect prosperity. But true biblical Christianity promises something different and deeper: "blessing."

Reflect: True prosperity and blessing are more about favor with God, true flourishing, and abundant life in Christ that includes such things as love, joy, kindness, peace, and lasting delight.

3. Negatively speaking, according to verse 1, the "blessed" man is to avoid "walking in the counsel of the wicked, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of mockers." These phrases (walking in the counsel, standing in the way, sitting in the seat) roughly correspond to thinking, behaving, and belonging.

Question: In what ways does our thinking shape our lives? (See also Romans 12:1) In what ways does the company we keep shape our lives and lifestyle?

Question: Why is it sometimes hard for us, especially as new believers, to resist the way of the world and choose instead the better way of Christ?

4. Positively speaking, according to verse 3, how are we as Christians to attain true blessing? How is our relationship with God informed and shaped by our interaction with (and posture toward) the word of God?

5. The Psalmist is painting a contrasting picture of two ways of life, two paths, and ultimately two different eternal outcomes. No third alternative is offered.

Question: How does this passage relate to what it says in John 3:16 and Matthew 25:46?

The Blessed Life: A Study of the Psalms



"The Light of the World" (1851-1856) by William Holman Hunt

Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the sacred place where the living God meets His people in the most intimate and personal of ways. He invites them to know Him not merely as an idea, but as their refuge, portion, shepherd, and King. From the opening doorway of blessedness in Psalm 1 to the climactic Hallelujahs of Psalm 150, the Psalter reveals that the truly happy life is one rooted in the person and work of Almighty God, whose steadfast love holds His people through every season of the soul. As the Psalter moves from anguish to adoration, from darkness to dawn, it becomes a mirror of the Christian life itself. It teaches us to pray honestly, to hope stubbornly, and to sing faithfully, even when night seems long. In the deepest valleys, the Psalms give voice to the church's groan; on the highest heights, they train the church's doxology. And in every line, every cry, and every hallelujah, Christ Himself comes near, revealing the light of the world in the dark night of the soul and leading His people into the blessedness that only His grace can give.

– Pastor Bill

About the artwork and artist.

The Light of the World, 1851-1853, is an iconic allegorical painting by William Holman Hunt. The painting depicts Jesus Christ as a regal figure in flowing robes, wearing a crown of thorns, holding a glowing lantern, and preparing to knock on a weed-overgrown wooden door with no external handle. This illustrates Revelation 3:20 from the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." The artist William Holman Hunt is showing us that Jesus is the divine door to the living God who meets His people in the most intimate and personal ways. The closed, overgrown door → representing the human soul or "obstinately shut mind" that has long ignored spiritual calling. There is no handle on the outside → the door can only be opened from within, emphasizing free will and personal invitation to faith. The lantern → Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12), illuminating darkness and offering salvation. The work marked Hunt's deepening Christian faith (from earlier agnosticism) and became one of the most reproduced and devotional images of the Victorian era, inspiring oratories, hymns, and widespread popular piety. It's often called a visual sermon on personal salvation.