

New Year Slide: Introduction:

If I could suggest a theme for the New Year, it would be - **“God’s Word: Our Unshakable Foundation”** as the theme for 2026.

Slide: Two theme verses come to mind. The first comes from Isaiah 40:8, *“The word of our God stands forever.”* The second comes from Matthew 24:35, *“My words will never pass away.”*

In the coming year we want to continue to stress our total commitment to God’s Word.

This is a good year to remind ourselves that we really do mean it when we say we believe the Bible.

Like it or not, time marches on and the calendar changes. 2026 is here.

But the Word of God remains the same. Would you like to be blessed by God in 2026? **Who wouldn’t?**

All of us feel that way, which is why we wish each other a **“blessed”** new year. We mean by that, “May the favour of God rest upon you all year long.”

That’s a wonderful thought. No one (at least no healthy person) gets up and says, “I want to be miserable this year. I hope I have a rotten new year.” **We all want to be blessed.** We all want to find fulfillment in what we do every day.

Psalm 1 tells us in just six short verses the secret of the life God blesses. And it’s not related to New Year’s resolutions. The blessing Psalm 1 talks about goes much deeper.

“Blessed is the man.” Happy is the man. This is God’s prescription for happiness.

This word from Psalm 1 is much needed at the beginning of a new year

As we study this psalm, we discover that blessedness relates to the way we live and the choices we make.

SLIDE Image: From God’s point of view, there are two ways and only two ways to live because there are two kinds of people in the world.

SLIDE: 2 Kinds of People. There are the righteous and then there are the ungodly. Everyone in the world falls into those two categories. **There is no “in-between” category.** Psalm 1 shows us how the righteous live and why they are blessed. **It also shows us the end result of both ways of life.**

If we want to be blessed by God in 2026, we need to pay attention to this psalm.

SLIDE: The Way of the Righteous (Psalm 1:1-3)

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.”

For most of us, the turning of the year is a pause for reflection.

Even those who rarely reflect find themselves looking back and looking ahead.

We take stock. We make resolutions.

We hope—sometimes cautiously, sometimes boldly—that the year ahead will be better, truer, deeper.

And it's no accident that the Book of Psalms begins where it does.

Psalms 1 is not a prayer. It's not a song of lament or praise. **It's wisdom for us to live by.**

It stands at the doorway of the Psalter like a guard, saying: Before you sing, before you pray, before you cry out to God—**decide how you will live.**

Psalms 1 Is A New Year's Psalm.

It confronts us with a question we cannot avoid:

What kind of life will we live in 2026?

Slide: The Blessed Life Begins with Direction (Psalm 1:1)

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.”

Psalms 1 begins not with what the blessed person does, but with what they refuse.

SLIDE: Notice The Progression:

SLIDE: He Does not **Walk** in the counsel of the ungodly

He Does not **Stand** in the path of sinners

He Does not **Sit** in the seat of scoffers

But for those who do, this is the slow drift of a life away from God.

No one wakes up one morning and decides to abandon God altogether.

It happens little by little—conversation by conversation, compromise by compromise.

Those who reject God's law, follow worldly advice, and live independently from Him, are characterized in this Psalm by a life opposed to righteousness, and ultimately face divine judgment.

In the 21st century, the *“counsel of the ungodly”* doesn't always come from dark alleys or shady characters.

It comes through: endless news cycles, social media outrage, entertainment that normalizes what Scripture warns against, voices that say, **“This is just the way things are now.” Get with it!**

Psalm 1 does not call believers to isolation, but to discernment.

To live a godly life today means asking:

Whose voices shape my thinking?

What values am I absorbing without questioning?

Where am I slowly becoming comfortable with what once troubled my conscience?

The blessed life begins when we recognize that direction matters.

SLIDE: The Godly Life Is Rooted in Delight, Not Duty (Psalm 1:2)

“But whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.”

Here is the heart of the psalm.

The righteous person does not merely obey God’s Word—they **delight in it**.

As we begin 2026, the question is not: How much Bible knowledge do we have?

SLIDE: But Rather: What Place Does God’s Word Actually Hold in My Daily Life?

The word “law” here means more than rules. It means instruction.

It is God revealing His heart, His ways, His wisdom for life.

When the Word becomes our joy, obedience follows naturally.

SLIDE: To meditate “day and night” does not mean reading Scripture every waking hour.

It means allowing God’s Word to shape how we think, decide, and respond.

In an age of distraction, this may be one of the greatest spiritual challenge God’s people face.

We live in a world of constant notifications, shortened attention spans, opinions without wisdom, information without transformation

SLIDE: Yet Psalm 1 insists that a godly life flows from a mind steeped in God’s truth.

If we are serious about this, we will find the time to meditate.

Perhaps we’ll read through the Bible in a year as our ladies are doing. Certainly try to memorize some Scripture. This has become something of a lost art today.

SLIDE: In an earlier generation, it was commonplace for Christians to emphasize Scripture memory in Sunday School and YP meetings. Trooperslane SS.

What a joy it is when we hide the Word of God in our hearts, **Quote!** Your Word have I hid in my heart.

I know that men especially, like to say, “I just can’t memorize. My brain’s too fried. I can barely remember my phone number.” **Women seem to do better at this, but we men have a thousand excuses.**

If we delight in the Word, we will find a way to read it, to meditate on it, and even to memorize it.

SLIDE: A Tree Planted by Water: Stability in a Shifting World (Psalm 1:3)

“He shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.”

Surely this is one of the most beautiful images in all of Scripture.

The righteous are not compared to something flashy or impressive. **They are compared to a tree.**

The idea of a **“tree planted”** by streams of water speaks of a mighty tree with large branches and deep roots that go far down into the soil. Scientists tell us that when you see a large tree that has been growing for many years, you can be certain that it has a vast unseen root system.

This is how the mighty sequoia trees last for centuries. Their unseen root system gives them stability against the changing forces of nature. That’s what a good root system will do for you.

To speak of *“fruit in its season”* means that the tree produces fruit that expresses its true inner character.

How do you spot an orange tree? By the oranges it produces.

And how do you spot an apple tree? Look for the apples. Whatever is on the inside must eventually be seen on the outside.

And in the life of the believer, what do we look for – **we look for spiritual fruit. What kind of fruit?**

The Fruit of the Spirit. Courage, forgiving spirit. Wisdom, Understanding, Discernment.

This is not only for the so called **“super spiritual”** but is available to every believer, and will only be fully realized over time as we continue to walk with the Lord and to delight in his Word.

This Blessedness Prospers in All Situations.

The last two phrases of verse 3 offer wonderful promises to those who delight in God’s Word.

First, their *“leaf does not wither.”* The phrase pictures a leafy tree that seems like an evergreen because its leaves are in season all year round.

People like this are constantly refreshed by the Word of God, constantly renewed, constantly drawing on new strength for new situations.

They don’t live off yesterday’s blessings, but live each day in the strength of the Lord whose mercies are new every morning.

Second, they prosper in all that they do. Man, that grabs our attention, doesn’t it?

Don't jump to the conclusion that prosperity refers only or mainly to material success.

They bring forth godly fruit in good times and bad times. Why? Because they are planted deep in the good soil and their roots reach out to the water of the Word of God.

This is a powerful word for us as we enter this new year.

SLIDE: The Way of the Ungodly (Psalm 1:4–5)

“Not so the ungodly! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.”

The whole truth about the human race is found in just two words: **“Not so.” Not so the ungodly.** They are not like the righteous and have chosen a different path.

In contrast to the tree stands the chaff. Chaff looks substantial—until pressure comes.

SLIDE: What memories this brought back to me! Farm and Once a Year Threshing: Chaff refers to the husk or hull that surrounds a nut or a kernel. It seems quite strong, but once the nut has been removed, it is light and insubstantial. **It has no weight. No root. No endurance.**

That's what the ungodly are like in the eyes of the Lord. Their new theories, new ideas, new beliefs are like chaff that is quickly blown away.

Learn from this that a life without God is empty, even if someone lives for a hundred years.

A life built apart from God may look successful for a season.

It may be admired. It may even be envied. But without spiritual roots, it cannot stand.

The 21st century offers many alternative visions of “the good life”: a life of self-defined truth, personal freedom without accountability.

Psalm 1 gently but firmly reminds us: not every path leads to life, few are on the narrow road.

SLIDE: Known by the Lord: The Security of the Godly Life (Psalm 1:6)

“For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

The psalm ends not with fear, but with assurance.

The Lord knows the way of the righteous.

He watches. He guards. He cares.

To be godly in the new year does not mean perfection.

Our hope is not in our resolve, our habits, or our consistency.

Our hope is in the God who walks with us on the path.

And ultimately, Psalm 1 points us beyond itself—to Jesus Christ.

Through Jesus, men and women are invited onto the path of life.

To look unto him and be saved, for God is not willing that any should perish but all come to repentance.

SLIDE: Conclusion: Choosing the Way as We Begin the Year

Psalm 1 leaves us with a choice.

Two paths. Two ways to live. Two foundations.

SLIDE Image: As we step into 2026, this psalm asks each of us—not just once, but daily:

Where am I rooted? What shapes my thinking? Which path am I walking?

May this be a year where we do not simply make resolutions but choose the way of the Lord.

SLIDE Image: May We Be Trees Planted by Living Water with our roots deep in the word of God.

Faithful. Fruitful. Steadfast.

There is a blessing waiting for those who build their lives upon God's precious Word. May that blessing be ours so that we, having been blessed, may be a blessing to others in the year to come.

And may our lives bear witness to the God who gives life—now and forever.

SLIDE: Prayer: In these momentous days, as another year comes before us, your Word stops us in our tracks and shows us the truth.

You came to show us a better way. Help us to be people of the Word, delighting in what you have given us. May we say No to anything that pulls us away from you.

Grant us the strength and resolve to say “Yes” to you and to your Word. Amen.