

# Journey From Despair To Delight

## LESSON 1 . . . Finding Lasting Happiness (Psalm 1:1-6)

Notes

**T**he book of Psalms is designed to focus our thoughts on God. The Hebrew word translated *psalm* (MIZMÔR, miz-more) means “praise.” It signifies singing with the accompaniment of musical instruments (Psa. 150). *Psalms* has 150 chapters—more than any other book in the Bible. *Psalms* also has several authors. King David wrote about half of the psalms; King Solomon wrote Psalm 90; Asaph (Ay-saf), worship leader at the tabernacle, wrote about a dozen; and most of the others are anonymous.

The psalms are expressions of human feelings, ranging from great joy and happiness to deep sorrow and repentance. Some psalms tell us how to deal with sin and find spiritual renewal. Others teach us how to worship God. We will begin our “journey from despair to delight” by discovering some secrets for **finding lasting happiness**, the first of which is . . .



### Avoid the path to unhappiness (1:1).

The book of Psalms begins with the word *blessed*. The word translated *blessed* (ESHER, eh-sheer) means “happy.” But what is happiness? Many people think happiness is found in prosperity, possessions, pleasure, or prestige, but most never find happiness because they don’t know what truth found in Ecclesiastes 3:11b?

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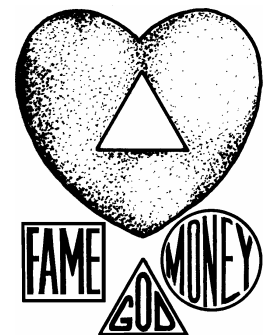
The word translated *eternity*, or “world,” (ÔLÂM, o-lawm) means “forever.” This means our *hearts* can’t be satisfied with possessions or achievements because those things are temporary. Nothing on this earth can give us **lasting happiness** because in every human heart there is a God-shaped vacuum only He can fill. Letting God fill that vacuum is the key to **lasting happiness**. To **avoid the path to unhappiness**, we must do **three** things:

**1. Eliminate the counsel of the wicked.** If we want to be happy, we cannot *walk in the counsel of the wicked*, or “ungodly” (Psa. 1:1a). The word *wicked* doesn’t mean atheists, bank robbers, or murderers, though it can include them. How does Psalm 10:4 describe the *wicked*?

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A *wicked* person is anyone who leaves God out of their lives. Listening to *the counsel of the wicked*, or “ungodly,” begins a downward spiral because their *counsel* will be translated into actions. Therefore, to **avoid the path to unhappiness**, we must **eliminate *the counsel of the wicked***.

**2. Vacate the lifestyle of sinners.** The psalmist says we cannot *stand in the way of sinners* (1:1b). The word *way* means “manner of life” or “lifestyle.” The word translated *stand* (AMAD, ah-mod) means “to abide in.” The word translated *sinners* literally means “criminals” or “offenders.” So, participating in the lifestyle of those who break God’s Law makes us spiritual criminals. If we listen to *the counsel of the wicked*, breaking God’s Law will become a part of our lifestyle. Therefore, we must be very careful about the friends we choose. Why according to 1 Corinthians 15:33?

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This means bad associations, or “communications,” ruin our morals. That’s the downward spiral of bad influence. This doesn’t mean we are not to be friends with unbelievers. Jesus was called *a friend* of “sinners” (Mt 11:19), but He befriended them to lead them to holy lives. We should be friends with unbelievers but should not participate in their sinful lifestyles.

**3. Decontaminate our witness.** The Bible puts it like this: We will not *sit in the seat of mockers* (Psa. 1:1c). The word *seat* refers to what we might call a professor’s “chair” in a university or seminary. For example, what does Jesus say about the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:2?

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Sitting *in the seat of mockers*, or “the scornful,” refers to teaching or encouraging others to sin as a way of mocking God. This means we should not have anything in our lives that could encourage others to sin.

To find lasting happiness, **avoid the path to unhappiness** and second . . .



### **Adhere to God’s Word (1:2-3).**

To adhere means to stick to or stay attached to. To **adhere to God’s Word**, we must do **two** things:

**1. Apply God’s Word.** The psalmist puts it like this: *But his delight is in the law of the LORD* (Psa. 1:2a). Some people read the Bible just to see how far they can go without crossing over the line to sin. They are looking for loopholes. But the person who delights in God’s Word has an insatiable craving to know more about the Bible because he or she has a

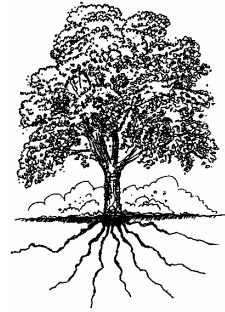
deep desire to please God. How does Jeremiah 15:16b describe what our reaction to God's Word should be?

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Reading or hearing God's Word should be like eating your favorite food—a *delight*. Not only does a happy person *delight* in God's Word, but he or she also *meditates day and night* on it (1:2b). Meditating on God's Word is based on the same process as worrying. Worrying is taking a negative thought and thinking about it over and over. Meditating is taking a scripture and thinking about it over and over for the purpose of applying it to your life. When we **apply God's Word** by meditating on it, the next step is automatic.

**2. Appropriate the power of God's Word.** If we allow the power of God's Word to work in our lives, we will be *like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season* (1:3a-b). Just like a tree strengthened by a constant supply of *water*, we will be spiritually strengthened by the Word of God, and we will produce *fruit*. But what kind of *fruit*? When we appropriate the power of the Bible to our lives, the Holy Spirit produces what nine components of *the fruit of the Spirit* found in Galatians 5:22-23a?



1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_ 9. \_\_\_\_\_

*The fruit of the Spirit* is a word picture of Christ. Therefore, as we **appropriate the power of God's Word** in our lives, we become more like Him.

Also, our *leaf does not wither* (Psa. 1:3c). This means we don't burn-out spiritually. Serving God never becomes dull, dreary, or depressing. If we allow the power of God's Word to work in our lives, we will always be exciting, vivacious believers.

Finally, if we **appropriate the power of God's Word** in our lives, God promises that *whatever* we do *prosper* (1:3d). This doesn't mean we will get rich monetarily. How does Psalm 92:14 describe the righteous?

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This means we will be exciting, fresh, and productive, even in old age. To find lasting happiness, we must **avoid the path to unhappiness, adhere to God's Word**, and third . . .



### **Appraise the end (1:4-6).**

This means we should keep the end in view. The end of *the wicked* is not like that of the righteous because *the wicked . . . are like chaff that the wind blows away* (1:4). *Chaff* refers to worthless husks of wheat or other grain that just blow away in the wind. A life without God has no eternal value; it is as worthless as *chaff* blown away in the wind.

*Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment* (1:5a). This means they cannot withstand *the judgment* of God. Revelation 21:8 lists the kinds of people who will have their place in the lake of fire. What two kinds of people head the list?

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The *cowardly*, or “fearful,” are those who are afraid to take their stand for Jesus Christ. The *unbelieving* refers to those who never place their faith in Christ. These two groups head God's list of horrible sinners.

In the end, *sinners* will not be allowed *in the assembly of the righteous* (Psa. 1:5b). On earth today, *sinners* live among the *righteous*. However, at judgment they will discover they have no place with God's people in heaven. When Jesus returns at the end of time, His angels will gather all nations before Him. What will He then do, according to Matthew 25:32b?

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The entire first psalm is summed up like this: *For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish* (1:6). **Lasting happiness** is found in believing God's promise: *the LORD watches over the way of the righteous*. How does Psalm 34:15 amplify this statement?

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This means we will never have to go through a problem alone.

**To find lasting happiness, you must avoid the path to unhappiness, adhere to God's Word, and appraise the end.**