

Draft – Psalm 1 Project

Psalm 1 Devotional

Carefully read through the first Psalm.

¹*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;
²but 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;
⁶for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

This passage has a lot to say about what characterizes the lives of those who follow God. We expect that our lives will look different than those around us who do not share our faith, yet we continue to struggle with the challenges life throws us. What does Psalm 1 say is the thing that sets apart the person who is blessed by God?

Consider the image in verse 2: the tree planted by streams of water. What strikes you about this picture? How might this translate to the lives of those who delight in the law of the Lord?

Verse 3 describes the wicked as chaff driven away by the wind. Chaff refers to the part of the grain that was useless; it was unsubstantial and separated from the crop by the wind. How does this compare to the prosperity of the tree?

Psalm 1 gives us an image of what path our lives can take if we desire to learn God's ways and spend time in His Word. In what ways do we delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night? Take a moment to evaluate the ways in which you pursue the Word of God.

Introduction to the Psalm 1 Project

Psalm 1 provides a beautiful illustration of the importance in constantly allowing God's law to shape our lives. As a church, we want to live this truth together and encourage each other to make the study of God's word a priority. The Psalm 1 Project will be one way in which we will provide a framework to pursue Scripture individually and as a community.

This project aims to help every member of FOL take personal ownership for sections of the Word and to strengthen the Biblical study skills in each member of our church. The manuscript study method, explained below, will provide guidance and tools to help each of us go deeper into the Word and allow it to transform our lives. Together we will study designated passages on our own and have the opportunity to form groups to share our experience with. This is a great opportunity for our church family to grow!

Introduction to manuscript study

For those of you who have attended a Life Group with FOL, this method will be similar to process of observation, interpretation and application used in Bible study. This guide will use some of these tools to add focus to personal Bible studies and help us receive from the Word.

Imagine getting into the Word as entering a new city. Maybe it is a place you've visited once or many times before. Maybe it is a brand new destination you have been trying to get to for a while. Perhaps you have heard stories or seen pictures of what the place is like. In any case, there is much to explore and learn as you check out the place for yourself. Each city has its own culture, which surely has similarities and differences when compared to how you were raised or how you live now. Different buildings or sections of the city have their own unique history. Sometimes many things can be noticed instantly; other times a guide book or a history lesson might help you understand the place in a much deeper way. Travelers with different backgrounds might notice different aspects of life in the particular city: one might see the different types of restaurants in town first, another may interact with the people on the street to see what they think of their hometown. All of these adventures may even bring up more questions about how the city came to be how it is and what life is like there. Each place we visit can shape who we are and what we understand about the world around us. Time after time, immersing ourselves in a place shows us there is always more to learn with an open mind and dedication to exploration.

Here are some instructions and guidelines for the journey:

The steps of good observation

- i. Pay attention to how the author composes the message
 1. Observe how the writer forms the text; they way he uses words and phrases can help us understand the point he wants to get across.
 2. For example, make note of repeated words or ideas.
 3. Also notice contrasts (such as the difference between the blessed and the wicked person in Psalm 1), or comparisons of things that are alike.
 4. Other aspects of the authors' writing to observe include: cause and effect, introductions, commands, illustrations, and logical connection words like "since," "therefore," or "'If..., then..."

- ii. Use resources for context
 - 1. Many resources are available to help us better understand the context of the text we are reading.
 - 2. To better understand what is happening in the passage, you can research the book it is found in, who the author and audience are, and what happened in history at this time.
 - 3. If you are not familiar with a word, look up the definition in the dictionary.
 - 4. Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias can give insight into the history or cultural practices that are mentioned in the text.
 - 5. Commentaries can also be helpful to gain insight into the context, but be careful about the interpretation they might include. The goal is still to discover the text's meaning for ourselves, so do not cut the process short by accepting answers from resources and ending your own thought process.
 - 6. These resources will be available at the Family Center on designated evenings set aside for working on the study.
- iii. Make connections between the text and the Old Testament
 - 1. The writers and audience of the Scriptures had varying degrees of knowledge about the Old Testament.
 - 2. Various historical practices, rules, and prophecies from the Old Testament are referenced in New Testament passages.
 - 3. Take note of connections to the Old Testament whenever possible. This can be either images that are similar or quotations of Old Testament passages.
 - 4. When we find such references, they can help us see what the author is intending to say and how the audience might have understood it at the time.
- iv. See yourself in the text and experience the emotions of the characters
 - 1. Another important way to observe what is happening in the text is to see yourself as part of the story and experience the emotions that are part of what is going on.
 - 2. Ask yourself what you might feel in the position of one of the characters in the passage. What might it feel like to be a bystander observing the scene?
- v. Ask good questions about the passage
 - 1. A good question can be answered by the text.
 - 2. Good questions help us get to the main themes of the passage and discover the author's intended meaning. If something troubling you seems to be trivial, explain why you think it is important to understanding the text.
 - 3. Feel free to ask a question even if you think you already know what the answer may be, especially if it relates to the main theme of the passage.
 - 4. Keep questions simple and precise, so others would know exactly what you are asking.

The steps of good interpretation

- vi. To discover the meaning of the passage, we attempt to answer the questions generated from the text. Answering questions requires us to focus on the text in front of us to look for the answers (rather than using previous knowledge or assumptions of what the text means).
- vii. There may be multiple options for answers to your questions. Each option may have some evidence in the text supporting it.
- viii. In this case, it is important to use the immediate context. The best evidence usually comes from the immediate context, such as the sentence in question. If the answer is not there, next look to the paragraph, then the section, the book, Old Testament references, and cultural context.
- ix. Try to keep the options, evidence and answers as simple as possible in order to avoid confusion.

The steps to apply the Word to our lives

- x. When it comes to studying Scripture, doing the Word is most important. When we skim through a passage without grasping its meaning or take a truth about God and say, "That's nice," tuck it in our pocket and go on our way, we are cutting short God's desire and transforming power to change our lives.
- xi. As we dig deep, ask good questions and discover the meaning of the passages we study, inevitably we will notice that the truths we find don't necessarily line up with how we live our lives. This reality should bother us.
- xii. We then must decide how to respond: ignore the discrepancies or repent and believe in the gospel. We can take small steps and trust that God desires to help us, heal us, and draw us closer to Him.
- xiii. Because of our love for God, we should desire to respond God's truth with specific action. What practical steps (big or small) can you take to change your behavior or way of thinking?
 1. For example, we saw how Psalm 1 says it is important to spend time in God's Word. Committing to studying Scripture through the Psalm 1 Project is a practical application of that passage.
 2. Sometimes we need to turn to each other for ideas to help us apply the truth we are struggling with. We also need prayer and support from our community to make lasting changes. In light of this, please feel free to seek advice and prayer from each other in applying the Word.

The Bible has so much to speak into our lives. While it may seem overwhelming at times, we can master one portion of Scripture at a time. Taking initiative in studies like this one will help us grow in the Word over our lifetimes.

Luke 1

¹Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

⁸Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

¹⁸And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." ¹⁹And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." ²¹And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. ²²And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. ²³And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

²⁴After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, ²⁵"Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy— the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

³⁹In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
⁵²he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

Luke 1:1-56

Some questions are provided below to help you explore the text. They are by no means the only questions that could come from the passages. Please feel free to ask your own questions and search out the answers to what interests you most!

Vs. 1-4

Study Questions

1. What might the audience know about Jesus? [vs.1]
2. How does it affect your reading of the book that the information was gathered from eyewitnesses? [vs.2]
3. Imagine Luke the reporter gathering information to write his book – what would you see?
4. Who was Theophilus? What is Luke's goal in writing to him? [vs. 3]

Application

1. How do verses 1-4 help you trust the Bible more?
2. Who might be a Theophilus in your life? How will you tell them about Jesus?

Vs. 5-25

Study Questions

1. Describe Zechariah and Elizabeth's history of faith. [vs.5-6]
2. In their culture, what would it be like for the couple to be barren? How would it affect their daily lives? [vs.7]
3. How did Zechariah feel this morning, knowing it was his day to enter the temple? [vs. 9]
4. What might Zechariah's fear have been like? [vs. 12]
5. What was Zechariah's prayer? When do you think was the last time he prayed for a son? [vs. 13]
6. Why will John be great? [vs. 15]
7. Contrast the events inside the temple to those outside the temple.
8. Why didn't Zechariah believe the angel? How did the angel know he didn't believe? [vs. 20]
9. How did they know he had a vision? [vs. 22]
10. Why is Zechariah silenced for 9 months?
11. What disgrace did Elizabeth endure? [vs. 25]

Application

1. What do we learn about the kingdom of God from Zechariah and Elizabeth?
2. Which characters or lessons do you relate with?

Vs. 26-38

Study questions

1. Contrast the life situations of Mary and Elizabeth.

2. Why was Mary chosen? [vs.28]
3. How does Mary feel?
4. Why will Jesus be great? [vs. 32]
5. How is Mary's question different from Zechariah? [vs. 34]
6. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit and God's creative power? [vs. 35]
7. How does Elizabeth fit in? How is each pregnancy impossible? [vs. 36-37]
8. Considering what difficult things lie ahead, describe Mary's commitment to serving the Lord. [vs.38]

Application

1. What impossible things is God calling you to? Are you responding like Mary did?

Vs. 39-56

Study questions

1. How does Elizabeth's song encourage Mary's faith? [vs. 42]
2. How is God merciful? How is He mighty?
3. Compare the themes from Mary's song to Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.
4. What do we learn about God in the revolutionary language in Mary's song?

Application

1. How can you encourage or mentor someone younger than you like Mary encouraged Elizabeth?
2. How can you prepare for the revolution described in the passage?

Our Response

☒ I have read and studied Luke 1:1-56

☒ Here is a thoughtful response about the lessons I have learned:

☒ Here is a report on how I "go and do likewise":