



## Week 1: Walking in God's Ways

### Week 1, Day 1

#### Psalm 1

<sup>1</sup> *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,*  
<sup>2</sup> *but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.*  
<sup>3</sup> *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.*  
<sup>4</sup> *Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.*  
<sup>5</sup> *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*  
<sup>6</sup> *For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.*

#### Understanding the Passage:

Did you catch the progression in verse 1? It is subtle but important: it moves from *walking* in step with the wicked, to *standing* on the path that sinners take, to finally *sitting* in the company of mockers. Notice how this escalates — first you listen to bad advice, then you start walking in the same direction as those who reject God's ways, finally you settle down permanently among those who mock what is sacred. This isn't just about avoiding obviously bad people or blatantly sinful behavior. It's a gradual drift, not a sudden plunge.

The alternative path is described with the image of a tree planted by streams of water. This isn't a tree that *happened* to grow near water by accident — it was deliberately *planted* there. In a semi-

arid climate like ancient Palestine, trees had to be near a water source to flourish. The Psalmist is telling us that righteous people doesn't just stumble into spiritual health; they intentionally position themselves near the sources of life: delighting in the law of the Lord, meditating on his law day and night.

The contrast with the wicked is stark. They are like chaff — the useless husks that are blown away when grain is winnowed. Unlike a rooted tree that bears fruit and keeps its leaves, chaff has no weight, no substance, and no staying power. When the “winds” blow (tragedy, betrayal by those you love and trust, job loss, illness, and so on), those who have built their lives on anything other than God's truth discover they have no anchor, no roots, nothing to hold them steady.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. Think about the progression in verse 1. Can you identify any areas where you might be drifting away from God through small compromises rather than obvious rebellion?
2. What does it mean practically to "delight" in God's law rather than just dutifully reading it?
3. The tree metaphor suggests intentional positioning near life-giving sources. What are the "streams of water" in your life that help you flourish spiritually?

### **Week 1, Day 2**

#### **Psalm 119:97-104**

*97 Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long.*

*98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is always with me.*

*99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your decrees are my meditation.*

*100 I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.*

*101 I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.*

*102 I do not turn away from your ordinances, for you have taught me.*

*103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

*104 Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*

#### **Understanding the Passage:**

The enthusiasm in these verses is almost overwhelming. The psalmist doesn't just respect God's law or find it useful — he *loves* it with the kind of passion we typically reserve for people, not principles. It is clear that this love is born from personal experience: being wiser than enemies and more understanding than teachers and the aged. This is a remarkable claim because our culture teaches us that formal education and life experience are the keys to wisdom, but the psalmist is clear that meditating on God's word is the key to wisdom.

The comparison to honey is particularly meaningful in an ancient context where honey was one of the few sources of sweetness available. Just as honey satisfies a deep craving for sweetness, God's word satisfies a deep hunger in our souls. We grow to love it. That love leads to meditation, meditation leads to wisdom, wisdom leads to understanding, and understanding leads to practical choices about how to live.

Sprinkled throughout the psalm are signs of spiritual discernment. The psalmist says he "holds back" his feet from evil ways. This suggests that walking in God's ways requires intentional restraint, saying no to paths that might seem appealing but lead away from God. The final verse acknowledges that understanding God's ways helps us recognize and reject false paths. It's not just

about knowing what's right; it's about developing such a deep love for truth that we naturally "hate every false way."

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. How has God's word given you wisdom or understanding that goes beyond what formal education or life experience alone could provide?
2. The psalmist describes God's word as "sweeter than honey." When was the last time you experienced genuine delight in reading Scripture rather than feeling it was an obligation?
3. What "false ways" do you find most appealing or difficult to resist? How might deeper meditation on God's truth help you discern and reject these paths?

## Week 1, Day 3

### Psalm 15

*<sup>1</sup> O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?*

*<sup>2</sup> Those who walk blamelessly and do what is right and speak the truth from their heart;*

*<sup>3</sup> who do not slander with their tongue and do no evil to their friends nor heap shame upon their neighbors;*

*<sup>4</sup> in whose eyes the wicked are despised but who honor those who fear the LORD;  
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;*

*<sup>5</sup> who do not lend money at interest and do not take a bribe against the innocent.  
Those who do these things shall never be moved.*

### Understanding the Passage:

This psalm reads like an ancient job description for citizenship in God's kingdom. The psalmist asks what seems like a simple question: who gets to be close to God? The answer reveals that proximity to God isn't based on religious credentials or spiritual achievements. Instead, a relationship with God is strengthened in the patterns of our daily relationships with others.

Walking blamelessly isn't about moral perfection but about the direction and pattern of our lives. Someone who walks blamelessly isn't sinless, but they're moving consistently toward righteousness and making course corrections when they stumble.

Then the focus turns to speech. The prohibition against slander reveals how seriously God takes the way we talk about others. The anonymity of social media comments and a culture of casual gossip make this particularly challenging. How often do we "heap shame" upon our neighbors through criticism, mockery, or spreading information that damages their reputation?

Verse 4 helps us to see that those who live close to God develop the ability to distinguish between what honors God and what doesn't, and align themselves accordingly. Standing by your oath "even to your hurt" reveals the cost of integrity. Sometimes keeping our word costs us financially, socially, or personally. Even so, God wants us to be known for being trustworthy, regardless of convenience.

The promise at the end is striking: "Those who do these things shall never be moved." This isn't a guarantee against hardship but a promise of stability that comes from building your life on God's principles.

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Which of these character qualities do you find most challenging to live out consistently?
2. How can you "despise" wicked behavior without becoming judgmental toward people?
3. The psalm emphasizes integrity in speech, business dealings, and promises. In what areas of your life have you felt the greatest pressure to compromise your integrity?

### Week 1, Day 4

#### Psalm 90:12

*<sup>12</sup> So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.*

#### Understanding the Passage:

The Hebrew word for "count" (*manah*) means to number or assign significance to something. It's the same word used when God numbered the stars or when a king counts his army. God wants us to recognize that our days have weight and value, that each one matters because our time is limited.

It strikes me that we work really hard to avoid thinking about death or aging. We use euphemisms, invest billions in anti-aging products, and generally pretend that we have unlimited time. The psalmist suggests that this avoidance actually makes us *less* wise, not more peaceful. When we honestly face our mortality, when we *manah* our days, our priorities come into clearer focus.

The goal isn't to become paralyzed by the shortness of life but to "gain a wise heart." Wisdom, in biblical terms, isn't just intellectual knowledge — it's the skill of living well. A wise heart knows how to spend time, energy, and resources in ways that matter. It can distinguish between what's urgent and what's important, between what's temporary and what's eternal.

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. When you honestly consider that your time on earth is limited, what activities or priorities feel *less* important? What feels *more* important?
2. What would change in your daily routine if you truly believed that each day was a gift that should be stewarded wisely?
3. How will acknowledging your mortality lead to greater peace and wisdom rather than anxiety and fear?

### Week 1, Day 5

#### Psalm 25:4-12

*<sup>4</sup> Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.*

*<sup>5</sup> Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.*

*<sup>6</sup> Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.*

*<sup>7</sup> Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;*

*according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!*

*<sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.*

*<sup>9</sup> He leads the humble in what is right and teaches the humble his way.*

*<sup>10</sup> All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.*

*<sup>11</sup> For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great.*

*<sup>12</sup> Who are they who fear the LORD? He will teach them the way that they should choose.*

### Understanding the Passage:

This passage reads like the prayer of someone who has come to the end of their own wisdom and desperately needs God's guidance. When David pleads for God not to remember the sins of his youth or his transgressions, we see that his requests come from a vulnerable place. He is specific in what he wants now: he wants to know God's ways, learn God's paths, and be led in God's truth.

The repetition of "teach me" and "lead me" reveals a posture of humility that's essential for spiritual growth. There was a point in David's life when he asked God to rubber-stamp decisions he'd already made and bless paths he'd already chosen. But this psalm shows that David has moved to being genuinely open to having his thinking and direction corrected by God.

Verse 6 makes an appeal based on God's character rather than David's worthiness. This is how we can pray with confidence — not because we deserve God's favor but because God is inherently gracious. When David names his need for forgiveness, he knows it will come because God's grace and steadfast love are greater than our sins.

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. David asks God to teach him and lead him rather than asking for specific outcomes. How comfortable are you with praying for God's guidance without knowing where it might lead?
2. What "sins of your youth" or past failures do you still carry guilt about? Take a few minutes to bring those before the Lord right now, knowing that God is ready to forgive you.
3. David says God teaches "the humble." What are the barriers to humility in your own life that might prevent you from receiving God's instruction?

### Video Discussion Questions:

1. Does it feel like there are two clear paths of good and evil in your life? If not, what does it feel like instead?
2. Have you experienced the slow drift that Psalm 1 describes of **walking** in step with the wicked, **standing** in the way that sinners take, and **sitting** in the company of mockers?
3. What practices or habits help you stay oriented toward integrity even when you make mistakes?
4. When you read Psalm 90:12, do you feel a tug to reevaluate what actually matters or to become a different kind of person? Talk more with the group about the feelings that arise when you read that verse.
5. If you could plan for your last day on earth, how would you spend it?
6. How do we know what God's ways look like in our specific circumstances?
7. What is one area of your life where you need to ask God to show you God's ways?

### Prayer requests and other notes: