

Choosing The Right Path

Psalm 1

MEMORY VERSE

PSALM 1:6

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

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Bibles, several sheets of paper, and markers.

Black and white construction paper, scissors, glue sticks and tongue depressors.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Who Am I?

It is important in our lives to choose the right path. As we will learn today, **God wants to bless our lives.** When we follow Him and choose His ways, our lives will be blessed.

Before class, think of three characters from the Bible who lived their lives for the Lord and were blessed (example: Daniel). Think of three others who chose the wrong path and their lives ended in destruction (example: Judas). Think of some questions to ask the children that will help to describe the individual. Start with harder questions, and move to easier ones if they cannot guess. For example, for Daniel you might say, “I pray three times per day,” “I eat only vegetables,” etc. Save the “I was in the lion’s den” clue for the last one. Split the class into two teams. Start by giving one clue to team A and if they cannot guess, give the next clue to team B and see if they can guess. Continue giving clues until the person is guessed. Keep score as to which team get the most points.

After all six names have been guessed, use the descriptions as an introduction to today's lesson of choosing the right path. Ask the children, "What happens when we choose a path that honors God?" and "What happens when we choose a path that goes against God's Word?"

LESSON TIME!

There are two paths we can choose to walk on. Those who choose God's path are those who desire to live by faith in God's Word, seeking His righteousness; they will have a blessed life. In contrast, the path of the wicked will not cause them to prosper; and, like a dried leaf, the wicked will one day perish. What path are you on? Our choice is important, for **God wants to bless our lives.**

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;

We can choose to either take the path of a godly person or the path of a ungodly person. The psalmist begins to describe the joys of being a godly person--one who obeys God and refuses to listen to those whose hearts are bent on evil in contrast to those who would scoff or laugh at the things of God.

God wants us to be set apart from those who have chosen the path of the ungodly. He desires that we experience the peace and joy that results from a life lived in the right relationship with God.

Do your friends build up your faith or do they tear it down? Our friends can have a strong influence on us, often in ways that we do not always notice. If we choose to have friendships with those who laugh at what God considers important, we may be drawn into sin, and our friends' indifference to God will become our indifference.

A true friend will draw you close to God and encourage and support your walk with Him.

Note: the person described in verse one is at first walking, then standing, and then sitting with sinners. There is a progression a person who drifts from the Lord often experiences. Drawn into something or curious about something in the world, one may listen to and begin to walk in the way (the counsel) of the ungodly, those who follow their own selfish desires and lusts. Sadly, one may begin to feel more comfortable in his path away from God and begin standing, situating himself in a lifestyle that displeases God. Once completely comfortable with a sinful lifestyle, he begins to sit. He joins the scornful, those that mock God and His ways. Though we are called to reach out those who do not know Jesus, we must not participate in the things they do.

PSALM 1:2

But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.

A faithful follower of God will avoid bad company; he will delight in God's law and meditate upon it day and night.

To meditate on God's law is to spend time reading and thinking about His Word—carefully considering how His Word applies to us. Instead of walking in the counsel of the ungodly, this man will be walking in the counsel (advice) of the Lord. The Psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). God's Word lights our way through this dark and evil world we live in. With His light, we will see the path before us and not stumble. We will experience God's blessings upon us.

PSALM 1:3

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.

The psalmist paints a beautiful picture of a strong tree by a riverbank producing luscious fruit at its season. The harsh winds may come, and the heat of trials may beat down on the tree, but it remains strong, green, and fruitful by the water (see also Jeremiah 17:5-8). The righteous man lives by faith and places his confidence in God; he will flourish like a tree planted by water. Does that mean that everything will go his way?

When God tells us that we will prosper, He does not mean that we will never have failure or difficulties in our lives. We are not even guaranteed health, wealth, and happiness. His Word does tell us that when God's wisdom is applied to our lives, the fruit it bears in us will be good, receiving His approval. He will bless our lives with things you cannot buy--peace, joy, special relationships, and His presence and leading. **God wants to bless our lives.**

As the fruitful tree soaks up the water and bears luscious fruit, we also are to soak up God's Word, producing actions and attitudes that honor God. Like a well-watered tree, the fruitful servant of God can trust in the promises of God's Word and stand firm through life's trials. God will be his guide, his help, and his strength through all life's trials.

One Way Sign

In our lesson, today, we learned of two paths one might take; only *one* path will lead to blessing and prosperity; so there is really only one way for a wise and careful person to choose--God's way. For our craft, today, we will make a "One Way" road sign to help us to remember to choose God's path. You will need black and white construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, and tongue depressors.

Use a black sheet of construction paper as the background. Measure and cut two inches length-wise to make a rectangle. The children will need to cut out letters from white construction paper to spell out ONE WAY. Judge the size to make sure the letters along with an arrow fits into the black rectangle. Help younger children with patterns. Once the letters are cut out, have the children cut out an arrow and a thin border to go around their sign also from the white construction paper (again judge the size to make sure it fits near the edge of the black rectangle). Glue the border onto the black rectangle. Next glue on the ONE WAY letters and the arrow (suggestion: have the arrow pointing up instead of left or right). Glue the tongue depressor onto the bottom middle of the sign so it can be held up.

PSALM 1:4

The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

Now the psalmist describes the fruitless life of a wicked person. In contrast to the person who stands as a strong and fruitful tree, the image of the ungodly person is like the chaff from worthless husks of grain.

Chaff is the outer shell or husk of the grain that must be removed to get at the valuable kernels of grain inside. The people removed chaff by a process called threshing and winnowing. After the plants were cut, they were crushed; then the pieces were thrown

into the air. Since chaff is very light it was carried away by the wind while the good grain fell back to the threshing floor. Simply put, chaff is a symbol of a faithless life that drifts along without direction. The blessed person is guided by God's Word and anchored by faith in His promises. God is actively faithful to keep His promises to bear fruit in our lives. Good grain is a beautiful symbol of a fruitful life, one that can be used by God. **God wants to bless our lives.**

Judgment will one day come for those who do not know God and refuse to turn to Him. The wheat will be crushed; only the good grain will remain. Those lives which are not fruitful or given to Jesus will be blown away with the wind. These truths should help us bring things into the proper perspective. As we understand the seriousness and consequences of our choices, things will seem to come into perspective—things that seem so important to people in this life will not seem to matter at all. Only eternal things will matter. How we need to keep our lives focused on eternity!

PSALM 1:5

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

It seems at times that evil people may be getting away with things. It appears as though they continue in their wicked ways without any consequences for their actions. Do you ever wonder why God allows the wicked to carry on in life as they live life by their own rules? The Bible reveals God is very patient and merciful. He gives people time and room to change from their ways and turn towards Him (Romans 2:4). But, God assures us that a day is coming when their sins will be punished (Matthew 25:3-46). They will not be able to stand in His judgment, nor will they gather together with the righteous. How important it is that we share our faith with others who are headed down that wrong path!

Who are the “righteous?” The righteous are those who walk in a “right” relationship with God. As a result (a natural consequence) of that relationship, the fruit of God’s Spirit becomes evident in their lives—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22,23). God produces good works in their lives and enables them to do what is pleasing in His sight (Hebrews 13:20,21).

PSALM 1:6

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Notice the contrast of the final outcome between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will again prosper, but the wicked will perish. The Lord has watched over the way of the righteous and He knows them. The righteous are saved by their personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The wicked, who have gone their own way and refused to have anything to do with God, will reap eternal punishment--the worthless life of the ungodly will not endure.

How blessed is the person who seeks after the Lord, to do His will, who walks in the counsel of His Word. God’s Word becomes a light to show him the way through this dark and evil world. What will your choice be?—the way of the righteous or the way of ungodly? To follow the path of the ungodly will lead to disappointment and ultimately eternal separation from God. God has given us the rules for a happy and prosperous life. Let us choose God’s path and make His Word our delight, our daily meditation, that our lives may be as fruitful trees planted by God’s rivers of water. **God wants to bless our lives.**

Memory Verse Relay

You will need Bibles, several sheets of paper, and markers. Before class, write the reference for the memory verse at the top of a sheet of paper (Psalm 1:6 – write only the reference; do not write out the verse). Use one paper for each group of six students that you will have. Set up a table on the opposite end of the room. Clear the floor so the children can run across the room. On the table, set out a Bible for each team, a marker, and one of the sheets with the reference on it.

During class, divide the students into groups of six. Have them line up on the side of the room opposite from the papers. At your signal, have the first person in line run to the table and read the verse in the Bible in front of them and write down on the paper the FIRST WORD only of the verse. They should leave the Bible open and return to tag the next person in line. Next, the second student will run to find and write the second word of the verse. Continue to play until one team completes the entire verse.

When all teams have completed the relay read the verse together as a class.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to give their lives to God fully, deciding to walk down the path that leads to life and blessing. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.