

Psalm 1: How To Be Successful
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Introduction: Psalms 1–2 introduce all the psalms. 1 is personal, about the individual before God & different from the world; 2 is prophetic, about God’s coming kingdom and how it will be established. Give outline; read the whole psalm together. Then reread each subdivision after explaining it.

I. Description of the Godly Person, vv. 1–3

“Blessed” is plural in Hebrew, a form used 44 times in the OT, mostly psalms and proverbs. Also ends Ps. 2(v. 12), bracketing these psalms. Also in Ps. 119:1 (+ way, walk, law of the Lord) and 119:2.

“O the blessednesses of the man” Means fortunate, well-off, blissful.

Greek form (*makarios*) 9 times in Matthew 5:3–12.

Blessed is the **man** (Heb. *ish*)—usually an individual male but can be individual person.

In Division I (vv. 1–3) the psalmist will describe the godly person’s lifestyle (A & B), then the blessing (C).

A. What he avoids, v. 1

1. walking in the counsel of the ungodly (translated “wicked,” also in vv. 4, 5, 6)
2. standing in the way of sinners
3. sitting in the seat of scorners

Our modern culture is also full of such people. We cannot avoid relating to them—our Lord left us here to do so, as He did. But we do not imitate them. REREAD V. 1

B. What he does, v. 2

“The law of the Lord” is the teaching of Yahweh

1. Delights in it (cf. Isaiah 11:3)
2. Meditates (mutters) on it day and night (cf. 2:1; quote Psa. 119:97): “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.”
How much of it? “Every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4)

Does knowledge of the Word please God? A Rabbinic story said that God Himself studies Torah as they do. Jesus warned that Pharisees studied the Scriptures but would not come to Him (John 5).

REREAD V. 2.

C. What he achieves, v. 3 THE BLESSING

1. Described—he is like a well-watered evergreen fruit tree (palm?).
Produces his fruit in season—not always present, can’t rush it, can ruin it.
2. Summarized: He prospers in everything.
Same verb used of Joseph in Gen. 39:3, 23.
Same promise and same secret in Joshua 1:8: “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

What is success? Financial prosperity or good health? (see Prov. 3:1–2, 7–10) No, see James 2:5.

It means God’s best for each one.

REREAD V. 3.

II. Description of Ungodly Persons, vv. 4–5

A. What They Are Like, v. 4

“not so” They do not avoid ungodly counsel or ways, do not delight in the Lord’s teaching nor meditate in it, are not like fruitful trees, but are like useless chaff REREAD V. 4

B. What They Achieve, v. 5

Nothing lasting. They won’t stand in the judgment nor participate with all the righteous. (Note that the godly person excludes himself now; the ungodly will be excluded finally.) REREAD V. 5

III. Why do They End Up Differently?, v. 6

A. because the Lord knows (watches over) the way of the godly

B. but not the way of the ungodly

Their way “perishes,” implying that God doesn’t “know” (watch over) it. REREAD V. 6

Conclusions

1. Blessing was God’s original plan—see Gen. 1:28; 2:3
2. Ultimate guarantee by Jesus the King. (Same Greek word in Matt. 5:3–10, 9 times)
3. Psalm 1:1-2 gives the key for obtaining God’s blessing. The key is to truly love God’s instruction, to know the Bible and obey it. It is useless to make up your own tricks or shortcuts.
4. How faithfully must one use this key? As much as he wants blessing and success. Only Christ used it perfectly.
5. How can you get this love for God’s Word? By drawing near to God and asking Him for it.

6. A demonstration (object lesson) that it is necessary to fill each day with the correct priorities. (Practice this illustration until it is smooth.) My empty day is represented by an empty mason jar (quart size). Show two identical small bottles of sand (a and b) and two identical bottles of gravel (a and b), also ten golf balls. Explain what they represent (see below). Put sand a, then gravel a, into the jar. Start putting in golf balls; only two or three should now fit. Empty the jar, then put in all the golf balls, all of gravel b, then all of sand b.
 - Golf balls representing **essential things** for my day: food (& medicine), exercise, rest, **Bible reading and meditation, prayer**, talk, affection, etc.
 - Gravel representing **today’s tasks** (material, financial, vocational)
 - Sand representing **social life and whatever else brings pleasure.**

Psalm 1

1 **Blessed is the man** who does not
walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.

2 But 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,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.

4 **Not so the wicked!**
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.

5 Therefore the wicked
will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the
righteous.

6 **For the Lord** watches over the
way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked
will perish.

Questions for Discussion About Psalm 1

Introduction: Review the psalm, which gives the rule for true success (v. 3d).

1. What is success? (cf. Romans 12:1–2)

2. What does the rule require?

Must we scheme to help it?

3. How well must one obey it?

Only Christ obeyed it perfectly.

4. How does one get this attitude?