



# Psalm 1

## Wisdom Psalm by David

The first psalm of David is categorized as a “wisdom” psalm. The structure of a wisdom psalm emphasizes the theme of “Two Roads” through numerous sayings such as:

- Better sayings
- Numerical sayings
- Admonitions to “sons”
- Blessing formulas
- Emphasis on the law

Similar to the book of Proverbs, these psalms focus on the value of wisdom and living a wise, Godly life as opposed to an ungodly life. Psalm 1 gives a clear distinction between the *righteous and the wicked*. Wisdom literature in the Bible divides humankind into these two absolute categories and does not recognize a third.

Another theme in wisdom psalms concerns the present fortunes and the ultimate destinies of human beings. The first and last words of Psalm 1 give us these alternatives.

*Blessed* is the righteous person who delights in God’s law; the ungodly, on the other hand, will *perish*. We can see the process of “blessing” and “cursing” already in this life.

Psalm 1 Outline:

- 1-3 The Godly Life
- 4-5 The Ungodly Life
- 6 Summary

As you look more carefully at this psalm, pay attention to the progression of compromise—the erosion of our good intentions.

Verse 1 illustrates (through 3 negatives) the importance of allowing absolutely no compromise with evil so that evil never becomes a habit.

Verse 2 shows the positive side of godliness and the means by which it may be attained, followed in verse 3 with a description of what results when a righteous walk is practiced.

Notice the triple set of parallels in verse 1:

Walk.....counsel.....ungodly  
Stand..... path .....sinners  
Sit.....seat.....mockers

As Pastor Mark pointed out, the psalmist has spiritual compromise in mind. The word pictures give us the concept of how easy it is for our intentions toward righteousness to slow to a standstill or a complete stop as they are worn away by the company we choose to keep.

An example of a Biblical person that flirted with evil and lost is Lot.

Look at Genesis 13: 11-13 and Genesis 19:1. Lot walked towards the ungodly, then took his “stand” among sinners and in the end was sitting at the city gate with the evil.

The opposite example of a righteous man is Joseph. Read Genesis 39:1-12 and note how Joseph refused to allow compromise take its toll even when Potiphar’s wife kept coming after him.

Why do you think David mentions the Law here in verse 2?

In Psalm 119:9, 11 we read:

*How can a young man keep his way pure?  
By keeping it according to Thy word.....  
Thy word I have treasured in my heart,  
That I may not sin against Thee.*

Verse 3 tells us the result of a godly life. Note that we shall *be* something rather than *do* something as a result of delighting in and meditating on God’s Word.

What are the treelike characteristics listed in verse 3?

The prophet Jeremiah talks about the godly with treelike roots in Jeremiah 17:5-8. A flourishing life is the result of maintaining an uncompromising walk; delighting in God’s Word.

As you go through your week, reflect on compromise and ask yourself these probing questions:

- Are areas of my life showing signs of spiritual, ethical, or moral compromise?
- Does my life resemble the kind of tree described in Psalm 1?
- Should I put an end to some things that are dragging me down?

Reread Psalm 1 again, this time aloud. Pay close attention to the “walk.....stand.....sit.....” picture in the first verse. Honestly, ask yourself if you have begun to tolerate a few compromises you once rejected. What do you need to do to clear up the erosion?

Spend a few minutes delighting in the Lord. Tell Him in prayer how much you love Him and appreciate Him. Be specific, thanking Him for removing most of the “chaff” that once existed in your life.<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from “Living Beyond the Daily Grind, Book 1” by Charles R. Swindoll, Word Publishing, 1988.