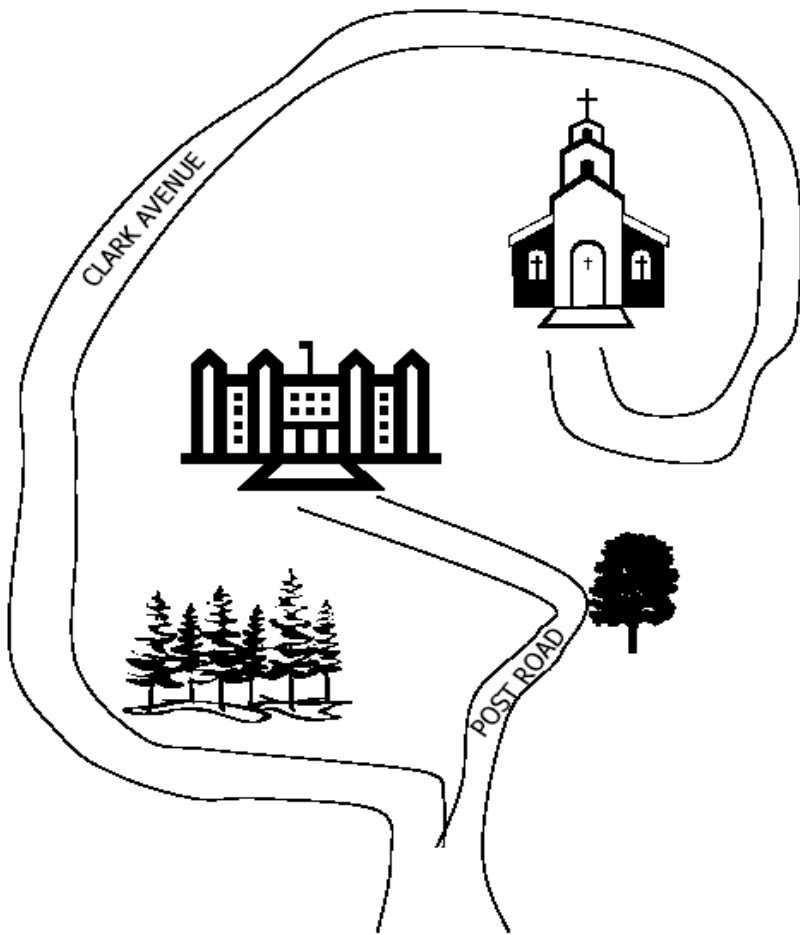


The Way of Righteousness

(Psalm 1)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Teacher, draw a simple map on the board showing a road that splits into two roads, Clark Avenue leading to the church and Post Road leading to the school. Then lead the children in a discussion:]



What are all the different kinds of paths you have traveled in your life? (Walked a garden path or a sidewalk, driven a highway, ridden your bike on a “bike path,” hiked a trail into the forest.) How do you think that walking down a path in the woods might be like your life? [Teacher, connect the physical paths we tread in life to the spiritual paths we must also choose.]

Some people think there are many paths to God, but Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6) Let me explain...

- How many roads are on this map? (Two, Clark Avenue and Post Road.)
- Where does Clark Avenue go? (To the church.)
- Where does Post Road go? (To the school.)
- Can you get to the school by going on Clark Avenue? (No.)
- Can you get to the church by going on Post Road? (No.)

Suppose you thought that the road to the right – Post Road – would go to the church because the church is on the right. Would you be correct? (No!) Post Road only goes to the school. It doesn’t make any difference if you *think* that the road goes to the church; the road goes to the school no matter what you think. You could try to get to the church by Post Road, but you would not get there.

The Bible also talks about two roads we can take through life. Each road has a destination, a place where it leads, just like Clark Avenue goes to one place and Post Road goes to another place. The Bible tells us that there is only one way to get to Heaven and that is by way of Jesus.

Today we are going to study Psalm 1 which is full of word pictures. Word pictures paint ideas in your mind and help you to see things more clearly. For example, if I said, “It was darker than the inside of a cow” you’d know I was saying that it was completely and totally without any light at all. That is a word picture.

Psalm 1 describes the two paths of life that you can take in life and compares the life of the faithful person to the life of the faithless person.

Opening Prayer

Father, there are really only two paths in life, the path to eternal life with You and the path to destruction. Please help us to learn how to make wise choices in life so that we might stay on the path to heaven. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

For the LORD watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction. (Psalm 1:6)

Lesson

Every day you are faced with choices. You can choose to do things God's way, or you can choose to ignore God and do things your own way. There's God's way of obedience or Satan's way of rebellion against God.

The psalmist begins by praising the joys of those who refuse to listen and follow the advice of people who do not love God.

Psalm 1:1

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.

Mockers are people that make fun of or tease others. The psalmist is talking about people who make fun of God.

Notice the progression here. First, he *follows* the advice of someone from the wrong crowd, then he *stands around* with them, and finally he *joins* in with them. Oh, you may not start out wanting to hang out with the wrong kids at school, but if you don't watch out, you'll be right in the middle of them.

The friends that we have can have a huge influence on us. If our friends don't consider the things of God important, we could be tempted to feel that way, too. If we don't feel that the things of the Lord are important, it is just the same as mocking God ourselves. Do your friends build up your faith in God? Or, do they tear it down? True friends help you draw closer to God.

The more we allow people who mock God to influence us, the more we separate ourselves from our source of real life. We must have contact with unbelievers if we are to witness to them, but we must not join in or imitate their ungodly behavior. If you want the joy of the Lord, make friends with those who love God and His Word.

The psalmist goes on to say that God blesses people who study his Word and try to obey Him.

Psalm 1:2

But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night.

The "*law of the Lord*" is referring to all of Scripture—the whole Bible. The more we know God's Word, the more we will depend on Him to guide every thought that we have, every word that we speak, and action that we do.

You can learn how to follow God by meditating on His Word. *Meditating* means spending time reading and thinking about what you have read. It's like chewing on the word just as a cow chews its cud before swallowing it. When you read God's word, don't just read the words and then put your Bible away. Ask God to show you the lesson He wants to teach you. Ask Him how you should change so you're living as He wants. Maybe there is a sin He wants you to confess. Maybe He wants you to think in new ways about a particular person or situation.

If you want to follow God more closely, you must know what He says. Knowing God's Word and meditating upon it are the first steps towards applying it to your everyday life. The Psalmist says that the person who delights in God's Word is full of joy.

Then he compares a person like this to healthy, fruit bearing trees with strong roots.

Psalm 1:3

They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.

Godly people are described as “*trees planted along the riverbank.*” A tree is one of the most important plants God created. Can you think of reasons trees are important? Trees provide food and shade for people and an ideal place for birds and animals to live. We also use wood from trees to build things, to make paper, to burn to keep warm and for cooking.

Why is it good for a tree to be planted along the river? It can get plenty of water to drink. Did you know that Jesus said that anyone who believes in Him would receive *Living Water* (John 7:39)? That is a word picture that describes the Holy Spirit. God fills us with the Spirit, Who refreshes our souls and comforts us with the knowledge of His love and care.

A tree that is planted by water gets strong roots that make it sturdy in the face of violent storms. Once the roots are firmly in the ground, it will not easily wither.

In the same way, people who are planted in God’s Word will not easily “*wither*” when the storms of life come. They will be able to produce spiritual fruit. This does not mean that people who put their trust in God will never have difficulties or failures. There is no guarantee that we will always be healthy, wealthy, or happy. What it means is this: when we apply God’s wisdom, our lives will bear good fruit and we will receive God’s approval.

Just as a tree soaks up water and bears luscious fruit, we also are to soak up God’s Word, and allow it to produce thoughts, words, and actions that will honor God. To achieve anything worthwhile, we must have God’s Word in our heart. The more we delight in God’s Word the more fruitful we will be. We grow like well-watered, fruitful trees. [Teacher, discuss what it means to have a “*fruitful*” life.]

In contrast, those who don’t trust and obey God have meaningless lives that blow away like dust.

Psalm 1:4

But not the wicked! They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.

Just in case you are not clear about the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous, the psalmist spends the next few verses giving us a clear description of the ungodly.

Unlike the righteous, the ungodly cannot be compared to a tree. Instead, the psalmist compares him to chaff.

Chaff is the outer shell (or husk) that must be removed to get at the valuable kernels of grain inside. Chaff is removed by a process called threshing and winnowing. After the plants are cut, they are crushed, and then the pieces are thrown into the air. Chaff is very light and is carried away by even the slightest wind, while the good grain falls back to the earth.

Chaff is a symbol of a faithless life that drifts along without direction. Good grain is a symbol of a faithful life that can be used by God.

Psalm 1:5

They will be condemned at the time of judgment. Sinners will have no place among the godly.

There is going to be a day of Judgment at the end of time. On that day, the wicked will perish, but the Lord watches over the righteous.

Psalm 1:6

For the LORD watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

There are only two paths of life before us—God’s way of obedience or the way of rebellion and destruction. Be sure to choose God’s path because the path you choose determines how you will spend eternity.

Once we accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, we can never be happy or blessed by living sinful lives. True happiness comes as we daily meditate on God’s Word and apply it to our lives. Each day you should read at least one verse of scripture. Then ask God to open

your spiritual eyes and ears so that you might be able to get the deeper meaning and understanding of what the words mean for you personally. God's Word is perfect and is able to give you wisdom, joy, and guidance on your journey through life.

Closing Prayer

Father, we want to choose to follow the path of righteousness. Give us the power and wisdom that we need to choose to follow You in all our ways. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

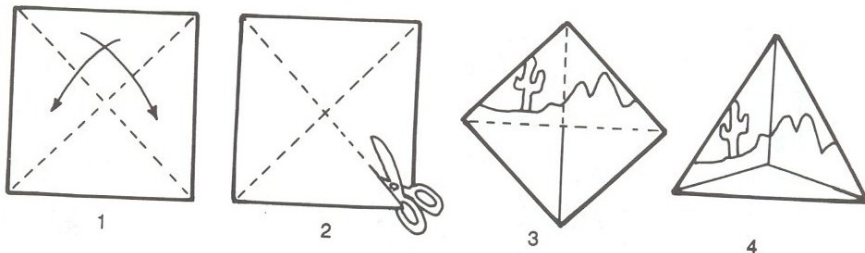
Triarama

Triaramas are a three-dimensional way for students to display what they have learned.



Materials:

- Construction paper (9" x 9")
- Construction paper scraps
- Markers
- Glue
- Scissors
- Other decorations



Directions:

1. Fold the top right corner of the square down to the lower left corner. Repeat with the opposite corners.
2. Open and cut one fold line to the center of the square.
3. Draw a background scene on half the square as shown.
4. Overlap the two bottom triangles and glue.
5. Add stand-up parts to complete the three-dimensional scene.

Game Center

Use the following review questions in a time of discussion or a game of your choice:

1. (vv.1-2) How does Psalm 1 describe a godly person? What does he avoid? What does he love to think about? (He does not follow the advice of ungodly people and he loves God's word.)
2. (vv. 1, 4) How does Psalm 1 describe the ungodly person? (They are wicked, sinners, mockers, worthless)
3. (v. 1) Have you ever been given ungodly advice? Advice that if you followed it would disobey God's Word?
4. (v. 1) How can we be full of joy in our Christian walk? (Don't follow the advice of the ungodly and delight in God's Word.)
5. (v. 2a) What do godly people delight in? (God's word.)
6. (v. 2b) How does a godly person show they delight in God's word? (They read and obey it.)
7. (v. 2) What does it mean to meditate on the law of God? (Spending time reading and thinking about what you have read. It's like chewing on the word just as a cow chews its cud before swallowing it.)
8. (v. 3) How is a godly person like a "tree"? (Their lives are fruitful, they never wither, they prosper in all they do.)

9. (v. 3) What does it mean to have a spiritually fruitful life? (You are encouraging others to get to know God and to live lives that are pleasing to God.)
10. (v. 4) Why does Psalm 1 describe an ungodly person as worthless chaff? (A person who does not live a spiritually fruitful life – that is, he is drawn toward ungodly friends and does not have a desire to read and study the Word of God -- is not useful to God.)
11. (v. 4) What happens to chaff? (It blows away in the wind.)
12. Why is it important to choose godly friends? (They will help you stand strong in Jesus.)
13. (v. 1) Have you ever chosen to follow the advice of the wicked?
14. How can you get a greater hunger for God's Word? How can you make His Word a greater part of your life? (Spend time thinking about what God's word means.)
15. (v. 5) What will happen to all people who do not believe in the Lord on Judgment Day? (They will be condemned.)
16. What will happen to those who trust and obey God on Judgment Day? (They will be brought into the Kingdom of Heaven.)
17. (v. 6) Where does the path of the wicked lead? (Everlasting separation from God in Hell)

