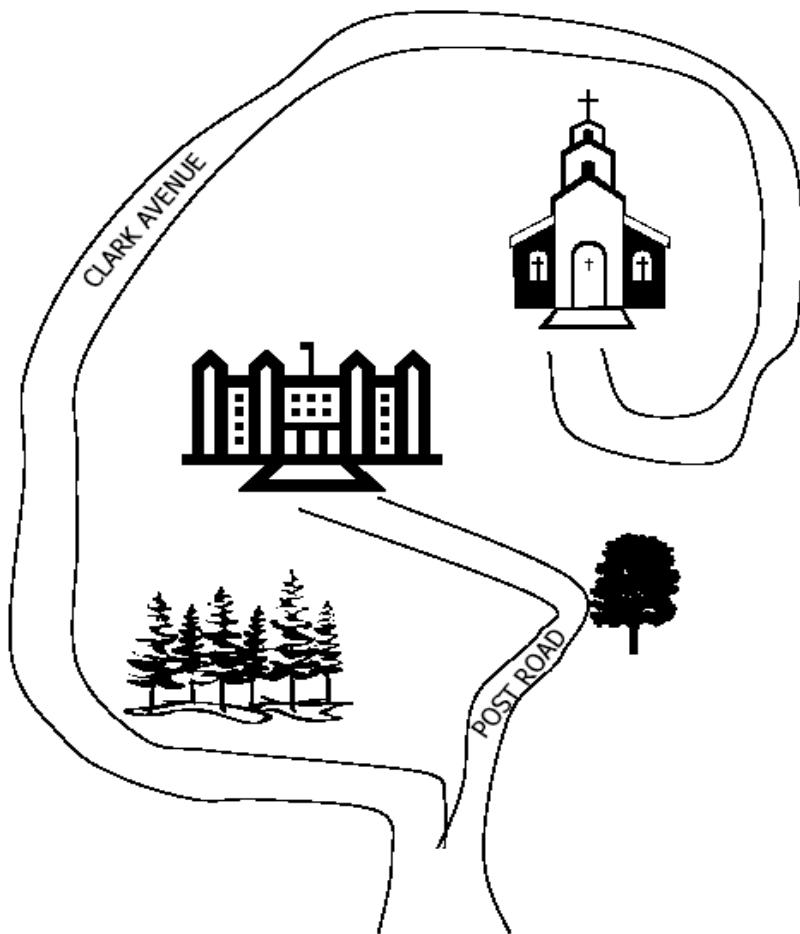


Two Paths

(Psalm 1)

Introduction

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 you are walking on the "*path of life*." Am I talking about an actual path you walk on? No! I'm talking about your life. Your journey through life started the day you were born. There can be smooth parts of your life when everything is going well and there can be bumpy patches when life doesn't go so well.

Psalm 1 describes the two paths of life that you can take in life and compares the life of a righteous person to the life of an unrighteous person. God says if you have placed your faith in Jesus, you are righteous. But if you haven't trusted in Him, you are unrighteous.

Psalm 1 calls the righteous person, "godly" and unrighteous person, "wicked".

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.

Verse 1

The man who wrote this psalm begins by telling us how we can be full of joy in our lives.

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.

Verse 1 tells us if we want true happiness, we need to choose good friends.

The friends that we have can have a bad influence on us.

First, Psalm 1 tells us not to follow the advice of someone from the wrong crowd.

Has anyone ever suggested to you to do something that you know would displease God? (Smoking, stealing candy at the store, cheating on a test.) That would be listening to the advice of a wicked or unrighteous person.

Besides not following the advice of ungodly people, Psalm 1 tells us not to stands around with them.

Oh, you may not start out wanting to hang out with the wrong kids at school or in your neighborhood, but if you continue to listen to their advice, you'll be right in the middle of them.

So, we are not to follow the advice of ungodly people or hang out with them; next, Psalm 1 warns us not join in with mockers.

What's a " mocker"? Mockers are people that make fun of or tease others. Psalm 1 is talking about people who make fun of God. The warning here is not to join in with these ungodly people who make fun of God's word.

If you want the joy of the Lord, make friends with people who love God and His word.

If our friends don't think the things of God are important, we could be tempted to feel that way, too. Do your friends build up your faith in God? Or, do they tear it down? True friends help you draw closer to God.

Verse 2

Psalm 1 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.

Verse 2 tells us that righteous people *delight in the law of the Lord*. In other words, godly people love the word of God.

He goes on to say that people who love God's word, meditate on it day and night. *Meditating* means spending time reading and thinking about what you have read.

You learn how to please God by reading God's word. But, when you read God's word, don't just read the words and then put your Bible away. You need to think about what you've read and ask God to show you the lessons He wants to teach you.

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.

The more we know God's word, the better we will know God and the more we will want to live our lives in a way that pleases Him. And the more you please Him, the more joy you will have in your life.

Verse 3

Next the writer of Psalm 1 compares a godly person to a healthy, fruit bearing tree 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.

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. Have you ever seen a plant that hasn't had enough water? They wilt or droop.

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

In the same way, people who are planted in God's word will not easily "wither" when stuff comes up in their lives. Instead, he says their life will bear fruit.

He is talking about spiritual fruit. He is saying that 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. The more we delight in God's word the more fruitful our lives 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.

Verse 4

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

Psalm 1:4

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

Unlike the righteous, the ungodly cannot be compared to a tree. Instead, the verse 4 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 wheat is cut, it is 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 blows away in the wind. Good grain is a symbol of a faithful life that can be used by God.

Verse 5

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 be condemned. They will not join us in heaven.

Verse 6

Verse 6 tells us that 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.

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**

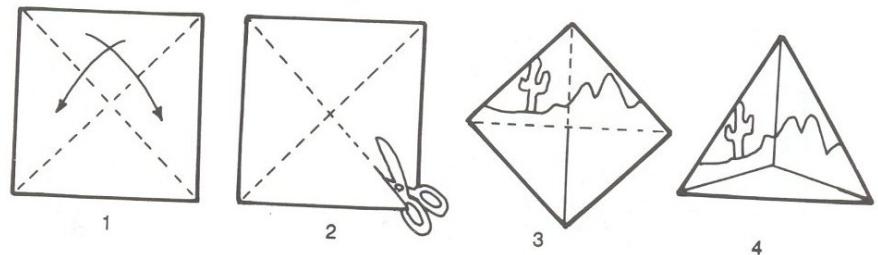
Triaramas are a three-dimensional way for students to display what



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. In verse 1, what are the three things you shouldn't do if you want to have joy in your life? (Follow the advice of the wicked, stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.)
2. Verse 1 tells us not to "follow the advice of the wicked". What does that mean? (Listening to the suggestions of an ungodly person)

- and then doing it.)
3. Verse 1 tells us not to “*stand around with sinners*”. What does that mean? (To hang around with the wrong kids, wanting to be part of their group.)
 4. Verse 1 tells us not to “*join in with mockers*”. What is a mocker? (A person that makes fun of or teases others.)
 5. Verse 2 tells us that godly people “*delight in the law of the Lord.*” What does that mean? (Godly people love the word of God.)
 6. Verse 2 tells us that people who love God’s word meditate on it day and night. What does it mean to meditate on God’s word? (Spending time reading and thinking about what you have read.)
 7. Verse 3 compares a godly person to a fruit tree planted along the river. Why is it good for a tree to be planted along the river? (It can get plenty of water.)
 8. What happens to the roots of trees that are planted by water and why is that a good thing? (The roots grow down deep in the ground and make the tree sturdy and fruitful.)
 9. How is a godly person like a tree planted along the river? (Their lives bear fruit; they stay strong in the Lord.)
 10. What kind of fruit does a godly person’s life have? (The fruit of the Spirit; thoughts, words, and actions that honor God.)
 11. Verse 4 compares an ungodly person to chaff. What is chaff and why is it worthless? (To get the wheat grain to make bread, you have to remove the chaff, the outer shell of a wheat seed.)

 12. Why is it important to choose godly friends? (They will help you stand strong in Jesus.)
 13. What does verse 5 say will happen to all people who do not believe in the Lord on Judgment Day? (They will be condemned.)
 14. What will happen to those who trust and obey God on Judgment Day? (They will be brought into the Kingdom of Heaven.)
 15. In verse 6, where does the path of the wicked lead? (To destruction.)

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