

Let's start at the very beginning



Bible Reference:
Psalm 1

Every great book starts strong, and the book of Psalms is no different. Psalm 1 stands at the entrance to the Psalms, introducing themes and ideas that appear again and again throughout the book. In this session the young people will explore what it means to be rooted in God and consider how their everyday choices and habits affect the path they are following.

You will need:

- Paper and pencils
- Salvation Army Songbooks (optional)
- Access to online streaming music platforms or YouTube



Beat



Say:

Last week we spent some time looking at the different genres of the Psalms and how they conveyed different emotions.

Ask:

Can you remember the different genres we looked at? What are they?

Say:

We discussed last week that there are even more psalm genres available, but we focused on these five.

Hymns of praise 🎉

Lament 😞

Thanksgiving 🙌

Wisdom 🧐

Trust 🤝

Leader's notes:

Ask the group to find modern-day worship songs, or Salvation Army songbook songs, that would fit with each psalm genre. They may need to use a streaming service, YouTube or the songbook index. Encourage them to share their songs and discuss why they have allocated them to that genre.

**Bridge****Ask:**

Why do you think the same themes continue to surface in the worship songs we sing today?



**Say:**

Our deep dive into the Psalms starts at the most obvious point – the beginning. Psalm 1 consists of only six short verses and is seen by some scholars as an introduction to the whole book.

Leader's notes:

Read Psalm 1 together. If possible, compare two or three different translations and encourage the young people to notice any differences in wording or emphasis.

Ask:

- What do you think is the main message of this psalm?
- Which genre would you place this psalm in? Explain why.

Say:

In the last session, we explored different genres of psalms, including hymns of praise, lament, thanksgiving, wisdom and trust. Psalm 1 is often described as a wisdom psalm because it offers guidance about the choices we make and the kind of life God calls us to live.

Watch:

A Tree Planted by Streams of Water | Bible Study | Psalm 1 (3:58)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVu-__SDsC3g

Ask:

- What do you think it means to be blessed?
- The clip described being blessed as 'being in a happy and right relationship with God'. What do you think about that description?
- In what ways do people sometimes misunderstand what it means to be blessed?

Say:

Psalm 1 presents two different ways of living. It contrasts the path of the righteous with the path of the wicked and encourages God's people to remain rooted in his wisdom and ways.

Ask:

- Where does God's forgiveness and grace fit into this picture?
- How does Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount connect with the message of Psalm 1?

Leader's notes:

Turn to Matthew 5 to 7 and skim read key sections together. Encourage young people to identify examples of how people wander away from God's pathway and how they can remain rooted in God's wisdom and love.

Say:

The choices people made were important to believers in the Old Testament and they remain important today. Psalm 1 reminds us that the key to a blessed life is remaining planted beside God's living stream. His word, wisdom and love are the source of the strength and growth we need.

**Bridge****Ask:**

What helps you to stay rooted in God when life feels challenging?



Sound Check

Say:

There used to be a popular interview question that went something like this: 'Where do you see yourself in five years?'

It was always very difficult to answer, particularly if you were fresh out of university and sat in your first job interview. Invariably you would give an answer that you thought the employer wanted to hear, rather than the truth that you really didn't have a clue!

Ask:

- What answer would you give to this question?
- Do you find it challenging to answer? If so, why?
- What kind of person do you want to be in five years?
- Are the current choices you are making leading you down that pathway?

Say:

Psalm 1 encourages us to think about the path that we are taking as we live our lives as followers of God. The first two verses show a progression of how we gradually move away from God's path.

Read:

¹Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
²but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
(Psalm 1:1-2)



Say:

Paula Gooder writes:

‘Notice the verbs used to describe what a righteous person does not do. The suggestion seems to be one of progression: first you try it out by walking it, then you get used to it and stand in it and finally you sit down in it and it becomes a habit.’

Ask:

- Can you think of examples of behaviours that follow the pattern: walk, stand, sit?
- Where are you starting to walk in the wrong direction, stand somewhere that isn't for you, or sit in a habit that leads you away from God's path?

Say:

As we think about our witness to others, the path we are choosing every day needs to look different from the world around us. The book *UnChristian* (David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons) is based around a survey carried out with young people in the United States. Those involved in the survey had either left the church or had never attended church. Although it was carried out a while ago, it still gives us a starting point to discuss attitudes to Christians today. One finding suggested that 85 per cent of respondents believed that Christians are hypocritical.

Ask:

What is your response to that statistic?

Say:

The aim of this discussion is not for us to feel bad, but instead to reflect on how the pathways we choose influence those who do not know Jesus yet. David Kinnaman suggests that the problem is often not hypocrisy itself, but the way Christians can sometimes appear morally superior or unwilling to acknowledge their own imperfections.

Ask:

- Why is it important to be authentic as Christians when we are sharing what we believe?
- How might honesty about our own struggles help others understand the message of Jesus?

Say:

Psalm 1 reminds us that the way we live speaks loudly to the people around us. As followers of Jesus, we are called to remain rooted in God and allow him to continue working in our lives.

**Bridge****Ask:**

Ask: If Psalm 1 is about two different ways of living, how do our everyday choices influence the direction we are heading?

**Say:**

Throughout Psalm 1, we have explored two different images: a pathway and a tree. The psalm reminds us that the choices we make shape the direction we are heading, while the image of the tree shows us what it means to be deeply rooted in God.

Ask:

- Where are you planted?
- What helps you stay connected to God's wisdom, strength and love?

Leader's notes:

Give each young person a sheet of paper and invite them to draw a simple tree with plenty of space for the roots and the branches and leaves. In the roots, ask them to write practical things that help them stay rooted in God, such as prayer, reading Scripture, worship, friendship or serving others. In the branches or leaves, encourage them to write ways they have seen God at work in their lives.

Say:

As you look at your tree, take a few moments to reflect on where your roots are growing and what God may be inviting you to deepen in your relationship with him.

Leader's notes:

Once the young people have completed their trees, read the following reflection from The VOICE translation of Psalm 1. Allow a few moments of silence afterwards for personal prayer and reflection.

¹ God's blessings follow you and await you at every turn:
when you don't follow the advice of those who delight in wicked schemes,

When you avoid sin's highway,
when judgement and sarcasm beckon you, but you refuse.

² For you, the Eternal's Word is your happiness.
It is your focus – from dusk to dawn.

³ You are like a tree,
planted by flowing, cool streams of water that never run dry.
Your fruit ripens in its time;
your leaves never fade or curl in the summer sun.
No matter what you do, you prosper.

⁴ For those who focus on sin, the story is different.
They are like the fallen husk of wheat, tossed by an open wind, left deserted and alone.

⁵ In the end, the wicked will fall in judgement;
the guilty will be separated from the innocent.

⁶ Their road suddenly will end in death,

yet the journey of the righteous has been charted by the Eternal.



Leader's notes:

Allow a few moments of quiet reflection before bringing the session to a close in prayer.



Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

- As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?
- What is the one thing Psalm 1 teaches us about living a life rooted in God?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.

