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Lesson 1

Psalms 1-10

Book 1, the first division of Psalms, contains forty-one psalms most—if not all—written by David. These psalms will be equally distributed over the next four study units. As mentioned in the introduction, you should study at any one time no more than what you can give ample concentration to. This may even be just one psalm at a time. The divisions of the study units are mainly to serve as organizational signposts of progress in your journey through the Land of the Psalms.

I. PSALM 1

A. Title

The Two Ways. The way of God and the way of man. The way of the godly and the way of the ungodly. The way of life and the way of death.

B. Occasion

This psalm was no doubt intentionally chosen to introduce the whole Psalter. In practically every psalm there is to be seen the godly and the ungodly, the superior advantages of the godly and their more glorious end. Compare this first psalm with the last of the psalms (Ps. 150). Compare also the first four words of Psalm 1 with the last four words of Psalm 150.

C. Stanza Divisions

In your analysis of this psalm, observe three stanzas, beginning at verses 1, 4, 6.

D. Analysis

The Analysis section of these studies should be the heart of your own personal study. Complete this original work before referring to outside helps (e.g., commentaries) or to comments that appear below.

Analysis involves two main processes: seeing and recording. For the latter, you record on paper what you see and what you conclude. It is suggested that you record your studies of each psalm on an analytical chart, as illustrated by the accompanying example.¹ Use the example as a model, and adapt your own type from it. You should record these items:

1. Identification of Stanza Divisions. The verse references are identified for each psalm. Note stanza divisions at verses 1, 4, and 6 for Psalm 1.

2. Key Words and Phrases of the Text. If the psalm is short (like Ps. 1) you may want to record the entire text. Record only the biblical text inside the rectangle.

3. Groups of Thoughts and Items. These and all other observations are identified outside the rectangle.

4. Emphasized Truths and Related Truths. Indicate these by underlinings, arrows, or other marks.

5. Outline Studies. Observe this example: His Life; What Regulates His Life; The Fruits of His Life.

6. A Title and Main Points Related to the Title. For example: *The Two Ways*: (1) The Way of the Righteous Man, (2) The Way of the Ungodly Man.

7. Spiritual Applications. Record these at the bottom of the work sheet.

8. Commentary Helps. After you have concluded your own study, you may want to record on your chart helps obtained from other sources. (Cite all sources.)

It will surprise you how much more you will see in the text once you begin to record your observations. Someone has correctly said, "The pencil is one of the best eyes." You will value having this permanent record of your study for future reference and for adding further studies.

Because of limited space in this manual, the Analysis sections of these studies will offer only a few questions and directions, which should be pursued in connection with your analysis. Let

1. Consult Irving L. Jensen, *Independent Bible Study* (Chicago: Moody, 1963) for a full description of the analytical chart method.

PSALM 1

THE TWO WAYS

<div>1</div> <div>THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN</div> <div>His life</div> <div>What regulates his life</div> <div>The fruits of his life</div>	<div>1</div> <div>BLESSED is the man that</div> <div>WALKETH NOT in the counsel of the UNGODLY,</div> <div>NOR STANDETH in the way of SINNERS,</div> <div>NOR SITTETH in the seat of the SCORNFUL.</div> <div>but</div> <div>HIS DELIGHT is in the Law of the Lord</div> <div>and in His Law doth he</div> <div>MEDITATE day and night</div> <div>And he shall be like</div> <div>A TREE PLANTED BY THE RIVERS OF WATER,</div> <div>that BRINGETH FORTH HIS FRUIT IN HIS SEASON;</div> <div>HIS LEAF also shall not wither;</div> <div>AND WHATSOEVER HE DOETH SHALL PROSPER.</div>	NEGATIVELY	
		POSITIVELY	<div>HE KNOWS THE LORD'S WAY</div>
		CONSEQUENTLY	—defying the wind
<div>2</div> <div>THE WAY OF THE UNGODLY MAN</div> <div>UNPROFITABLE —chaff</div> <div>GUILTY —judgment</div> <div>OUTCAST —congregation</div>	<div>4</div> <div>THE UNGODLY ARE NOT SO:</div> <div>BUT are like the</div> <div>CHAFF which THE WIND DRIVETH AWAY.</div> <div>Therefore</div> <div>THE UNGODLY shall NOT STAND in the Judgment,</div> <div>NOR SINNERS . . . in the Congregation</div> <div>of the RIGHTEOUS</div>	THE FIGURE	—driven by the wind
		THE APPLICATION	
SUMMARY	<div>6</div> <div>FOR THE LORD KNOWETH the</div> <div>WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS:</div> <div>but the WAY OF THE UNGODLY</div> <div>shall PERISH.</div>		<div>THE LORD KNOWS HIS WAY</div>

them suggest other paths of investigation. Instructions concerning recording your observations on an analytical chart will not be repeated from lesson to lesson. Also, it will be assumed that for every psalm you will derive *spiritual applications*, which is the ultimate purpose of your study. These also should be recorded. Suggestions for analysis of Psalm 1:

1. Look for all the contrasts of this psalm. For example, compare (1) the first word and the last word; (2) the tree and the chaff; (3) the consequences of the godly life and the ungodly life.
2. Study the progressions: walketh—standeth—sitteth
counsel—way—seat
ungodly—sinners—scornful
3. What three things are taught about the ungodly man by the terms “driveth away”; “judgment”; “congregation of the righteous”?
4. What is meant by the word “knoweth” in verse 6?

E. Outline

1	THE GODLY MAN	4	THE UNGODLY MAN	6	SUMMARY
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F. Comments

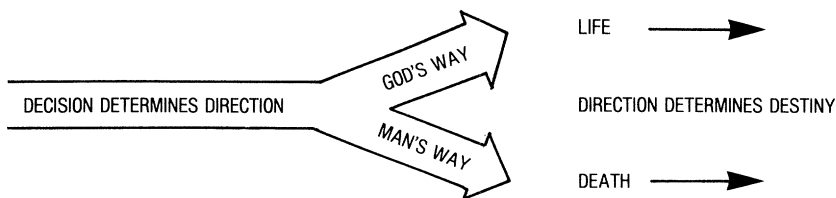
This opening psalm centers on man, with every line of the psalm making a reference to him and his ways. The last psalm centers on the Lord, with every line of that psalm calling for His praise.

The word “blessed” is a key word of Psalms. The first line of Psalm 1 accurately translated would read “Oh the blessednesses of the man that. . .” “This word ‘blessedness’ is not found in the singular in the Hebrew because there is no such thing as a single blessing; wherever there is one there is another.”²

G. A Practical Lesson

There are only the two ways and the two ends. In which way have you decided to walk? Read Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:6; Proverbs 16:25. See accompanying chart.

2. W. Graham Scroggie, *The Psalms*, rev. ed. (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1965), 1: 48-49.



II. PSALM 2

A. Title

God's King. As God chose David to be king and established his kingdom, so He has chosen David's great Son to be King of kings and will establish His kingdom (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

B. Occasion

Psalm 1 introduces the whole book of Psalms; Psalm 2 may have been given its prominent position as the second psalm to introduce Book One of the Psalms. Psalm 1 speaks of the two ways of man, measured by relation to God's law; Psalm 2 speaks of the two ways, measured by relation to God's Son.

C. Stanza Divisions

At verses 1, 4, 7, 10

D. Analysis

What is the main point of each stanza? On the basis of the word "therefore" of verse 10, relate this last stanza to all that goes before. Study the contexts of the references to God's Anointed, God's King, and God's Son. On the phrase "Thou art my Son," read Mark 1:11; Matthew 3:17; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5; 7:28; 2 Peter 1:17. Observe these relations: earth setting (vv. 1-3) and heaven setting (vv. 4-6); nations (heathen) rage and Lord's wrath; the "Why" of verse 1 and the "Be wise" of verse 10.

E. Outline

This marvelous poem is in four stanzas of three verses each.

1	SIN ON EARTH	4	WRATH IN HEAVEN	7	SALVATION BY THE SON	10	INVITATION AND WARNING	12
	words about the nations		words about God		words by the Son		words to the nations	
	Christ: The Anointed One		The Enthroned One		The Son of God		The Savior of Men	

F. Comment

“Begotten” in verse 7 does not refer to Christ’s *birth* but to His *resurrection*. See Acts 13:32-33.

In this psalm we are admitted to the counsel chamber of the wicked and to the throne of God.

G. A Practical Lesson

Those who will not bend must break (v. 9). Read Philippians 2:10-11.

III. PSALM 3

A. Title

God My Help

B. Occasion

David wrote this psalm over the experience of fleeing from his son Absalom. Read 2 Samuel 15–18.

C. Stanza Divisions

At verses 1, 3, 5, 7

D. Analysis

Study this psalm using this outline: “Many say” (first stanza); “But I testify” (remainder of the psalm). What kind of help is suggested by each of these (v. 3): “shield,” “glory,” “lifter up of mine head”? Apply to today. Notice the tenses of verses 5-7.

E. Outline

1	3	5	7	8
PLIGHT		PEACE		PRAYER

F. Comments

The word “selah” appears three times in this psalm (seventy-three times in Psalms). It is probably derived from the Hebrew root *sa-lal* meaning “lift up.” It was not to be read aloud by the reciter. Rather, it notified him “that at this point he should pause in his utterance and permit the music accompaniment to strike up; or else . . . lift up his voice to a higher intensity or pitch.”³ The word “selah” often comes after an impressive statement, hence the pause for intensified reflection.

G. A Practical Lesson

Absalom had the crowds with him, but David had God. One with God is always a majority.

IV. PSALM 4

A. Title

God My Righteousness

B. Occasion

Probably the same as for Psalm 3

C. Stanza Divisions

At verses 1, 2, 6

D. Analysis

What do you learn about man from this psalm? About God? What are the bases for David’s prayer in verse 1? What is involved in the phrase “set apart . . . for himself” (v. 3). How is *6b* the answer to *6a*?

E. Outline

1	SUPPLICATION	2	COUNSEL	6	TRUST	8
	—the enlightened life—		—the sanctified life—		—the enlarged life—	

3. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 436.

F. Comments

David was “not trusting in his own righteousness, but God’s righteousness (v. 1). The doctrine of imputed righteousness was apprehended by the spiritually enlightened in Old Testament, as well as in New Testament, times. For a further illustration of this in David compare the opening verses of Psalm 32 with Paul’s application of them in Romans 4.”⁴

G. A Practical Lesson

Joy, peace and safety are given to those who know God as their righteousness (vv. 7-8).

V. PSALM 5

A. Title

The Morning Watch (See v. 3.)

B. Occasion

Not stated. Any morning of David’s life would have been a suitable occasion to call forth this song.

C. Stanza Divisions

At verses 1, 4, 7, 9, 11

D. Analysis

Observe the frequent use of synonymous parallelism (see p. 6) in each stanza of this psalm. Underline the synonymous terms in your Bible: stanza one—prayer terms; stanza two—sin terms; stanza three—divine attributes, and worship terms; stanza four—sin terms; stanza five—joy terms.

4. James M. Gray, *Christian Workers’ Commentary* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Assn., 1915), p. 217.

E. Outline

1 MORNING WATCH	4 UNRIGHTEOUS HAVE NO ACCESS TO GOD	7 RIGHTEOUS HAVE ACCESS TO GOD	9 EVIL TONGUES AND THEIR JUDGMENT	11 PRAISE TONGUES AND THEIR REWARDS	12
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F. Comments

In the *American Standard Version* the words “look up” (v. 3) are rendered “keep watch.” “In this Song the believer’s life, within and without, is contrasted with the unbeliever’s, both as to his talk (1-7), and his walk (8-12).”⁵

G. A Practical Lesson

Much depends upon how we start the day.

VI. PSALM 6

A. Title

Midnight and Dawn

B. Occasion

An acute trial through which David was passing which he recognized as God’s chastisement for some sin (v. 1)

C. Stanza Divisions

At verses 1, 6, 8

D. Analysis

Note references in the psalm to the fact that David’s trial was (1) physical, (2) spiritual, and (3) social. Analyze the first stanza especially concerning the supplication verbs (e.g., “rebuke me not”). Observe the attitude of penitence throughout the psalm.

5. Scroggie, p. 63.

E. Outline

1	THE PLEA	6	THE GRIEF	8	THE ANSWERED PRAYER	10
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F. Comments

David dreaded God's anger (v. 1) and God's absence (v. 4).

G. A Practical Lesson

The midnight's trial becomes the dawn's deliverance, in answer to the prayer of the penitent heart.

VII. PSALM 7

A. Title

Song of the Slandered Saint (suggested by Spurgeon)

B. Occasion

The slanderous accusation of a man named Cush, during the days when David was fleeing Saul (e.g., cf. 1 Sam. 24:9-15)

C. Stanza Divisions

At verses 1, 6, 14, 17 (You may want to break this down into smaller stanzas.)

D. Analysis

What is suggested by the "ifs" of verses 3-4? What is the key note of stanza 6-13? Notice the repeated word that bears this out. Compare the beginning and end of this psalm.

E. Outline

1	ADMISSION OF HUMAN FALLIBILITY	6	APPEAL FOR DIVINE JUSTICE	14	ARRAIGNMENT OF THE WICKED	17	ADORATION BY THE PSALMIST
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F. Comments

Read Matthew 5:11-12 for Jesus' comments about the persecution of slander that is experienced for His sake.

G. A Practical Lesson

Slander is hard to bear, but he who is wise will pray and sing praises to God.

VIII. PSALM 8

A. Title

The Glory of God and the Glory of Man

B. Occasion

Could it be that one night when David was out under the starry heavens, meditating on the vastness of the universe compared with man, the Holy Spirit put this matchless poem in his soul?

C. Stanza Divisions

At verses *1a*, *1b*, 2, 3, 9

D. Analysis

Identify a theme for this psalm from its “envelope” (i.e., the beginning and end of the psalm). The excellency of the Lord is seen in various things, including (1) the heavens (v. *1a*), (2) babes (v. 2), and (3) man (vv. 3-8). How does the psalmist use these three illustrations to teach his point?

E. Outline

1a	EXCELLENT NAME	ILLUSTRATED BY			9	EXCELLENT NAME
		1b heavens	2 babes	3 man		

F. Comments

“Man is the crowned king of creation, and under his feet all things have been put (6-8). . . . But the original purpose of God for man has not been fulfilled because of his sin; yet that divine design is not frustrated, for God Himself has become Man, and by the incarnation and sacrifice on Calvary, that is restored which by the first

Adam was lost.⁶ Study these passages that quote this psalm: Matthew 21:15-16; Hebrews 2:6-9.

G. A Practical Lesson

The exclamation “What is man . . . !” magnifies not man but God, who crowned him.

IX. PSALM 9

A. Title

A Triumphal Hymn

B. Occasion

David may have written this after one of his victories over the Philistines (cf. 1 Sam. 17).

C. Stanza Divisions

At verses 1, 3, 9, 15

D. Analysis

What is the dominant note of each stanza? Note the repetitions of “I will” (vv. 1-2) and “Thou hast” (vv. 4-6). At what places is praise specifically mentioned? Study the psalm using the accompanying outline.

E. Outline

1 PRAISE	3 THE LORD A JUDGE	9 THE LORD A REFUGE	15 THE LORD PREVAILS	20
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F. Comments

There is a prophetic element in this psalm, pointing to Christ’s second coming to judge and to reign. Note verses 7-8, 17.

6. Scroggie, pp. 74-75.

G. A Practical Lesson

If we are in right relation to the Lord on the throne (vv. 4, 7) we enjoy the blessings of the Lord as our refuge (v. 9).

X. PSALM 10

A. Title

The Wicked Ruler

B. Occasion

Though anonymous, this psalm was no doubt written by David. In Psalm 9 he writes about external enemies (heathen nations); in this psalm he writes about internal enemies, specifically wicked men in places of authority in Israel who oppress the poor and humble (cf. vv. 2, 18).

C. Stanza Divisions

At verses 1, 2, 12

D. Analysis

Compare the opening of this psalm with the first verses of Psalm 9. Also compare the beginning and end of this psalm. What are the many descriptions given of the wicked man in verses 2-11? Whom is David addressing in verses 12-18? What is taught about God in these verses? Study the related thoughts of verses 1, 11 and 12. Contrast the phrases “the Lord is King” (v. 16) and “the man of the earth” (v. 18).

E. Outline

1	WHY?	2 THE WICKED	12	PLEAS FOR JUST RECOMPENSE	18
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F. Comments

The word “poor” might be read as “meek” or “afflicted” (*Berkeley*). A.C. Gaebelein and James M. Gray have suggested that the “wicked” one of this psalm personifies the Antichrist at the end of this age, as described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9. The suggestion for

this interpretation comes from the phrase “the man of the earth” (v. 18).

G. A Practical Lesson

Regardless of appearances, the Lord has not forgotten; the Lord sees everything (v. 11); the “Lord is King for ever and ever” (v. 16).