

## INTERVARSITY BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

*Psalms 1:1-6 NIV, A Wisdom Psalm (60 minutes)*

### **WELCOME (7 minutes)**

Icebreaker: Name two of your daily habits – one that you enjoy and one that you don't.

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

### **GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)**

Each time we meet, let's be careful to work well together as a group. We are coming from many different backgrounds, so the purpose of these group norms is to help everyone feel welcome so they can fully participate:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

As your leader, I will help us remember our group norms. Also, as members of this group, feel free to speak up if you notice we are straying from these norms.

### **INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)**

For the ancient Hebrew people, the Psalms were songs of worship that captured their reality and guided them to turn their will and their longings toward God. These lyrics were first written in response to events in the lives of the authors, and then later the whole community used them in worship. After the return from exile in Babylon, many of these songs from over the centuries were collected into the book of Psalms. Individuals and communities can pray or sing the Psalms as honest spiritual expressions or as commitments of faithfulness, and at the same time, the book as a whole tells the story of Israel's redemption – monarchy, exile, and return.

Spontaneous prayer is a relatively modern value, so think of any hero of the faith throughout history and they probably had the Psalms as their prayer book (even Jesus!).

The Psalms are Hebrew poetry, which is characterized by parallelism. This means that very often, one line makes a statement and the next line reinforces that statement by repeating it in a new way (synonymous parallelism), contrasting it (antithetical parallelism), or building on the idea (synthetical parallelism). Almost one third of the Bible is written in the genre of poetry, and as we study and interpret poetry, we should look be aware of images and metaphors that appeal to the senses, emotions and shifts of tone, and life experiences communicated artistically.

### **SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)**

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?
- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Psalm 1:1-6 NIV –

1 Blessed 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,  
2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,  
    and who meditates on his law day and night.  
3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
    which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
    whatever they do prospers.  
4 Not so the wicked!  
    They are like chaff  
    that the wind blows away.  
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
    nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.  
6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
    but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

### **DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)**

Let's discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. What do you think it means to "delight in" and "meditate on" the law of the Lord, for the original readers and for us today? (The "law" for the original readers would have indicated the Torah, which is the first 5 books of the Old Testament.)
2. Why does the author use the imagery of a tree planted by streams to describe a person who is doing the actions of verses 1-2?
3. Harvesting wheat by hand involves tossing the grain in the air so the wind can blow away the loose chaff while the wheat kernels, which are heavier, fall back into the basket. Why does the author use chaff imagery to describe the wicked?
4. How might this psalm have impacted the ancient Hebrews as they prayed and sang it in worship together?
5. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

### **RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)**

The psalmist here is painted a picture of two types of people – those who devote themselves to God’s word and allow themselves to be shaped and nourished by it, and those who are shaped and formed by the bad company they keep. The Lord longs for people to plant themselves and put down deep roots into him as their source of life.

Be a person who delights in and meditates on God’s word.

Let’s discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group’s discussion of the text.

- A. What has been your experience of meditating on God’s word? If you were to deepen this practice in your life, what would that look like for you?
- B. Share about a time when you were being shaped by people who were not a good influence on you. What was that like? How did you free yourself?
- C. Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm that invites us to go deeper with God. What holds you back?

**CLOSE (2 minutes)**

Let’s pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

*Tips for leading the group discussion (and more tips are available at [howto.bible](http://howto.bible)):*

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying “What else?” instead of commenting on every response.*



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contact [christy.gates@intervarsity.org](mailto:christy.gates@intervarsity.org) or [sara.chang@intervarsity.org](mailto:sara.chang@intervarsity.org) with any questions