

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Experiencing the Psalms” Lesson 4. (Psalms 1 and 16). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>**

Primary resources: James L. Mays, *Psalms*, 1994, John Knox Press; *Shepherd's Notes on the Psalms*, 1999, Broadman & Holman Publishers; *Life Application Study Bible*, NIV, 1991, Tyndale House Publishers and Zondervan Publishing House.

**Introduction:** Psalms 1 and 16 both address the challenge of an individual who, when faced with wickedness in society, must choose which path in life to take.

**Read Psalm 1 completely through:** Note that, as an introductory Psalm to the entire collection, this Psalm sets forth two major contrasting journeys that can also be seen throughout the Psalms. One path is described as leading to “blessedness;” the second does not.

**Now re-read 1:1-3:** Note the various elements that lead to living a life that is declared “blessed” or “happy.” Two parts are evident: the positive things one should do and those which one should avoid or not do.

- On the negative side, the Psalm uses the words “walk” (“thinking” – accepting guidance from evildoers nominally but not yet habitually); “stand” (“behaving” – conforming conduct to example of sinners); “sit” (“belonging” – now taking a position of actively and willingly participating in mocking God and things sacred) to describe progressive degradations of the heart that lives a life in conflict with God. What does this description mean to you? Do you think it is valid even today? Discuss.
- On the positive side, the Psalm offers a major suggestion for those who desire to be blessed. What does the Psalm suggest? How do you think putting this action into one’s life would be of benefit? Discuss.
- What word picture describes the person who chooses the path of righteousness? Do you think this is true or not? Discuss

**Now re-read 1:4-6:**

- In contrast to the “blessed,” the “wicked” appear to be grounded and guided by thoughts and actions separate from God and solely from within themselves; thus, living a life of illusion. Do these verses suggest that to you? Discuss.
- Throughout the Psalms the “wicked” are often described as those who lose sight of their place as created beings and thus subscribe to “independence” of thought and action instead of dependence upon God and His Word for life choices. As such, they play three principal roles: they are depicted as afflicting the lowly or powerless; accusing the innocent; undermining the trust of the faithful. What does the Psalm say will happen to them? Does this give you comfort or not? Discuss.

**Read Psalm 16 completely through:** Note that this is a prayer for protection from the perspective that the Lord means everything to the Psalmist.

- What parts of the Psalmist’s life does he appear to entrust to the Lord and how often does he do that? Can you say the same for your own life? Discuss.
- What does the Psalmist expect from God as he walks with the Lord in a faithful, trusting relationship? Have you experienced something similar? Discuss.
- What does the Psalmist feel as a consequence of the surrender of his very being to the Lord? Again, have you experienced the same or something similar? Discuss

**Now Read Acts 2:14-32:** Note how Peter incorporates verses 8-11 from Psalm 16 in his sermon about the resurrected Christ.

- What do you learn from Peter’s use of the verses from Psalm 16? Does it give you a different perspective concerning the Psalm? What lesson(s) do you find? Discuss.