



WHY
Cope
WHEN YOU CAN
Conquer?

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 REGULAR BAPTIST
Press

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© 1999 Regular Baptist Press • Arlington Heights, Illinois

www.RegularBaptistPress.org • 1-800-727-4440

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RBP5240 • ISBN: 978-0-87227-203-3

Eighth printing—2018

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DEDICATION
TO MY FAVORITE PREACHER, J. O.

Even though you have retired as a pastor from a local church, I know you will never retire from preaching. You will always be my pastor and favorite preacher. I still have the privilege of hearing you speak each week, and you always challenge and bless my heart. We've been serving the Lord together for over thirty-four years, and it just keeps getting better and better. Thank you for all the spiritual enrichment you have added to my life.

PREFACE

A few years ago I spent three years studying the Psalms. Each day I pondered the truths, plodded through the tough verses, and prayed many of the psalmists' prayers. My time in the Psalms always reminded me of God's power and providence in my life. I was also challenged time after time that *God is good* even when He doesn't seem good. I wrote the book *Be Still, My Child* as a result of those daily times in God's presence. As you can imagine, the book of Psalms became very precious to me.

When I decided to write a Bible study on the Psalms, I had a hard time deciding which of the 150 psalms to use in the study. All the psalms have such interesting lessons to teach us. I decided to focus on some of the psalms that could move us from just coping with life to conquering.

Worry and discouragement are two common problems with which we all struggle. They are attitudes that keep us from conquering. But a daily dose of Psalms can help. A. C. Gabelein said, "A psalm a day keeps worry away." Athanasius said, "Most Scripture speaks to us, while the Psalms speak for us." When we are down and discouraged and need to be lifted up again, we can find help in Psalms. Often we can identify with the psalmist and say, "That's just how I feel."

No other book confronts the real-life perplexities and problems we face today like Psalms. And no other book can move us from coping to conquering like the Psalms.

LESSON 1

How to Live a Happy Life

Psalm 1

*“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper”
(Psalm 1:3).*

Psalm 1 almost serves as a preface to the rest of God’s hymnbook, the book of Psalms. We don’t know who wrote this psalm, but the message is clear and simple: the righteous are blessed; the wicked are cursed.

The first word in Psalm 1 is “Blessed.” The Hebrew word for “blessed” often means “happy”; however, this word has a much broader meaning than the one we usually use for “happy.” We most often think of happiness as a feeling we experience when circumstances and people are favorable. The word “blessed” relates to the internal calm a believer enjoys when things are right between her and God. This calmness produces contentment and joy in her life.

This psalm is full of truth that many of us have lived out and experienced. Loving God, I am happy; living in God, I am safe; obeying God, I will experience His rest. God wants to bless us; He wants us to enjoy the blessed life He has planned for us; but we must meet His conditions for receiving blessings. We will look at those requirements in this lesson; then you can evaluate how you measure up. My prayer is that you will discover the key that opens the door to true happiness if you have not already found it.

The Blessed Man (vv. 1–3)

Read Psalm 1:1–3.

1. Why are so many Christians unhappy?

2. How would you describe ungodly counsel? See Proverbs 14:12.

3. Notice the progression of the three words in verse 1: walketh, standeth, sitteth. When a Christian turns to the ungodly for counsel, what else might he do with the ungodly?

“Ungodly people are all around us. . . . The ungodly can live in our homes, work with us, be among our best friends. Taking their advice is fatal. The blessed person does not slow down to walk with them. If he does, his walk will soon come to an immobilizing standstill.”¹

4. What do you think the psalmist meant by the “law of the LORD” (v. 2)? See Psalm 119:9–11.

5. Happiness is not found in the world. Happiness is found in the Word, the “law of the LORD.” What comes to your mind when you read, “his delight is in the law of the LORD”?

6. How can you find delight in reading the Bible?

7. Do you go through the “motions of devotions”? To find out, ask yourself this question several hours after you have read your Bible: What did I get from the Word today?

“The quiet time often becomes a hollow convention of religious structure, instead of a holy meeting with the personal Christ. We read a verse or two of Bible, pray a little prayer and—oops! It’s 7:30, Amen, and off to work again. . . . Some of us have forgotten why we take time, and with Whom we spend it. Instead of thinking of devotions in terms of what we want from God, perhaps some of us need to re-evaluate. . . . Have you devoted yourself to looking for Him with all your heart and all your soul?”²

8. The happy, fulfilled child of God is described by four graphic phrases in verse 3. What are they, and what do they mean to you?
9. The happy Christian is pictured as a strong tree planted by rivers of water. (a) What is the significance of the words “rivers of water”? Read John 7:37–39.
- (b) Why is the tree a picture of strength?

10. As strong trees, we are to be productive—not just stand around looking good, as some trees do. What kind of fruit should be evident in a Christian’s life? Read Galatians 5:22 and 23.

“What a garden of virtues. In these nine qualities—the fruit of the Spirit—we have one of the most concise and complete biographies of God. For these are His qualities, His attributes. This is what God is like. And God’s greatest desire for us is to become like Him. As we live in Him and He in us, it is natural for us to be blessed, bear fruit and prosper, as the First Psalm declares.”³

11. What is the significance of the words “bringeth forth his fruit in his season”?
12. Happy Christians are not green just in the spring. They are like evergreens; they just keep growing: “Their leaf also shall not wither.” How would you describe a Christian who does not wither? Read Jeremiah 17:7 and 8 and Habakkuk 3:17–19.
13. Do you have a hero of the faith or a spiritual role model who demonstrates this kind of perseverance? If so, write down what that person endured.

“Herein we as Christians are to differ from the world. When hell is let loose, and the worst comes to the worst, we are to do more than ‘put up with it’ or ‘be steady.’ We are to know a holy joy and manifest a spirit of rejoicing. We are to be ‘more than conquerors,’ instead of merely exercising self-control with the aid of an iron will. We are to rejoice in the Lord and to joy in the God of our salvation.”⁴

14. What kind of prosperity does the happy Christian enjoy?
Read 1 Corinthians 1:4 and 5 and 2 Peter 1:3–8.

“. . . God is promising prosperity of life rather than of bank accounts. He is assuring those who obey Him and honor Him that in their obedience and trust they will find enrichment of life. This will mean far more to their true happiness than any amount of material prosperity.”⁵

The Ungodly Man (vv. 4–6)

Read Psalm 1:4–6.

Grain consists of kernels, straw, and chaff. Chaff, which covers the kernel, has no value at all, while the kernel and straw do. In Bible times, after the head of the grain was pounded to separate the kernel from the chaff, the grain was tossed into the air. The wind blew the chaff away, and the grain fell back to the threshing floor.

15. A tree is a picture of strength and stability. What does chaff picture?

16. Why would the ungodly be compared to chaff? Read John 14:27 and Isaiah 48:22.
17. The unbeliever “shall not stand in the judgment” (v. 5). The ungodly won’t have a leg to stand on when they are told their names are not in the Book of Life (Rev-elation 20:11–15; Matthew 7:21–23). What arguments for gaining Heaven might they use?
18. This psalm describes two ways to live and two ways to die. What are the two ends and to whom are they assigned?
19. How does the radical difference between the righteous and the ungodly motivate you to delight in God’s Word?

“The ungodly man is condemned to perish, however we have the assurance that God cares for His own (v. 6a). Our Heavenly Father may need to discipline us at times, but He always takes special care to preserve us in the midst of every situation. The unbeliever, however, has no hope of preservation. His doom is certain. Not only does he face the problems of this present life but also the prospect of God’s wrath and the second death (Rev. 21:8; cf. 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19–21).”⁶

20. Which of these descriptions fits your life: the blessed, happy person or the ungodly, hopeless person?

After studying this lesson, maybe you realize for the first time that you do not have eternal life. Or maybe you realize you have been depending on your good works to get you to Heaven. If you are not absolutely sure you have eternal life, read the verses that follow. They are the difference between Heaven and Hell.

- God **loves** you and wants you to enjoy the **abundant life** He offers you—John 3:16; John 10:10.
- Man is **sinful**, and his sin **separates** him from God—Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23.
- Jesus Christ’s death is the only **provision** God has made to pay for man’s sin—Romans 5:8; John 14:6.
- You cannot earn Heaven by your good works—Ephesians 2:8, 9.
- You must **receive** Jesus Christ as your Savior before you can personally experience His love for you and the abundant, happy life He has planned for you—John 1:12.
- You can invite Christ into your life right now by a simple act of **faith**—Romans 10:9–13.

Are you ready to invite Christ into your life to be your Savior? Use the following prayer to help you express your desire to God: “Lord Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. Right now I open my heart and invite You into my life as my Savior. Thank You for forgiving my sin and giving me everlasting life. I want You to control my life so I can experience the blessed life You have planned for me.”

- The Bible **promises eternal life** to all who receive Christ as Savior—1 John 5:11–13.



If you really want to live life with a capital L, I recommend the “Vine life.” “Vine life” is living out the commands of John 15:1–5, where Jesus says He is the vine and we are the branches. If you disconnect a branch from the vine, what happens? It withers up and dies. Only as the branch is connected to the vine can the sap

keep flowing into the branches. Only as we stay connected to the Vine (Christ) will His life flow through us so we can continue to grow. We stay connected to the Vine by spending time in His presence each day and reading and meditating on His Word. When we learn to live the Vine life, our “leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever [we do] shall prosper.”

From Your Heart



Have you found the key that opens the door to happiness? Do you draw your strength for daily life from Christ? Do you display determination and consistency in your life? Do you feel rich because of your inward prosperity? Are you living the Vine life?

Notes:

1. Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Falling into Greatness* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), p. 18.
2. Patrick M. Morley, *I Surrender* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1990), pp. 167, 168.
3. Leroy Brownlow, *The Fruit of the Spirit* (Fort Worth: Brownlow Publishing Company, Inc., 1982, 1989), p. 7.
4. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Faith Tried and Triumphant* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), p. 60.
5. Stuart Briscoe, *What Works When Life Doesn't* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1976), p. 20.
6. John White, *Songs That Touch the Heart* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1994), p. 11.