

MY GOD AND I:

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SELECTED  
PSALMS

KEN FLEMING



*Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.*

*My God and I: Selected Psalms*

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## Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

## How To Study

This study has twelve chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

## **Exams**

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions.

## **How Your Exams Are Graded**

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

# INTRODUCTION

The book of Psalms, a collection of 150 Hebrew poems, has been the devotional favorite of God's people down through the centuries. In the Psalms, believers in times past expressed their hearts to God. And even though their circumstances differed so much from ours today, we can readily identify with their writings because they express man's inmost feelings.

When we are discouraged, the Psalms lift our spirits. When we think God is distant, they help us sense that He is, in fact, near. When we are sad, they remind us of God's steadfast love, providing a sense of perspective. When we are happy, they give us words to express our praise to God. When tragedy strikes, they give comfort. When we feel lonely, they remind us of God's never-failing presence. In our doubts we find reason to exercise faith, and in our weakness we find strength to endure our hardships. When those around us are unfaithful, we discover that God is ever-faithful. When we are unjustly treated, we echo the cries of these Old Testament saints who yearned for justice and vindication. No wonder Psalms is such a well-loved book of the Bible!

The word *psalm* means "praise," and the content of many of them reflect this. David is the author of approximately half of them, with six other authors mentioned, chiefly Asaph and Korah. Fifty are anonymous. Most of them were written as lyrics to be accompanied by the lyre, a favorite musical instrument of those times. The Israelites would have probably sung them in connection with regular worship in the temple and when groups of pilgrims traveled to the annual feasts.

Much of the poetry is written in pairs of lines that are related to each other. In some pairs the second line expresses the same thought as the first, but in different words:

*“Hear my prayer, O LORD,  
And let my cry come to You” (102:1).*

In others, the second line contrasts with the first line:

*“For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the ungodly shall perish” (1:6).*

And in still in others the second line adds something to what is stated in the first:

*“For who is God, except the LORD,  
And who is a rock, except our God?” (18:31)*

When you observe this parallel structure, it will not only add to your enjoyment of them but will caution you to take into account the fact that, as poetry, they are not to be interpreted in the same way that doctrinal (or even narrative) passages are interpreted. The Psalms *are* part of the inspired Scriptures, but they are written from man’s perspective; they are valuable in that they do speak to and for our hearts, but we should not base doctrine on them without support from other portions of the Bible. It is also important to remember that the Old Testament should be interpreted in light of what God has revealed to us in the New Testament. For example, as New Testament Christians who are indwelt permanently by the Holy Spirit, we do not need to pray as David did when he sinned, “Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (51:11).

The psalms selected for this ECS study course cover the believer’s response to God amid the circumstances of life. In this selection, the writers relate some aspect of God’s person to their particular situation. May your study of these psalms open your eyes to the character of God in relation to your own heart and life.


## 1

## PSALM 1

### THE LORD IS MY GOD

One of the underlying themes of the whole book of Psalms is the wisdom of choosing to belong to God and following Him as opposed to the foolishness of rejecting God and following the way of the world and ungodliness. Psalm 1 is a gateway to all the other psalms in that it sets the tone for them all. It describes two kinds of people—the “righteous” and the “ungodly”—and proclaims the fact that God blesses the righteous and condemns the ungodly.

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**Psalm 1 is a  
gateway to all the  
other psalms.**

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#### *The Righteous and the Ungodly Contrasted*

“Righteous” people may be defined biblically in two ways. They are those who are *righteous by position*; they have been counted righteous (justified) in God’s sight because they have exercised faith in God to save them (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 1:17). They are also *righteous in practice*—that is, they practice their faith in God, seeking to please Him by the way they live. The “ungodly” constitute the vast majority of mankind. They are not only born “dead in trespasses and sins” and therefore “condemned already” (Eph. 2:1; John 3:18); they also sin actively in attitude, word, and deed (Rom. 3:10-18).

The psalm describes in broad terms the mindset, priorities, and destiny of the righteous person in contrast to the mindset, priorities, and destiny of the ungodly. Verses 1-3 relate to the godly; verses 4-5 to the ungodly; and verse 6 relates to both. Psalm 1 can be classified as a “wisdom” psalm because it calls on those who would be wise to choose to follow God’s

teachings that we find in the Bible. It can be compared to other wisdom literature in the Bible where there is a right way to be chosen and a wrong way to be avoided, and even the righteous must make choices.

Psalm 1 asserts in brief that the good and godly life will result in maximum spiritual enjoyment and blessing. It is blessing that far exceeds what the world offers, with its pleasures, possessions, and positions of honor and power. This blessing comprises the greater enjoyment of knowing God and obeying Him. It is clear that the anonymous author of this psalm experienced firsthand “the good life” that God offers and wanted others to know its value. He puts the lie to the notion that what the world calls the good life is really good—it will turn out instead not only to be empty, but to lead to judgment.

————— ❧ —————  
**Godly life will  
result in maximum  
spiritual enjoyment  
and blessing.**  
————— ❧ —————

### ***The Righteous are “Blessed”***

Psalm 1 begins with a beatitude, or blessing. The psalmist is stating a fact. The word “blessed” occurs more times in the book of Psalms than in all the other books of the Bible put together. Blessedness is the supreme condition of the godly person. It is actually a plural noun in the original language and could be read as “O, the blessednesses,” referring to the multiplied joys that God desires to pour out on His people. God designed mankind to be blessed. In the beginning, when God created Adam and Eve in His own image, the first thing He did was to bless them (Gen. 1:27-28). If you want to be a genuinely happy man or woman, Psalm 1 provides a key to being so.

Keep in mind that blessedness is not an arbitrary bestowment by God on certain privileged people. It does not depend on the pleasantness of surroundings or circumstances. Nor is it measured in how many possessions one has. The blessing we experience results from how we deal with two key relationships: our relationship with God and our relationship with the world. Blessedness is not an elusive dream. It is available for all who choose to heed what God says about these two relationships.



## ***The Way of the Godly (vv. 1-3)***

### **The Righteous Reject the World (v. 1)**

Blessed is the man or woman who chooses not to conform to the lifestyle of this ungodly world. This is the biblical principle of separation. Verse 1 does not imply that godly believers should have no contact with ungodly people. We are to live in the world and should influence it for good. We are to be light in a dark world, salt in a corrupt world, and righteous in a wicked world. The Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged that His disciples would live *in* the world but prayed that God’s truth in His Word would be the means of their not being *of* the world (John 17:16-18). The psalmist begins by stating that the righteous person is one who actively refuses to be *of* the world and that this stance would result in his being blessed of God.

In three phrases he characterizes the godly person as one who rejects the value systems of the world in which he lives. In Hebrew poetry there are often parallel lines that are poetically synonymous. That is, each line states the same general theme. Notice the parallels in these three lines: “Blessed

————— ❧ —————

**The lifestyle  
of the world is to  
be avoided.**

————— ❧ —————

is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.”

In practicing separation, there are three things the godly person does not do, three spheres he does not frequent, and three different descriptions of the worldly people he avoids. As we unwrap these three phrases we must keep in mind the central principle, which is that the lifestyle of the world is to be avoided. Because this is Hebrew poetry, we are not meant to view these descriptions as distinct theological truths.

### ***“Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly”***

When we choose not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, the result will be that we will not be shaped by their worldly advice. The ungodly cannot give good counsel to a believer because they leave God out of their reckoning. They reject divine authority and biblical wisdom and can know nothing of heavenly wisdom (cf. James 3:15-17). They never take into account God’s righteousness or His glory. When we refuse to “walk” or “go” in the direction the ungodly go, we will not be impressed or affected by the philosophies that govern *their* lives.

***“nor stands in the path of sinners”***

To choose to not stand in the way of sinners is to refuse to associate with them in their sinful lifestyle. The “path of sinners” describes their manner of life and is in contrast to the “way of the righteous” in verse 6. We are not to associate with their corrupt practices, because they do not represent God’s righteous standards. Here, the example of Samson is helpful. Samson was born to be a Nazarite (Judges 13:7). A Nazarite was one who consecrated himself to live for God and serve Him. But Samson preferred the lifestyle of the Philistines, particularly their flagrant sensuality, and he never knew the blessedness God had for him (read Judges chapters 14-16 for the full story).

***“nor sits in the seat of the scornful”***

To not sit in the seat of the scornful is to not participate with the ungodly when they scorn the holy things of God. The word “seat” may also be translated “assembly.” When the ungodly get together, they mock the biblical norms of absolute truth, sexual morality, and ethical standards. Lot’s life illustrates this clearly. He joined the assembly of the wicked city elders of Sodom even though their mocking vexed his righteous soul (2 Peter 2:7-8). His close association with them had a devastating effect on his family (Genesis 19).

Psalms 1:1 describes the downward progression of the influence of the wicked. The first step downward is to listen to their counsel. The next step is to willfully break God’s commandments. The final step is to join the assembly of the mockers and heap scorn on those who practice God’s standards of righteousness. Blessed is the believer who refuses to be molded by the world. It starts with bad advice; it continues with sinful actions; and it reaches a climax when we hold what is holy in contempt. We are exhorted in the New Testament, “Do not be conformed to this world,” and “Come out from among them and be separate” (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:17).

**The Righteous Esteem God’s Word (v. 2)**

We have learned that the righteous man is one whose relationship with the world is one of rejection and opposition. The other key relationship of the righteous man is his relationship with God and His Word, which is one of enjoyment and submission. We will call this the principle of devotion. The righteous man is described as one whose “delight is in the law of the Lord.”

God’s “law” does not refer only to the legal sections of the first five books of the Bible. It is a common synonym for the whole Word of God (Josh. 1:7). It is the *Torah* in Hebrew, which means “instruction from God.”

To delight in God’s law is to want to learn about God and His instruction to us. God’s law reflects His holy character. To delight in the law is to have an insatiable hunger to know more of God and His will and to actually do it. Delighting in God’s ways is a primary indication of spiritual life in contrast to the worldly mind that is hostile to God and does not submit to His law (Rom. 8:7). We should identify with the psalmist in Psalm 119:97 who wrote, “Oh, how I love Your law!”

————— ❧ —————  
**The key  
 relationship of the  
 righteous man is his  
 relationship with  
 God and His Word.**  
 ————— ❧ —————

The one who delights in God’s law will meditate on it day and night. That does not mean that he never thinks of anything else, but it does mean that he applies the principles of the Word to everything he does or says. We all meditate on those things we are passionate about. It may be sports, clothes, cars, work, or a host of other things. What we “love” is what we think about. When we have a passion for God’s Word, we will continually go over the text in our minds and consider its implications with the result that the indwelling Spirit of God will be free to apply it to different aspects of our daily life.

The word *meditate* means to “ponder by talking to oneself.” Biblical meditation is the purposeful engaging of the conscious mind on the Word toward greater understanding and application. There are sins to avoid, promises to claim, victories to win, and praises to be expressed. Biblical meditation is a discipline of the mind to consider Scripture and to be able to verbalize what you learn. The degree to which we can put our thoughts into words on *any* topic is the measure of what we have truly learned and absorbed about that topic. To practice biblical meditation will mean turning off the TV, music, cell phone, and computer—in short, any visible or audible distractions.

### **The Righteous Bear Spiritual Fruit (v. 3)**

In verses 1 and 2 the psalmist has described the righteous man in two ways: first, as one who rejects the ungodly world; second, as the one who embraces the law of the Lord. We now see that *separation* from the world (a negative attitude) and *devotion* to the Lord (a positive attitude) results in

spiritual *fruition*. God, the Planter, carefully places the righteous person where he or she can bear the fruit that He desires. In that place there will be “rivers,” or literally “irrigation channels,” of “water.” Irrigation channels indicate that God not only places the tree but provides water for it. Although times of drought may come, there will always be a supply of life-giving spiritual refreshment so His servant can give evidence of his relationship to the Lord.

The water in the soil dissolves the nutrients. Those moistened nutrients are absorbed by the tree, which spreads out its roots to reach them (cf. Jeremiah 17:8, where the same imagery is used). The nutrients are absorbed by the roots and transported unseen up through the trunk to its branches and leaves. Eventually they form the flowers and the fruit. It is a wonderful picture of the unseen work of the Spirit of God in us to produce spiritual fruit in our lives. Jeremiah 17:8 adds the detail that the tree “spreads out its roots by the river.” The importance of the supply of water to the tree, so it can bear fruit, cannot be overstated.

The properly planted tree, deeply rooted in the Word of God and well watered by the Spirit of God, should do more than just stand there; it should bear fruit. In biblical terms, fruit manifests itself in a number of ways, but we’ll just mention here some Christ-like characteristics that the righteous person will demonstrate when he or she is yielded to the Holy Spirit’s control: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. These are called the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). They appear best when there is continuous inner renewal in our souls. They have nothing to do with what we call “success” and everything to do with godly character.

Another feature of the tree by the channels of water is that its leaf does not wither, a picture of steadfastness and continual testimony of the fact that the tree is alive and healthy. The leaves are not only a means of sustaining life but they beautify the tree and do not wither, even in drought.

The final phrase of verse 3 says, “And whatsoever he does shall prosper.” The prosperity of the righteous man is measured by the God-honoring spiritual prosperity that becomes evident in his family life, his church life, and his working life. Jesus said to His disciples, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit” (John 15:8).

## The Way of the Ungodly (vv. 4-5)

The second illustration taken from the agriculture of ancient Israel is about the ungodly, who are contrasted to the godly by the phrase, “The ungodly are not so.” The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) states it with a double negative: “Not so, the ungodly, not so.” They are like the chaff on a threshing floor, which is separated from the kernels of ripe grain by animals tramping on it or by men beating it with implements. Threshing floors were placed on hilltops, where it was windy. The separated chaff and grain were thrown into the wind with shovels. The grain, being heavier, would fall back on the floor, while the chaff would be blown away by the wind. This pictures the end of the empty, worthless life of the ungodly in contrast to the fruit-bearing prosperity of the godly.

Threshing and separating the wheat from the husks is a common biblical description for the destruction and judgment of the ungodly. John the Baptist used this imagery when he said that the coming Messiah would “thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire” (Luke 3:17). The tree of the righteous will stand unaffected by the storm of judgment, but the chaff will be blown or driven away (cf. Job 21:18). The ungodly person is *not* the master of his own fate; rather, he is being relentlessly driven by the winds of God’s judgment.

The psalmist clearly indicates the fate of the ungodly by the word “therefore.” The ungodly cannot “stand” before the judge, because they are guilty (2 Thess. 1:8-9). They will therefore suffer eternal destruction. The psalmist may have been implying judgment in the sense of ongoing judgment in the lives of the wicked, but there are overtones of eternal judgment here. Certainly the ungodly will not enjoy the “congregation of the righteous” in heaven, but will be forever excluded.

## Words of Comfort, Words of Warning (v. 6)

The psalm concludes, “For the Lord knows the way of the righteous” (v. 6). God knows and understands that living in this fallen world is difficult for those who have chosen to please Him and to put the world behind them. He is very much aware that we are constantly opposed by the ungodly. God knows all Satan’s wiles, how he constantly seeks to trip up God’s people. The psalmist reminds us that the way of the ungodly will end in destruction, in contrast to the path of the godly that leads to eternal blessing.

The Word of God is clear that every human being will spend eternity in one of two places—either with God or excluded from His presence in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:15). That conclusion is legitimately seen in Psalm 1. But it is also true that, as a wisdom psalm, it contains an underlying message of warning for believers to make right choices every day regarding our relationships with both God and the world around us. In so doing we can truly experience the spiritual blessedness God intends for those who are righteous in practice as well as by position. And while enjoying this blessedness, we will be a source of blessing to those around us.

MY GOD AND I:

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SELECTED  
PSALMS

**EXAM BOOKLET**  
**AK '09 (2 UNITS)**

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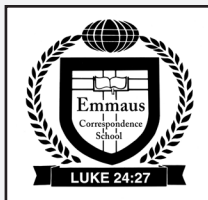
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CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

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INSTRUCTOR



*Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.*

## A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

### MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue                      C. yellow  
B. green                     D. orange

     **B**     

### WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

### RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

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## CHAPTER 1 EXAM

### PSALM 1 THE LORD IS MY GOD

#### EXAM GRADE

***Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.***

*Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.*

1. One underlying theme of the book of Psalms is
  - A. the pleasures to be found in God's created world
  - B. the wisdom of interacting with society
  - C. the benefit of expressing our emotions
  - D. the wisdom of following God as opposed to following the way of the world\_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Psalm 1 contrasts the mindset, priorities, and destiny of
  - A. the righteous and the ungodly
  - B. Jews and Christians
  - C. educated and uneducated people
  - D. the wealthy and the poor\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. The word \_\_\_\_\_ occurs more times in Psalms than in all the other books of the Bible put together
 

A. righteous	C. blessed
B. wise	D. ungodly

\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. The psalmist describes the godly person as one who
  - A. worships God regularly
  - B. rejects the value systems of the world
  - C. devotes his life to helping people
  - D. does not associate with worldly people\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. The ungodly cannot give good advice to a believer because
  - A. they leave God out of their reckoning
  - B. they haven't read the Bible
  - C. they don't understand their problems
  - D. they are in need of good advice themselves\_\_\_\_\_

6. Romans 12:2 instructs us to
- A. seek wisdom in God's Word
  - B. never associate with unbelievers
  - C. not be conformed to this world
  - D. enjoy the blessings God gives
- \_\_\_\_\_
7. Biblical meditation is engaging our minds on God's Word in order to
- A. block out all other thoughts
  - B. lose ourselves in the cosmos
  - C. form a list of rules to obey
  - D. both understand and apply it to our lives
- \_\_\_\_\_
8. Separation from the world and devotion to God results in
- A. a lonely life
  - B. spiritual fruit
  - C. material success
  - D. continual happiness
- \_\_\_\_\_
9. In verse 4, the ungodly are described as
- A. trees that wither in the heat
  - B. pools of stagnant water
  - C. chaff that the wind drives away
  - D. unfruitful vines
- \_\_\_\_\_
10. The way of the ungodly will end in
- A. destruction
  - B. blessing
  - C. annihilation
  - D. success
- \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

What changes will you make in your life as a result of meditating on Psalm 1?

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