



GOALS

- For students to learn the contrasting fates of the wicked and the righteous.
- For students to consider and analyze the temptations around them.
- For students to see how “sanctuary” time with God gives them power over their temptations.

MATERIALS: Group

- Variety of colored pencils

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Student journal pages
- Scripture sheet, Psalm 73
- A Bible
- A pen

SESSION INTRO

After you’ve grabbed your coffee, share that the psalmist David is widely known for his question, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” After asking God this question, he then later answered his own question: “By living according to your word” (Psalm 119:9). We can trust the Word of God. Through it we learn how to live the lives we were created to live. Lining our lives up to what God says in His Word will keep us on the path He intended us to travel.

Pray

As you pray, be sure to ask that God will give your students a deep desire to keep their way pure regardless of what’s going on around them. Ask God to help them fulfill the ultimate goal of Bible Study – that they might live according to His Word.

DIGGING IN

Call your group’s attention to the Session 3 journal page and the Scripture sheet for Psalm 73. Distribute two colored pencils to each student.

Read the first three verses of Psalm 73, marking any reference to the author of the psalm (including pronouns like “me,” “my,” and “I”) in a unique way. Then invite them to list everything they learn about the author in the space provided on their journal pages.

Once you have finished, discuss the following questions:

Who is the author of this psalm? What is his deal?

What (or who) is he looking at? How is this affecting him?

What do you think it means that Asaph’s “feet had almost slipped” and that he “nearly lost my foothold”?

Direct your students to the “temptation gauge” on their journal page. Ask them to label the far left side of the gauge with “The wicked” and the far right side with “God.” Before drawing the needle on the gauge, ask them to visualize where they think it should be drawn at this point in the psalm (verses 1 through 3). Is Asaph leaning more toward God or toward the temptation (or could he be right in the middle)?

Let your students draw where they think the needle should be at this point in the verse.

Author Profile:

Share with your group that we're given some background on Asaph from another place in the Bible. Invite your group to read from their Bibles 1 Chronicles 16:1-6, and 37. Then discuss these questions:

What was Asaph's "occupation"?

He was a chief Levite, a musician in fact, which meant he helped the priests and oversaw worship duties.

What light does it shed on this psalm to know that Asaph was a spiritual leader?

This can serve as an example that religious busyness can lead to spiritual dryness.

Now ask your group to dig a little deeper into Asaph's journey. He gets gut-wrenchingly honest about his walk with God. Ask them to suggest a symbol or emoji to use to denote "wicked" (suggestions: a frowning face or a pitchfork) and then invite students to read Psalm 73:1-13 carefully, marking "the wicked" (including pronouns like "they," "themselves," and "their").

After they've read and marked, have them list on their journal pages three types of descriptions from the passage:

1. One they find disturbing (how could anyone be this bad!?).
2. One that they've seen in themselves.
3. One that they've seen in other people.

After most have finished, ask them to look over their markings regarding the wicked and to share the three descriptions that they noted. Their list should include at least some of these points:

The wicked

They're arrogant (v. 3)

They're getting rich (v. 3)

They have no struggles (v. 4)

They're healthy and strong (v. 4)

They don't have as many burdens as other people (v. 5)

They're not plagued with promises (v. 5)

They're violent (v. 6)

Sin comes out of their hard hearts (v. 7)

They're conceited (v. 7)

Their evil minds have no limits (v. 7)

They scoff (v. 8)

They're malicious (v. 8)

They threaten and put down other people (v. 8)

They claim that they're going to heaven (v. 9)

They think they own the earth! (v. 9)

Lots of people look up to them (v. 10)

They question God (v. 11)

They don't think God is as smart as they are (v. 11)

They're always carefree (v. 12)

They increase in wealth (v. 12)

Don't worry if your list isn't this detailed, but do encourage your students to bring as much detail out of the passage as they can! After they've finished, ask the following questions:

Asaph says that he's envious of the wicked. What do you think he's envious of?

Does it ever seem like people who don't follow God have fewer problems than you? Do their lives look more fun and more carefree than the Christians you know? Does it seem like "the grass is greener" on the other side?

Look at verse 13. What is Asaph feeling here? Have you ever felt this way?

This can be a pretty important discussion and an opportunity for students to see themselves in Psalm 73.

Now go to the next "temptation gauge" on their journal page. Have them draw the place where they would put the needle now.

DIGGING DEEPER

In this next section of the psalm, Asaph reaches a critical point in his journey. Invite students to read Psalm 73:14-20. As they read ask them to draw a symbol or emoji that denotes an “aha” moment when they see Asaph’s critical point.

After they have finished reading and marking, ask the following questions:

Where is Asaph when he has a turning point?

What does he suddenly understand?

What, exactly, is going to happen to the wicked? (Gather as many details as you can.)

Give students a few minutes to read the final section of Psalm 73:21-28. Ask them to use a special color or symbol to mark “God,” “Lord,” or any pronouns for God. Have them list on their journal pages everything they learn about God in the space entitled “Benefits of Sticking with God.”

Now back to the third “temptation gauge.” Have your students draw the needle where they think it best represents Asaph. Ask why they put it where they put it?

TAKING IT INWARD

Share that Asaph was almost a spiritual dropout because he was tempted by what the wicked were doing. Pause for a minute and ask students to thoughtfully share their responses to the following questions.

Has there been a time in your life, maybe even now, when you have almost been a spiritual drop out?

What were the types of things going on around you during this time?

How were/will you be able to get out of the funk and back into the rhythm of a right relationship with God?

Asaph wasn’t doing well. The struggle was real and the temptation to quit was presenting as an easy option. But by the end of the psalm, what seemed to be Asaph’s status?

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Reiterate to your group that the definitive moment for Asaph was his “sanctuary” experience. Without it, he would not have been able to use the word “almost” in verse 1 when describing his feet slipping. Then share:

What does Asaph’s experience teach us? Why is this psalm in the Bible?

How does Asaph’s experience shed light on the maxim from the opening of this session, “If the Devil can’t get you to sin, he’ll get you busy”?

What can we do to ensure regular experiences in the “sanctuary of God?” How might this differ from simply attending church every Sunday?

Follow up the last question with a brainstorm discussion of ideas on how to create “sanctuary” through the week. Here is a suggestion:

Make a one-hour appointment with God. Go to a special place. Devote time to:

-“listen” for God

-write out a prayer

-meditate on Psalm 73 along with these passage about God’s transforming power in our lives: Hebrews 13:20-21;

1 Corinthians 12:6; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Philippians 2:12-13

After discussing ideas, invite students to adopt an idea as their own and write it in the space under “My Sanctuary Time.” Before you dismiss, set up a method for your group to communicate to each other about their sanctuary experiences, whether using social media channels already established or creating a new outlet.