



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
- Whiteboard and markers

MATERIALS: Each Student

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

SESSION INTRO

Open

Open your session by sharing in your own words:

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.

Prayer

As you pray, 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

Psalm 73:1-3

Direct your students’ attention to the Scripture sheet for Psalm 73 and distribute two to three colored pencils per person.

Have your students read Psalm 73:1-3, just the first three verses, marking any reference to the author of the psalm (including pronouns like “me,” “my,” and “I”) in a unique way. After a couple minutes use the questions below to process these first verses.

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 almost “lost my foothold”?

Draw a “temptation gauge” on the board (see below), labeling 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 students to visualize where they think it should be

drawn at this point in the psalm (verse 1 through 3). Is Asaph leaning more toward God or toward the temptation (or could he be right in the middle)?



Let the group tell you where to draw the needle based on these verses. Then have them copy the gauge on their journal pages. (Keep the “temptation gauge” on the board throughout the rest of the group session.)

Psalm 73:1-13

Now ask your group to dig a little deeper to see what they can learn about “the wicked.” Ask them to suggest a symbol to use to denote “wicked” (suggestions: a frowning face or a pitchfork). Then ask students to read Psalm 73:1-13 carefully, marking “the wicked” (including pronouns like “they,” “themselves,” and “their”). After they’ve read and marked, they should list on their journal pages the three descriptions they find most disturbing.

After most have finished, bring them back together as a group. Ask them to look over their markings regarding the wicked and to share the three descriptions they find most disturbing. Invite them to add to their list as others share. Your list on the board 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? (Give students ample time to consider Asaph’s statements and discuss whether or not they’ve ever felt the same way.)

Now erase the needle on the “temptation gauge” on the board. Ask students where they would place the needle now. After they’ve told you where to draw the needle, have them copy the gauge onto their journal pages.

DIGGING DEEPER

Psalm 73:14-20

In this next section of the psalm, Asaph has a turning point in his thinking. Invite students to read Psalm 73:14-20. As they read have them note a turning point.

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

Where is Asaph when he has a turning point in his thinking?

What does he suddenly understand?

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

Now back to the “temptation gauge.” Ask students where they think the needle is now. Why? After you’ve discussed Asaph’s progression of thought, ask students to copy the gauge onto their journal pages.

Psalm 73:21-28

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.”

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 (maybe even ask your students to close their eyes so they can really reflect) and ask students to 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 way out. But by the end of the psalm, what seemed to be Asaph’s status?

Erase the needle on the temptation gauge on the board. As you discuss Asaph’s thoughts at the close of the psalm, redraw the needle where it belongs. Have your students copy the needle on the last gauge in their journal pages.

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. The share:

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

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

-write a journal about your time and send it to the group

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.