



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
- Timer
- Optional: Incentive “prize” for the winners of your skit challenge (Digging In)

MATERIALS: Each Student

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

SESSION INTRO

Pray

The Psalmist David is known for his question, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” After asking God this question he then 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.

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.

Open

Start your session with a light discussion on emojis or emoticons. You may want to Google “emoji vs. emoticon” for additional background info.

What’s your “go to” emoji/emoticon? What do you use the most often?

What’s the most creative one you’ve seen?

Share that the writer of Psalm 73, the psalm for this session, could have benefited from a supply of emojis. So, you’re going to help him out. Work as a group to create the following emojis (these are noted on their journal pages):

Disappointment, envy (a green colored pencil might help), disturbed, happy, “aha” moment

DIGGING IN

Bite-Sized Chunk 1

Share that you’re going to break Psalm 73 down into four bite-sized chunks, and that each chunk carries a different set of emotions. Ask your students to turn to their journal page and the Scripture sheet for Psalm 73. Hand out two to three colored pencils per person.

You’ll be asking your students to read Psalm 73:1-5 and 13-16. As they read, they’ll notice a range of emotions from the writer of the psalm. Ask them to draw an emoji on their Scripture sheets that they think best represents the writer’s emotion or state of mind each time it’s described.

After a few minutes, process what they saw in these verses with these questions:

Who is the author of this psalm?

What emoji would you use to describe his spiritual outlook at the moment?

What (or who) is he looking at?

How is this affecting him?

You may want to explain that sometimes the Bible uses the word “arrogant” to describe the people who refuse to serve God. They’re “arrogant” because they have no need of God in their lives. They’re the “I’ll do it my way” people.

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 put the needle based on these verses. Then have them copy the gauge in the appropriate place on their journal pages. (Keep the “temptation gauge” on the board throughout the rest of the session.)

Bite-Sized Chunk 2

Now ask your group to dig a little deeper to see what they can learn about “the wicked.” Good symbols might be a frowny face or a pitchfork (since they are in cahoots with evil).

Ask students to read Psalm 73:6-12 carefully, marking “the wicked” (including pronouns like “they,” “themselves,” and “their”). After they’ve read and marked the passage, ask them to look over what they marked and to share what they think is the “worst wicked.” Write these on the board as they’re shared. Below are possible responses; don’t worry if your list isn’t this detailed:

The wicked

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)

After listing on the board, 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 put the needle, have them copy the gauge onto their journal page.

Bite-Sized Chunk 3

In this next section of the psalm, Asaph has a turning point in his thinking. Have your students get into teams of two and together read Psalm 73:14-20. As they read have them note a turning point with the “aha moment” emoji they created in your opening exercise.

Challenge: Challenge the groups to put together a two-person skit acting out Asaph’s change in thinking. Allow two minutes for prep and then give each group one minute to act it out. Once all groups have finished, vote for the best group by large group applause. (You might want to have an incentive for the winner.)

Process Asaph’s turnaround with these 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 the students where they think the needle is now. Why? After you’ve discussed Asaph’s progression of thought, ask the students to copy the gauge onto their journal page.

Bite-Sized Chunk 4

Read out loud the end of the chapter, Psalm 73:21-28. Ask students to give a round of applause every time you read a phrase that describes Asaph’s closeness to God.

Erase the needle on the temptation gauge on the board. As you discuss Asaph’s thoughts at the close of the psalm, ask students where they’d place the needle at this point in the psalm. Have your students copy the gauge on their journal page.

Then ask your students:

According to Asaph, what are the benefits of sticking with God?

You may want to list these on the board.

How easy or hard is it to choose this option (sticking with God) when temptation is staring you in the face?

Where is your “temptation gauge” right now?

Have students draw it in the space provided on their journal pages.

CROSS-CHECKING

Share that we’ve given some background on Asaph from another place in the Bible. Invite your group to turn in their Bibles to 1 Chronicles 16. Ask for a volunteer to read 16:1-6, and 37. Then discuss these questions:

What was Asaph’s “occupation”?

He was a chief Levite which means 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.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Share in your own words:

Asaph's lifeline was the "sanctuary of God." It's what preserved him and enabled him to use the word "almost" when talking about checking out on God. What can you do this week to ensure that you get some "sanctuary" time with God?

Work as a group to help each other be creative in establishing "sanctuary" time this week. Point students to the space provided on their journal pages to jot notes. Here are some suggestions to get the ball rolling:

-set an appointment

-include worship music

-devote time to "listen" for God

-write out a prayer

-meditate on Psalm 73 (and the other psalms so far in this study: 139 and 15)

-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.