

General Church Education



# Family Lesson: Psalm 1

# A Psalm of Blessings

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## Family Lesson 12 - A

*A Psalm of Blessings*  
*Psalm 1*

**Family Talk:**  
**THE BLESSING OF THE LORD**

Rev. Alfred Acton

Today for our lesson we read the first psalm. Do you know what a psalm is? If you'd gone to a Hebrew Synagogue when the Lord was on Earth, you could have heard a psalm as it was intended to be used. The man who was reading wouldn't have read the psalm; instead he would have sung it. Psalms in Hebrew were songs – songs to be sung to the Lord; songs of praise; songs of joy; songs that asked the Lord for forgiveness; songs that asked for help. All of them were songs of worship.

Do you know why songs are important in worship? Songs are used in heaven to worship the Lord even as they are used on earth for worship. Each morning when angels wake up they hear beautiful music sung by angel choirs which turn their thoughts to the Lord and help them worship Him. The reason is because songs bring people together as one. If we know the words and the music, we can sing together, either in unison or in harmony. As we all sing we become as one. The beauty of it is that when we worship together the Lord hears one voice. Each person can give his little perfect bit to the harmony of the whole.

You know, all of heaven is a place where people come together as one. Each person has very special talents. Each person can do something that no one else in heaven can do. So they can come together as one, all giving of their special talent. This is like a beautiful song, or the work of many instruments. When they come together they sound in harmony as one beautiful chorus or performance. But suppose someone sings a bad note. What happens to the music? It doesn't sound as good as it could. Some of the beauty is hurt. So it is with us. When we work together, each using his special talents for the common good, the job is done better, and the people doing the job feel good. But when someone is selfish and does not join in the work, does not use his special talents for good, the job suffers. Angels in heaven work together, and their lives are in harmony. But evil spirits in hell, like bad notes in music, destroy their own harmony and happiness.

Now let's turn to the first psalm and see what the Lord was talking about in that psalm. You know, the psalm there says that a person is like a tree. A good person is like a very beautiful tree; a tree planted by the rivers of water; a tree that will live happily next to the calm peaceful flow of the water; a tree that will bring forth its fruit in its season, whose leaves will not wither and drop off,

but instead will continue to give food to the rest of the tree so fruit could be made. People are like trees. They take in spiritual water, or truth, and spiritual food, or good loves. By joining these together inside them they are able to do good things, to bear or bring forth spiritual fruits. When you live by truth from love you do good things for other people, and the good things you do are like the fruits of the tree. We all can take spiritual water, join it with good loves, and make it into spiritual fruit. From love we can take truth and use that truth so that we can do good. In this way we are like a tree which takes water from its roots and food from its leaves to make good fruit.

But how do we become like that beautiful tree planted by the water? What must we do to enjoy happiness? The psalm answers the question first by telling us what not to do, and then by showing us what to do. Don't follow the path to destruction! Instead follow the path to life, the path to heaven which is seen if you do as the psalm tells you. If you "delight in the law of the Lord" and "meditate day and night" on it, try to understand it and use it, then you will be like a beautiful tree.

Notice how the path to destruction is described. This path is a path that somebody can walk along, and then stand in, and at last sit stuck in. It is a path of selfishness. Walking that path is like first doing a bad thing – say hitting a friend. Standing in the path is like making up excuses for doing the bad thing – "He hit me first." Sitting in the path is actually liking the bad thing you did. You're glad you hurt your friend, and you're happy when he cries. You can see what a bad path this is to follow, and how it can, if you continue on it through your life, lead to hell. So we need to turn to another path, to refuse to walk, stand, or sit on the path to destruction. We need to remember that people who don't walk, stand, or sit in the path of selfishness can become like angels, can become like that tree planted by the water, can become capable of doing good and enjoying the happiness of heaven.

Remember, then, the value of psalms, songs in which many people can join together as one in worshiping the Lord. And remember, when you join together with others living truth and so doing good, you can become like a tree, a beautiful tree planted by the rivers of water whose leaves will not wither as it brings forth fruit in its season.

## A Psalm of Blessings

### Psalm 1

#### LEVEL 1 – A TREE PLANTED BY THE WATERS

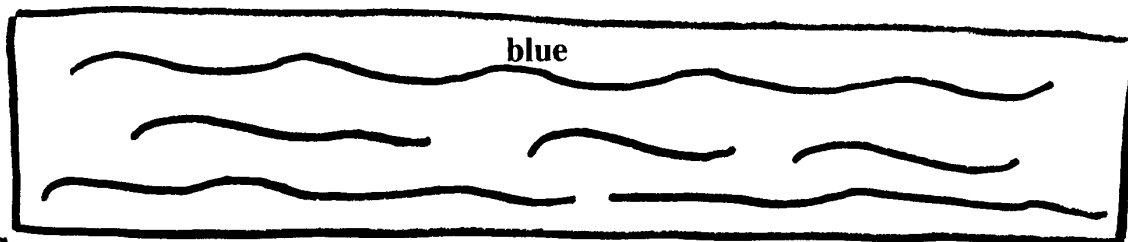
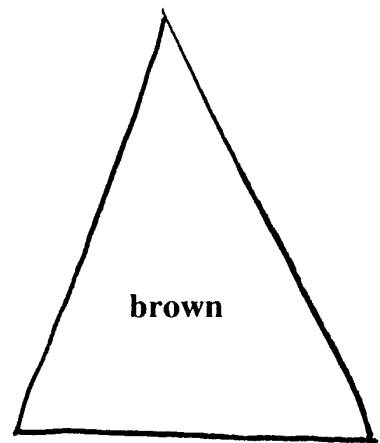
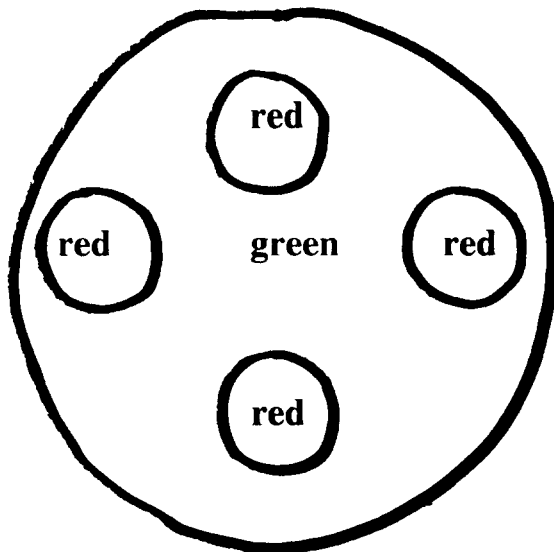
##### MATERIALS NEEDED

Scissors and Glue, paste, or tape


Crayons or markers

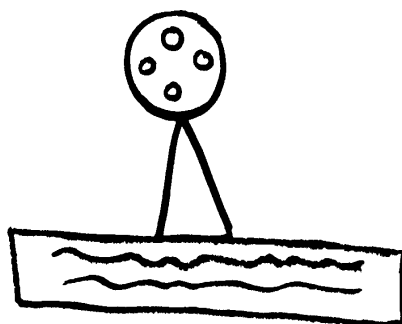
You are going to make a picture to go with the framed verses from Psalm 1 on the next page:

- you can draw or paint your own picture OR
- you can use the cut-outs below to make a picture OR
- you can cut pictures of a beautiful river and tree from magazines.



##### INSTRUCTIONS

- Color the fruit on the tree (apples), then the tree, trunk and river.
- Cut out the three shapes. 
- Paste the shapes on the other sheet so that they look like this:





He shall be like a tree

Planted by the rivers of water

That brings forth its fruit in its season.

A Psalm of Blessing, Level 1

Picture

## A Psalm of Blessings

### Psalm 1

#### LEVEL 2 – YOU CAN WRITE A PSALM

Today we learned that a PSALM is a song, or a poem to the LORD. Most of the PSALMS in the Word were written by a shepherd boy who grew up to become a king – King David. The LORD helped David write the Psalms, just as He helped him conquer his enemies and become king.

**Here’s how to write a poem to the LORD:**

Think of a name for the LORD that you love. Write it here:

What is the LORD like? Write it here:

Think of three things the LORD made that you love. Write them here:

What could you do to thank the LORD? Write it here:

Write two or more names for the LORD (or a description for Him)

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*You gave me* -----

*and* -----

*and* -----

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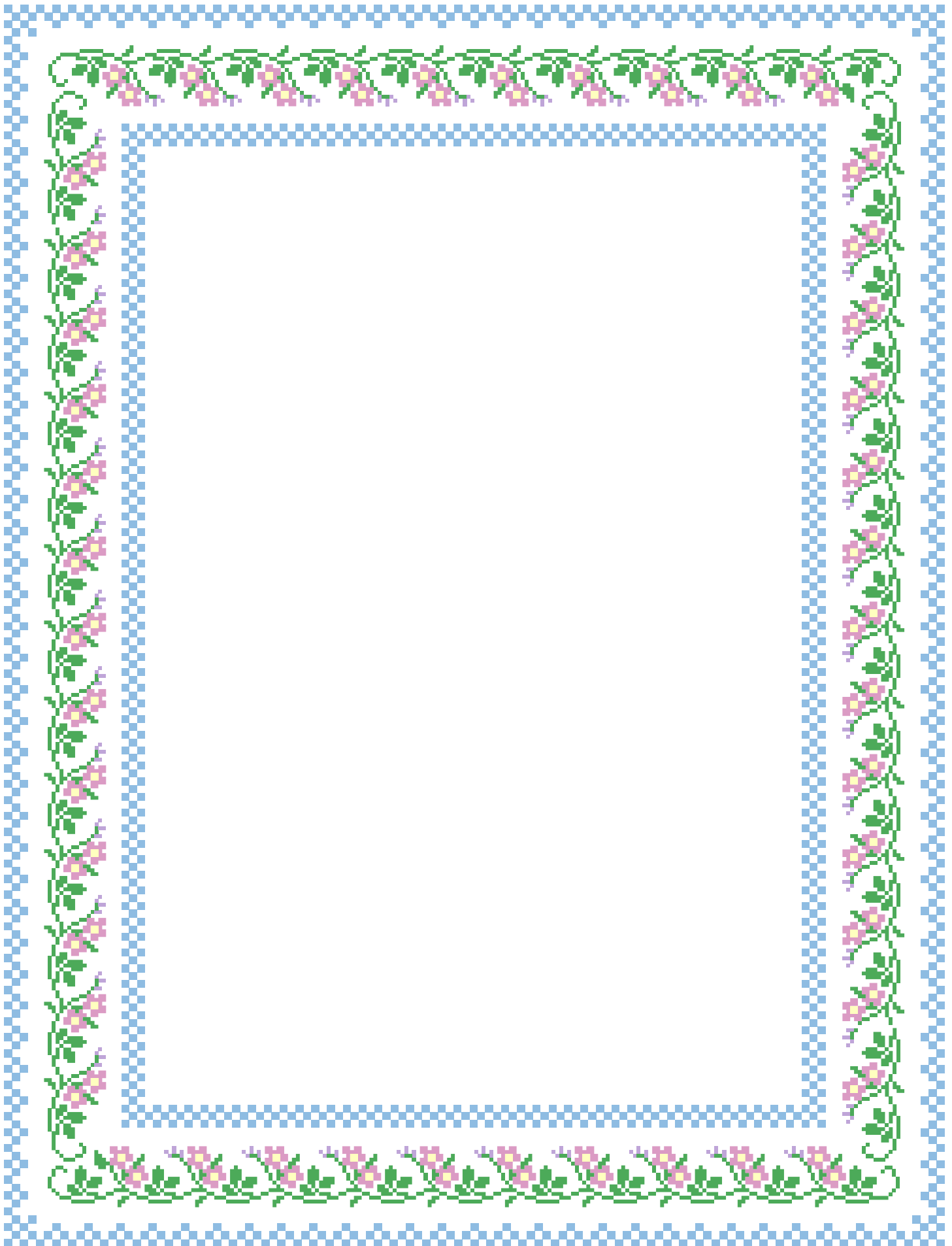
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**Read what is in the box. That is your Psalm.**

**Now copy it neatly in the pretty frame on the next page.**

*(Put the page with dark lines behind it so the lines show through to help you write straight)*



A series of 20 horizontal black lines, evenly spaced, serving as a writing guide. The lines are arranged in a vertical column and are intended for handwriting practice.



## ***A Psalm of Blessings***

### ***Psalm 1***

### **LEVEL 3 – SIMPLE INSTRUMENTS**

#### **Materials Needed**

A pencil  
The Word or a Bible  
A cereal bowl  
3 or more rubber bands



You heard the first psalm read in worship. In the whole book of Psalms there are 150 psalms. We usually read the Psalms, but when they were first made up, they were sung. Often they were sung in worship.

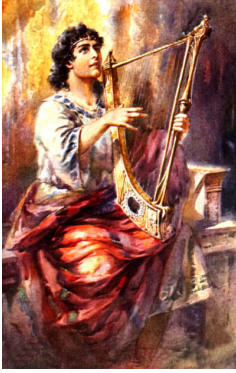
#### **Worshipping with songs**



Singing is a very important part of worship. It brings our affections into the service. We can read and hear portions of the Word in worship. This brings our minds to thoughts about the Lord. To worship the Lord we need to do more than just think about Him—we also need to express our love to Him. When we sing songs in worship, we are expressing love to the Lord, then our thoughts and affections, our whole selves are worshipping the Lord.

#### **Who wrote the Psalms?**

Do you remember which king, who ruled over all the Holy Land, made up most of the psalms? Turn to the book of Psalms and look at what is written at the beginning of psalms 3, 4, and 5. It was King \_\_\_\_\_ who wrote most of the psalms. But was he using his own words when he sang the psalms? For the answer to this question look at II *Samuel* 23:2. Whose words did he use? \_\_\_\_\_. This means that the book of Psalms is part of the Lord's \_\_\_\_\_.



David played beautiful music. He used his beautiful music to help people feel better. What king did he help with his music? (Look at I *Samuel* 16:23.)

\_\_\_\_\_. What musical instrument did

David play? \_\_\_\_\_. What did he play it with?

\_\_\_\_\_.

See if you can find the instrument which David played on page three.

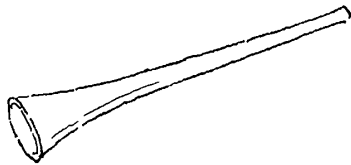
This shows you many of the musical instruments that the children of Israel used to play the psalms. It is part of a booklet called *Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving*.

### **Making a simple instrument**

The Israelites did not have the machines or the materials that we now use to make musical instruments. They had only wood, some metals, reeds, and parts of animals. You can make a simple musical instrument, sort of like the harp that David played, with a cereal bowl and 3 rubber bands. Stretch the three rubber bands around the bowl with about 1/2 inch space between each. By holding one rubber band at a time against the rim on one edge of the bowl with your thumb, tighten or loosen the rubber band on the other edge of the bowl with your other hand. Pluck the rubber bands with one finger to hear what tones you have made. When you have three tones that sound nice to you, try quickly pulling one finger across all three rubber bands. You have played a chord. (You can add more rubber bands for more tones.)

The psalms were sung while a musician played on the harp. Other instruments were also used to accompany the singing. If you look at the pictures on the next page and use your imagination, you may be able to think of other ways to make simple musical instruments.

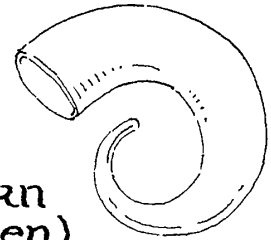




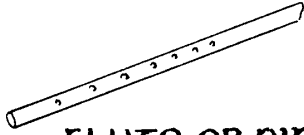
TRUMPET  
(chatsoserah)



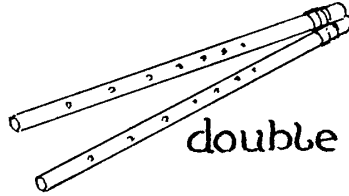
TRUMPET  
(shophar)



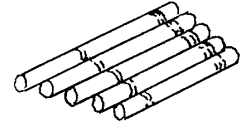
HORN  
(karen)



FLUTE OR PIPE  
(chalil)



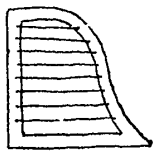
double pipe



ORGAN  
(ugab)

### Wind Instruments

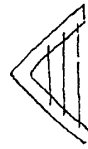
In the psalms David sings, "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon". (81:3) "In thy favor our horn shall be exalted" (89:17)



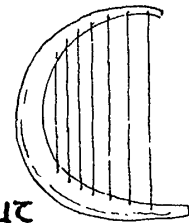
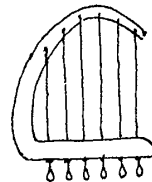
psaltery (nebel)  
of ten strings



harp (kimor)

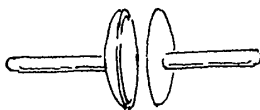


sackbut  
(sabbeta)



### Stringed Instruments

There were many varieties of strings stretched over frames as simple as three strings stretched over a bent twig. David sang, "Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto Him with the psaltery and on instrument of ten strings. (33:2)



loud cymbals  
(koyunjik)



high sounding cymbals



tabret OR  
timbrel (toph)

### Percussion Instruments

Cymbals were of two kinds, loud and high sounding. The timbrel was shaken in the hand like a rattle to produce a rhythm beat in music and dance.

*A Psalm of Blessings*

*Psalm 1*

**LEVEL 4 – COMPARING A PERSON AND A TREE**



*Psalm 1 compares a person with a tree.*

How many ways can you think of that a person is like a tree?

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*Think about what the Lord said in this psalm. He tells us that a person is blessed who does not do evil, but delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it. This person the Lord compares to a tree.*



*“He shall be like a tree  
Planted by the rivers of water,  
That brings forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf also shall not wither;  
And whatever he does shall prosper.”*

How is a good person “planted by the rivers of water”? (*Hint: what does water correspond to?*)

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How does a good person “bring forth fruit”?  
*(Hint: the answer was in the talk.)*

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Green leaves in sunlight make food for the tree. Withered leaves cannot do this.

Why would a good person’s “leaves never wither”?

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***A Psalm of Blessings***  
***Psalm 1***  
**LEVEL 5 – DIFFERENT PATHS**

Throughout our lives we travel different paths. One path may lead us to our conjugal partner, another to a satisfying career, another to a satisfying hobby. The most important path is the one that leads to heaven—the “path of life.”

Stop to think about the paths you are following. At the end of the path is some goal. What are the steps you need to take to reach it? Notice that as you take the steps you walk the path. Each step, if it's in the right direction, will get you closer to the goal. Most people, when they get very close to their goal, want to make sure it's really the right goal. They stop walking and, as it were, just stand there looking at the goal. At last, if they like the goal, they make it theirs. They enter in, sit down, and enjoy it. Of course, at any time on this path, if they don't like the goal, they can run away from it.

**Application**

Now consider the paths described in Psalm 1, verses 1-3

[1] Blessed is the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the  
ungodly,  
Nor stands in the paths of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

[2] But his delight is in the law of the  
Lord,  
An in His law he meditates day and  
night.

[3] He shall be like a tree  
Planted by the rivers of water,  
That brings forth its fruit in its  
season,  
Whose leaf also shall not wither;  
And whatever he does shall prosper.

### 1) The Downward Path

On the next page is a chart for you to fill in representing someone who chooses a “downward path”—someone who does “*walk in the counsel of the ungodly,*” and “*stand in the path of sinners,*” and “*sit in the seat of the scornful.*”

- a) First fill in where this path leads (THE PATH TO \_\_\_\_\_)
- b) Fill in “THE WALKERS” BOX. Use your own words to describe walking this part of the downward path.
- c) Fill in “THE STANDERS” box. Use your own words to describe walking this part of the downward path.
- d) Fill in “THE SITTERS” BOX. Use your own words to describe walking this part of the downward path.

### 2) The Upward Path

Fill in the chart after the Downward Path chart to represent someone who chooses an upward path—the path followed by someone whose “delight is in the law of the Lord.”

- a) First fill in where this path leads (THE PATH TO \_\_\_\_\_)
- b) Fill in “THE WALKERS” BOX. Use your own words to describe walking this part of the upward path.
- c) Fill in “THE STANDERS” box. Use your own words to describe walking this part of the upward path.
- d) Fill in “THE SITTERS” BOX. Use your own words to describe walking this part of the upward path.

### 3) Paths in the Other World

You might also enjoy reading about paths in the other world. After the charts is a passage from *Heaven and Hell* which describes “the way that leads to heaven” and “the way that leads to hell.”

Did this reading give you any more ideas about the meanings of the different paths?

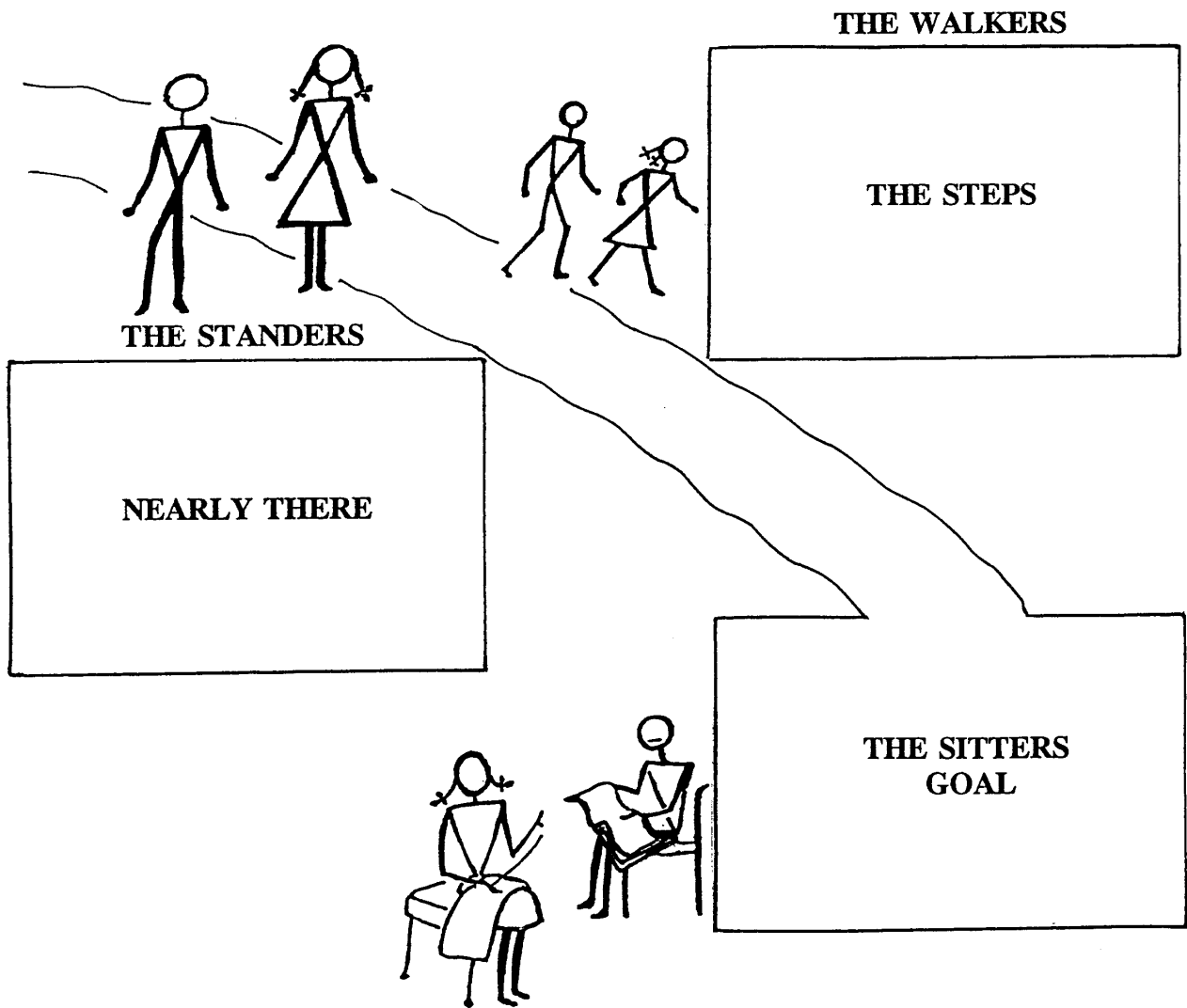
Look at the “paths” you filled in again, and see if there is anything you could add.

\*\*\*\*\*A Psalm of Blessings, Level 5 page 3



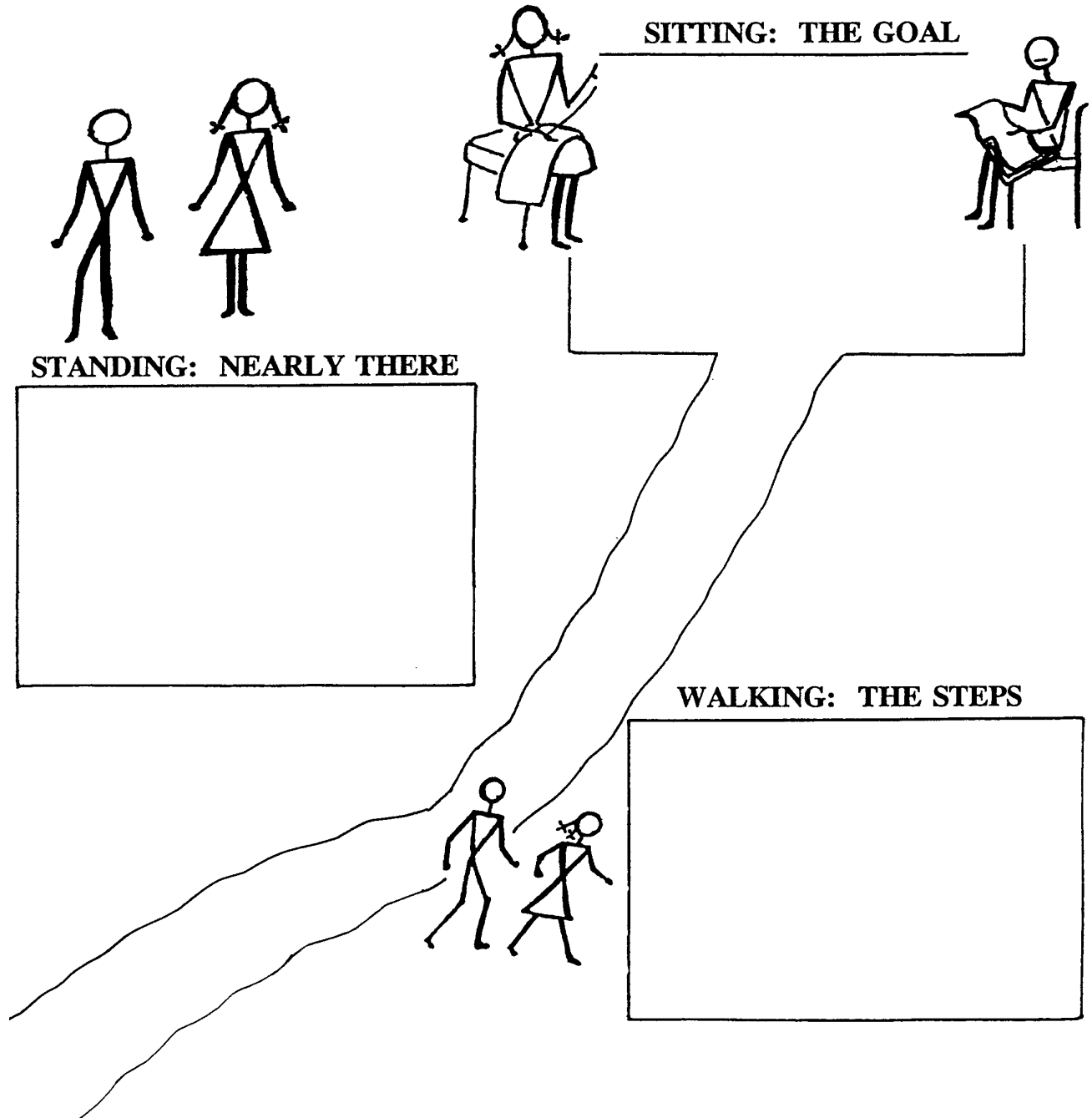
# The Way Down

**THE PATH TO** \_\_\_\_\_



# The Way Up

THE PATH TO \_\_\_\_\_



**HEAVEN AND HELL 534**

[1] The way that leads to heaven, and the way that leads to hell were once represented to me. There was a broad way tending towards the left or the north, and many spirits were seen going in it; but at a distance a large stone was seen where the broad way came to an end. From that stone two ways branched off, one to the left and one in the opposite direction to the right. The way that went to the left was narrow or straitened, (*the word "strait" means narrow or strict, it is not the same as "straight"*) leading through the west to the south, and thus into the light of heaven; the way that went to the right was broad and spacious, leading obliquely downwards towards hell. All at first seemed to be going the same way until they came to the large stone at the head of the two ways. When they reached that point they divided; the good turned to the left and entered the straitened way that led to heaven; while the evil, not seeing the stone at the fork of the ways fell upon it and were hurt; and when they rose up they ran on in the broad way to the right which went towards hell.

[2] What all this meant was afterwards explained to me. The first way that was broad, wherein many both good and evil went together and talked with each other as friends, because there was no visible difference between them, represented those who externally live alike honestly and justly, and between whom seemingly there is no difference. The stone at the head of the two ways or at the corner, upon which the evil fell and from which they ran into the way leading to hell, represented the Divine truth, which is rejected by those who look towards hell; and in the highest sense this stone signified the Lord's Divine Human. But those who acknowledged the Divine truth and also the Divine of the Lord went by the way that led to heaven. By this again it was shown that in externals the evil lead the same kind of life as the good, or go the same way, that is, one as readily as the other; and yet those who from the heart acknowledge the Divine, especially those within the church who

acknowledge the Divine of the Lord, are led to heaven; while those who do not are led to hell.

[3] The thoughts of man that proceed from his intention or will are represented in the other life by ways; and ways are visibly presented there in exact accord with those thoughts of intention; and in accord with his thoughts that proceed from intention every one walks. For this reason the character of spirits and their thoughts are known from their ways. This also makes clear what is meant by the Lord's words: enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (*Matthew. vii. 13, 14*). The way that leads to life is narrow, not because it is difficult but because there are few who find it, as is said here. The stone seen at the corner where the broad and common way ended, and from which two ways were seen to lead in opposite directions, illustrated what is signified by these words of the Lord: have you not read what is written? The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. Whoever falls on that stone will be broken' but on whomever it falls, shall be broken (*Luke. xx 17, 18*). "Stone" signifies Divine truth, and "the stone of Israel" the Lord in respect to His Divine Human; the "builders" mean those who are of the church; "the head of the corner" is where the two ways are; "to fall" and "to be broken" is to deny and perish.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Stone" signifies truth (AC 114, 643, 1298, 3720, 6426, 8609, 10376).

"The stone of Israel" means the Lord in respect to the Divine truth and His Divine Human (AC 6426).