

# WHY DO THE WICKED FLOURISH?

## *Psalm 73*

*A Psalm of Asaph*

- <sup>1</sup>Truly God is good to Israel,  
to those who are pure in heart.
- <sup>2</sup>But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled,  
my steps had nearly slipped.
- <sup>3</sup>For I was envious of the arrogant  
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- <sup>4</sup>For they have no pangs until death;  
their bodies are fat and sleek.
- <sup>5</sup>They are not in trouble as others are;  
they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.
- <sup>6</sup>Therefore pride is their necklace;  
violence covers them as a garment.
- <sup>7</sup>Their eyes swell out through fatness;  
their hearts overflow with follies.
- <sup>8</sup>They scoff and speak with malice;  
loftily they threaten oppression.
- <sup>9</sup>They set their mouths against the heavens,  
and their tongue struts through the earth.
- <sup>10</sup>Therefore his people turn back to them,  
and find no fault in them.
- <sup>11</sup>And they say, “How can God know?  
Is there knowledge in the Most High?”
- <sup>12</sup>Behold, these are the wicked;  
always at ease, they increase in riches.
- <sup>13</sup>All in vain have I kept my heart clean  
and washed my hands in innocence.
- <sup>14</sup>For all the day long I have been stricken  
and rebuked every morning.
- <sup>15</sup>If I had said, “I will speak thus,”  
I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

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## **WELCOME:** *Fixing Our Focus*

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Was there ever a time when you compromised your walk with the Lord because you saw how the wicked have been flourishing? If so, share your experience with the group. If not, share with the group how you were able to avoid sinning against God.

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## **WORSHIP:** *Adoring Our God*

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Suggested songs:

*God is the Strength of My Heart* by Mark Moses and Steve Merkel  
(Don Moen)

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## **WORD:** *Understanding the Word*

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*Lesson Aim:* Members will not lose hope or question God's character and promises when they see the wicked flaunting their evil and being arrogant against God.

### **Introduction**

When you see wicked people in power getting away with their crimes, the innocent being oppressed, have you ever wondered if living for God was worth it? Here are people who are openly opposed to God and yet they have power, wealth, and health. But here you are, doing your best to live up to God's standards, and yet you're experiencing health issues, you have problems at work and at home. You ask yourself, "Where is God's justice? Doesn't he take care of his children?" The psalmist went through a similar experience and wrote this psalm. Let's learn how he was able to keep his life in tune with the Lord despite his experiences.

*Leader:* Lead in reading Psalm 73:1-15 aloud together. Then read the paragraph on the "Key Verse."

*Key Verse:* The psalmist was able to resolve his problem by holding on to God's character and promise found in verse 27. "For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you." God's justice is sure to come, it's just a question of when.

### **Psalm 73:1-15. Theme:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. The psalmist opens the psalm by saying that he had almost sinned against God. What is the reason behind this (*vv. 1-3*)?

2. Underline how the psalmist describes the wicked in verses 4 and 5. Why do you think God has allowed the wicked to become so?
  
3. What happened to the wicked because of their prosperity (*vv. 6-9*)? Put a box around them. Do you see any similarities between what the psalmist describes and what you see in the world today? Explain these to the group.
  
4. The prosperity of the wicked not only affects them, but also the rest of the people. Encircle the effects it has on the rest of the people (*vv. 10-11*). Why do you think people behave that way?
  
5. How did all these affect the psalmist? What conclusion did he come to, and what did he find wrong with the conclusion (*vv. 12-15*)?

*In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 1-15.*

**Psalm 73:16-22. Theme:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Read verses 16-22 together.*

<sup>16</sup>But when I thought how to understand this,  
it seemed to me a wearisome task,  
<sup>17</sup>until I went into the sanctuary of God;  
then I discerned their end.

<sup>18</sup>Truly you set them in slippery places;  
you make them fall to ruin.

<sup>19</sup>How they are destroyed in a moment,  
swept away utterly by terrors!

<sup>20</sup>Like a dream when one awakes,  
O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.

<sup>21</sup>When my soul was embittered,  
when I was pricked in heart,  
<sup>22</sup>I was brutish and ignorant;  
I was like a beast toward you.

6. How was the psalmist able to resolve his dilemma, where did he turn to (*vv. 16-17*)? In our day, where can we turn to resolve the same dilemma?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What did God disclose to the psalmist regarding the fate of the wicked (*vv. 18-20*)? Underline how the psalmist described the fate of the wicked.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What was the reason given by the psalmist why he became deluded and came close to sinning against God (*vv. 21-22*)? What can we learn from this?

*In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 16-22.*

**Psalm 73:23-28. Theme:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Read verses 23-28 together.*

<sup>23</sup>Nevertheless, I am continually with you;  
you hold my right hand.  
<sup>24</sup>You guide me with your counsel,  
and afterward you will receive me to glory.  
<sup>25</sup>Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.  
<sup>26</sup>My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.  
<sup>27</sup>For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;  
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.  
<sup>28</sup>But for me it is good to be near God;

I have made the Lord God my refuge,  
that I may tell of all your works.

9. What reason did the psalmist give why he was kept from sinning against God (*vv. 23-24*)? What does this tell us of how we can be kept from sinning against God?
10. How did God's revelation to the psalmist change his view of reality (*vv. 25-26*)? What does this tell us of how we should look at life?
11. What final conclusion did the psalmist arrive at (*vv. 27-28*)? Do you agree with his conclusion? Why or why not?

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**Another possible reading of verse 10 is, "Therefore his people turn back to them, the waters of a full cup are drained by them."**

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*In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 23-28.*

### **Questions for Adults**

1. Have you had the same experience as the psalmist where you felt that it is pointless to keep following God because evil people are not being punished? Share your experience with the group.
2. How would you reconcile God's justice with the reality where evil people are thriving and in power? Is God being unfair by allowing believers to suffer while those who are openly opposed to him are enjoying life?
3. How does making God your only desire cure the envy you feel towards wicked people who are flourishing?
4. Individually and as a group, pray back this psalm to God. You could start by saying something like:

*Father, I confess there are times when I envy the wicked who are in power. Forgive me when I question your justice and righteousness...*

5. Pray for our country (Prayer requests supplied by the Leader).

### **Questions for the Youth**

1. Influencer. This is a title that is deeply coveted by the youth. Prosperity isn't about riches and wealth anymore – now it's about being regarded as a “god” in the internet. Nothing could be more satisfying to the young than a certain “K” number of followers and reacts. But as we observe, getting a “K” number of followers often involve scandals and issues, coupled with cursing and bashing. Have you ever been tempted to share in the same trend?
2. Have you felt that there are those who received blessings they don't deserve while you toil in vain in being a good person? How come all those bad boys/girls get their “ideal partners?” How come my friend gets all those leadership opportunities despite having a poor attitude? How come my classmate gets to have – and take for granted – the latest gadgets? How come I don't get anything in return for the good that I do? What are similar questions you've asked yourself? What makes you think these are unfair?
3. If God could give you peace of mind knowing that all things work for the good of those who love God, how would you feel about people who purposely do evil and yet seem to have everything they want?
4. How can your group help you keep God's precepts despite the seemingly unfair circumstances?

### **Questions for Children**

1. Have you sometimes felt that God was unfair because those who do bad things seem to enjoy life while you face many difficulties even though you are trying to be obedient to God? What do you do whenever you feel that way?
2. What character of God can help you overcome your feeling that life is unfair? Why?
3. The psalmist declared that he desires God alone, and wants to be near him all the time. How do you think can your desire for God be increased?