PSALMS: INTERACTING WITH AN AWESOME GOD
Week 5: Walking the Right Way

This includes:
1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW
Teenagers face tremendous pressure when it comes to standing up for their faith. Pursuing a life that honors God means making a commitment to that lifestyle and not allowing other people to become obstacles along the way. This lesson offers insight into what it looks like to strive for a God-centered life in the midst of a world that is anything but focused on God.

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. WHAT: Christ-followers are called to live lives that honor God.
2. WHY: Teenagers who understand and make the commitment necessary to lead lives that honor God place themselves in a position of lifelong spiritual growth.
3. HOW: Your students will consider their environment and their influences to see if people are leading them down a path that goes against God’s desires, and if so, they will consider ways to change or resist that influence.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE
Psalm 101

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES
1 Corinthians 9:22-23 and Ephesians 5:1-2

TEACHING PREP
The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead.

Read Psalm 101.

As Christ-followers, we are called to identify ourselves with our Savior, to be like the one we follow. And while we are forgiven and made right in God’s eyes through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, the Bible is clear: We must strive through our actions and attitudes to be Christ-like.

The desire to live a God-honoring life is a theme that comes up repeatedly in David’s psalms. In this lesson’s passage, we see David expressing his desire to live a life that is blameless. He talks about the direct actions he would take to achieve this goal. Along the way, he addresses the idea of the company he keeps, implying that the actions of others have an effect on our efforts to live God-centered lives.

Relationships form the nucleus of a teenager’s world. The company your students keep may have more of an impact on their faith lives than anyone else does, outside of their parents. Your students’ friends have the ability to draw them closer to God or to push them away from God. It’s important for teenagers to think about the friends they keep and whether or not these friends have a positive or a negative impact on their lives.
THE BEFORE & AFTER [optional]

Text Message Questions
We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- Are you pursuing a God-honoring life? Big question, huh? Let’s talk in small group tonight.

- What influence do your friends have on you? Come to small group and we’ll talk about it.
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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [optional]
Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then jump right into this week's lesson.

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you’d like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.

TEACHING POINTS
The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen are (1) Seek a life that honors God, (2) A life that honors God requires commitment, and (3) Don’t let other people become an obstacle.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Psalm 101 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so everyone has a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: No matter how much you want to reach a destination, having the wrong directions makes it really hard. Wrong directions can steer you off your desired course. In life, we see the same thing happen. Let’s spend a few minutes talking about the importance of leading lives that honor and please God, with a focus on the role that our friends and environments play in hindering or helping our pursuit of God-centered lives.

1. Seek a life that honors God

ASK:
- What’s the longest period of time you’ve ever gone without making a mistake or sinning?
- In verse 2, David says this: I will be careful to live a blameless life. Was David saying it was possible to live a perfect life and never sin? If not, what do you think he was communicating?
- What kinds of challenges do you and other teenagers face each day that can make it difficult to pursue a life that honors God?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: The pursuit of a life that honors God is at the heart of who we are as Christ-followers. The Bible calls us to exhibit self-control to limit our sinful urges and tendencies. While we will never lead perfect lives, and while we are ultimately made righteous in God’s eyes through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and through no means of our own, we are called to lead disciplined lives and be like Christ in our daily habits and choices.
2. A life that honors God requires commitment

**ASK:**
- Is it possible to "accidentally" lead a life that honors God? Why or why not?
- What is likely to happen to your relationship with God if you aren’t committed or taking steps to keep that relationship healthy and growing?

Ask students to form groups of three or four for these questions.

**ASK:**
- Look through this psalm and identify all the specific actions that helped David—and would help you—live a life that honors God. Which of these actions are currently part of your life or would be easy to incorporate? Which might be difficult to incorporate, and why?
- In verse 3, David says he refused to look at things that were vile and vulgar. Why is that an important commitment for a Christian to make? How do our environments—what we see, what we hear, where we go—impact our effectiveness at living lives that honor God?

Bring students back together.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Commitment is essential to leading lives that honor God. Spiritual growth doesn’t happen accidentally; we must remain diligent in practicing habits that draw us closer to God and avoiding habits and places that draw us away from God. If we surround ourselves with images, thoughts, and environments that are full of things that go against the ways of God, it is far more difficult to stay on track spiritually. But if we are diligent in keeping our thoughts and hearts focused on God, we will have a much clearer path to leading the lives God calls us to lead.

3. Don’t let other people become an obstacle

**ASK:**
- Which people are having the most positive influence on your life these days, and why are they having such a solid influence?
- Now think about people who are having a negative impact on your desire to live a God-centered life. Don’t mention their names, but why do they have such a strongly negative influence on you?
- Verse 6 reminds us that it isn’t enough to avoid people who are a negative influence; we also must seek people who provide a positive influence. Where have you found friends like this? Where might you find additional friends who will support and encourage you as you pursue a life that imitates God?
- Does this psalm support the idea that followers of Christ shouldn’t have any friends who aren’t Christians? Why or why not?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** We cannot simply surround ourselves with Christ-followers only; if we did, how would people learn about God’s love and grace? But we must be aware of the impact people have on our commitment to live God-centered lives. People hold powerful influence in our lives, so if we surround ourselves with people who constantly lead us away from Christ, we will find our faith deeply weakened.
ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [optional]

ASK:
- Read 1 Corinthians 9:22-23. How do these verses speak to the tension between needing to be in contact with those who do not know Christ and being negatively influenced by those who are not seeking to live God-centered lives?
- How could Paul find common ground with everyone without compromising his beliefs? What might this look like in a modern context?
- Read Ephesians 5:1-2. What do you think it means to "imitate" God?

APPLICATION

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.

ASK:
- Earlier we talked about the people influencing you positively or negatively. Are you willing to address your relationships with the people affecting you negatively? Think of a few ways you might approach them or other ways to address the situation to limit the negative impact it has on your desire for a God-centered life.
- Identify some potential friendships or mentorships that you might seek out to help you more deeply live a God-centered life. What are some specific action steps to pursue these relationships?
- Are you ever a negative or positive influence on others? How can you do more to lead others toward God and God’s ways?

SUMMARY

End your lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

_I will be careful to live a blameless life—when will you come to help me? I will lead a life of integrity in my own home (Psalm 101:2)._