

**Title: Call to Exodus****[Slide 1]****Text: Psalm 1****What kind of world do you want?****A garden in the desert:****[Slide 2]**

Way back in 1929 two newly-weds named Herman and Ruth Ohme decided to create a garden in a desert. They had recently purchased 40 acres of land along the Columbia River in Washington State for an orchard. One part of the land offered a breath-taking view of the snow-capped Cascade Mountains to the west and the Columbia River 600 feet below. But the viewpoint was dry, desolate, rock-strewn and barren of any life except desert scrub.

Standing on that overlook, Herman and Ruth had a dream: they imagined it transformed into high alpine forest and meadows, complete with brooks and pools.

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To realize their dream they transplanted small evergreens from the Cascade Mountains. They planted ground cover, dug out pools, and created trails. To keep their trees and plants alive they hauled water in 5 gallon buckets from the river valley until they had installed an irrigation system.

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Standing at the edge of the gardens you can see the difference all of their hard work made: a garden in the desert.

**A song about two worlds:**

God's Word was written to empower us to do the same thing: turn our deserts into a new Garden of Eden. Nowhere do we find more down-to-earth, practical directions on how to do this than in the Psalms. They are *the story of God and His world in song*. They capture the full range of human emotion; they confront us with dark nights in spiritual wastelands, and inspire us with the vision of God and His love.

The very first psalm sets the tempo for all that follows. It sings the song of two worlds: the desert and the garden. And it challenges us to do in our lives and relationships what Ruth and Herman Ohme did to a cliff overlooking the Columbia River: turn a desert waste into a life-filled and life-giving garden.

### **Psalm 1:**

#### **[Slide 5]**

*Blessed is the one  
 who does not walk in step with the wicked  
 or stand in the way that sinners take  
 or sit in the company of mockers,  
 but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
 and who meditates on his law day and night.  
 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
 which yields its fruit in season  
 and whose leaf does not wither—  
 whatever they do prospers.*

#### **[Slide 6]**

*Not so the wicked!  
 They are like chaff  
 that the wind blows away.  
 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.  
 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,  
 but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.*

*(New International Version)*

## The Two Paths:

### The Way of the World:

Notice how the song begins. It promises *happiness*, but only if we choose the right path. True happiness *doesn't just happen*. Deserts "happen." Gardens are planted and watered. The same is true in our lives.

The writer describes the forces that ruin our lives with three terms:

- *The wicked*: The "wicked" are those who deliberately do what is wrong. They are *intentional* in their desire to hurt and destroy. They are the polar opposite of "the righteous." The wicked deliberately uproot gardens and turn them into wastelands.
- *Sinners*: The root meaning of the word "to sin," is "to miss the mark." The word "to sin" is used in the Bible to describe an arrow that doesn't find its target. Here in Psalm 1 we might think of people, or a society, that tries to get things right, but can't shoot straight. Or perhaps they end up aiming at the wrong target!
- *Mockers*: The mockers are those who ridicule God's ordering of the world. Wasn't that what the serpent was doing in the Garden of Eden when he questioned God's command to not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?

The writer commands that we not *walk, stand or sit* in a world opposed to our Creator's purposes. In each case, he is speaking of an entire system that has become infected with wickedness, sin and mocking. Such a system creates its own culture and world view. It imposes its story of the world on everyone it touches. It strives to turn God's world upside down.

### The Way of "Torah":

The other path that the writer presents us with is the Way defined by "the law of the LORD." The Hebrew word for "law" is "Torah." Torah means more than a collection of rules, however. Its root meaning is "teaching," and Torah does guide us and teach us to turn our deserts into God's Garden.

In the broadest sense, Torah is the story of God and His world. The first five books of the OT are known collectively as Torah. In them we discover God as Creator and as the God who redeems and restores His broken world. We

discover God creating a solemn covenant with a man, a family, and eventually a people. And we see God take that people out of Egypt and to the border of the Promised Land.

The writer commands us to fill our hearts and minds with God's Story and be like the person:

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*Psalm 1:2 NIV*

*...whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.*

It's not enough to *avoid* the broken and destructive elements of our world. We must put something else in the place of this world's false values and false story. God's Torah, God's Story and values must become our deepest delight and our default thinking. That means reading God's Word and internalizing it. It means letting God be King in your life no matter what is going on.

**Garden and Desert:**

How important is it that we make God's Story our story in every area of our lives? When God's Story is our story and we follow God's marching orders, our lives become God's Garden:

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*Psalm 1:3 NIV*

*That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
whatever they do prospers.*

The word the writer uses for "planted" means "to transplant." It refers to taking a tree that was growing somewhere else and deliberately planting it in a new place. When God's Story is our story, God plants us in His garden, right next to a stream. Like the towering fir trees in Ohme Garden, we become a garden in what was once a desert.

On the other hand, when we allow this world's story to be our story, the opposite happens:

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*Psalm 1:4 NIV*

*Not so the wicked!  
They are like chaff  
that the wind blows away.*

Things may seem to be going just fine for a while, but eventually our sins catch up with us. The things that were growing in our lives dry up and blow away.

**Call to Exodus**

**The Exodus Journey:**

To build our lives around God's Story means to take the Exodus Journey from the habits and thought life of sin into the new life of Jesus. That is what the Torah is all about. It is the story of Israel's Exodus and rebirth as God's people. It is the story of going from slavery to freedom. It is the story of God growing a garden where there was once a desert.

**Your Exodus Journey:**

Psalm 1 doesn't tell the story of an ancient people's Exodus. It commands you and me to take our own Exodus Journey. It speaks to the reality of evil, deception and mockery in our world. A single night of primetime television provides all the proof you need that our society is too often a moral and spiritual desert. If we want to become a planting in God's Garden, we'll need to leave that world behind.

What is there in your life that you would most want to see become God's Garden?

- What does your inner world look like? Is it a garden filled with God's thoughts or a desert filled with the opposite?
- What does your marriage look like? Is it a place where you, your spouse and your family are refreshed? Or is it like a plant barely hanging on for lack of shade and water?
- What is your greatest goal? Is it to climb to the top of the pile? Or is it to become God's planting in His Garden?

## **Call to Exodus:**

The very first message that Jesus delivered was all about our daring to take the Exodus Journey and become a part of God's Garden. He read from Isaiah 61, which begins with these words:

### **[Slide 10]**

*Isaiah 61:1-3 NIV*

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,*

### **[Slide 11]**

*to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
  
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty  
instead of ashes,  
the oil of joy  
instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise  
instead of a spirit of despair.*

### **[Slide 12]**

*They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the LORD  
for the display of his splendor.*

Jesus promises to do the same for you and me if we will take the Exodus Journey out of captivity and darkness into His healing and freedom. It's a journey that begins by refusing to walk, stand or sit in the old, corrupt story of this world, with all of its evil, sin and mockery. It's a story that takes us

out of mourning and despair and into God's joy and praise. It's a journey of meditating on God's Law, God's Story, God's Torah all the time.

And when we take that journey, we experience a little taste of God's fully restored Creation – God's Garden as our one and only reality:

**[Slide 13]**

*Revelation 22:1-2 NIV*

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city.*

**[Slide 14]**

*On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*

Let the healing begin today.