

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

The Happiness of the Righteous and the Ruin of the Wicked
Psalm 1; Psalm 14

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

Trust and Obey, *The Worship Hymnal* # 500; CCLI #3273472 Public Domain
Because He Lives, *The Worship Hymnal* #449; CCLI #16880
He Knows My Name, *The Worship Hymnal* #44; CCLI #2151368
Step by Step, *The Worship Hymnal* #480; CCLI #696994

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

The Happiness of the Righteous and the Ruin of the Wicked

Focal Text

Psalm 1; Psalm 73: 1-3, 23-28; Psalm 112

Background Text

Psalm 14; Psalm 37; Psalm 53

Main Idea

The righteous are the friends of God and the wicked are the enemies of both God and his true people. The righteous man continually delights in God's revealed will. The Law is not a frustration to him but a source of freedom.

Question to Explore

How do we explain to the unbelieving world the truth that God's righteous people will prosper and the wicked will not do so.

Teaching Aim

Learners will consider the truth of the teaching that the righteous will prosper.

Learners will consider the consequences of choosing wicked ways.

Learners will understand the theme of trusting in God rather than fretting about ways in which the wicked seem to prosper.

Gathering together:

Sing:

Trust and Obey, *The Worship Hymnal* # 500; CCLI #3273472 Public Domain

Because He Lives, *The Worship Hymnal* #449; CCLI #16880

First thoughts:

There are various psalms which emphasize doing good and the result of that way of living. We will examine two of those in our study. Another psalm which deals extensively with the theme of good and evil and the consequences thereof is Psalm 37.

It begins: ***Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass, they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.***

“Do not fret” the psalmist says. Instead trust, do good, delight yourself in the Lord, commit your way to the Lord, be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him. These words written so many centuries ago are absolutely vital for us to claim in the violence-filled world in which we live. There are so many atrocities, so many men, women and children dying needlessly and others whose lives are so filled with suffering that we are in anguish even though we may not personally be suffering. “Do not fret” seems to be an impossibility. But Jesus told us this too in Matthew 6:33-34 ***But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.***

May our study and worship today equip us to better live believing the promise that: ***He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.*** (Psalm 37:6)

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

The Happiness of the Righteous and the Ruin of the Wicked

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Background Text

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Learners will consider the consequences of choosing wicked ways.

Learners will understand the theme of trusting in God rather than fretting about ways in which the wicked seem to prosper.

Introduction to your personal study:

Read and meditate on Psalm 1, 73, 112, 14, 37 and 53. Spend the week of preparation letting the words of these Psalms penetrate your mind and soul. As you read about world events or hear neighborhood gossip, know that the Lord of the Universe is in control. You cannot teach what you do not believe.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

“This Psalm is a product of the sages of Israel. It belongs to a group of psalms contributed by these men and generally referred to as ‘wisdom psalms’. There are nine such psalms in the books of Psalms (1, 37, 49, 73, 112, 119, 128, 127, 133) and parts of additional psalms clearly belong to the same genre (see Psalm 19: 7-14). These poems are uniformly didactic (*meant to teach*) in nature, and glorify law (torah) in its widest conception. They are warm in their praise of the man who walks in Yaweh’s way and unsparing in their condemnation of him who departs that way” (**The Broadman Bible Commentary**, Vol. 4. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971, p. 171.)

Focusing on the Meaning:

Psalm 1:1-3

***Blessed is the man
Who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
Or stand in the way of sinners
Or sit in the seat of mockers.
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And on his law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in season
And whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.***

Blessed (Hebrew *‘ashre*) means happy. “The blessed person lives within the boundary God sets out for life with him and receives observable blessings, sometimes material and always spiritual, which bring happiness. Such blessings are not so much a reward for good acts as the natural product of life with God” (**The Disciple’s Bible**, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, p. 636).

Ben Bonney (1933-2015) was one of those blessed men. He lived all of his life in the small town of LeRoy, Saskatchewan, Canada. He was a bi-vocational pastor who earned a living by carpentry. He built with his own labour the church in the small town where he ministered for many years. Many years later as the town changed, he and his wife, Evelyn, gave the church building to the town to use for a day care centre. Their home became their centre of ministry when immigrants from China and the Philippines came to their area to work in various industries. Helping some with learning English and others with finding affordable furniture and clothing; taking some to the doctor in the

nearby city, and providing translation as well as providing meals and friendship kept them busy when others had retired. Evelyn and Ben loved to sing and often sang for those in nursing homes. Ben loved God's word and preached and lived it. When he died after falling on ice and suffering major head injuries, tributes to his life came from places around Canada, North America, and other countries. Well-known Christian leaders spoke of Ben's influence on their life. Yet, he never left the small town where he lived until two years before his death when he and Evelyn moved to a nearby larger town to be nearer a son and his family. Ben was a blessed man and he blessed all those with whom he came in contact.

The poet says that the person is blessed who does not conduct his life by the advice of the wicked ones. This thought is repeated three times. The blessed person does not hang out with sinners or join in with those who scorn the ways of the Lord – who laugh at spiritual truths. The influence of those with whom we associate affects us. This doesn't mean that we never want to associate with unbelievers. In fact, we simply cannot and do not want to live removed from those whose life style we may not like. But we need to be very, very careful that our influence on them is greater than their influence on us.

The happy person reflects on the teachings which the Lord has given. For the Psalmist that would have been the teachings of the Torah. For us, it is both the Old and New Testament. "Law is used here not in the restricted, legalistic sense...It here means, as it most frequently does in the Bible, the instruction, teaching, guidance, even the revelation of Yahweh. It is an instruction in which the happy man takes great pleasure; he considers it relevant to all he does and considers it day and night" (The Broadman Bible Commentary, p. 172).

This happy person is like a strong tree planted close to a good source of water. The tree yields fruit in season and is strong. Like Ben Bonney, the influence of this happy person extends beyond him or herself.

Psalm 1: 4-6

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 will perish.

In contrast to the peaceful and fruitful life of the righteous man, the wicked person's life will have no lasting influence – they are like chaff that the wind blows away. **The Message** by John H. Peterson states it this way:

***You're not at all like the wicked,
Who are mere windblown dust –
Without defense in court,
Unfit company for innocent people.***

We are reminded of Victor Hugo's character, Javert, in the book and later popular stage play **Les Miserables**. Javert uses these words as he is unable to extend mercy to his long-hunted enemy Jean ValJean. ValJean had originally stolen a loaf of bread to feed a starving family member. He was imprisoned. His eventual release came only with the provision that he carry and present the document showing his prison record. He destroyed it in order to gain employment. That began the long search by Javert. ValJean experiences mercy from a Catholic priest from whom he had stolen silver. From that point on, his life is devoted to doing good for others. But Javert is never able to believe the change and to extend mercy. He repeats the words ***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 will perish.***

The truth here is the contrast between those who chose to live within the boundaries God sets out for life with Him and those who make the choice to live following their own desires. The fate of the wicked belong to the Lord and not to our seeking retribution. We can easily fall into the judgmental and unloving attitude demonstrated by Javert.

Psalm 73: 1-3; 23-28

***Surely God is good to Israel,
To those who are pure in heart.
But as for me, my foot had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.
For I envied the arrogant
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.***

***Yet I am always with you;
You hold me by my right hand.
You guide me with your counsel.
And afterward you will take me into glory.
Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
But God is the strength of my heart
And my portion forever.***

***Those who are far from you will perish;
You destroy all who are unfaithful to you,
But as for me, it is good to be near God.***

***I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.***

Earlier in this chapter the author affirms ***Surely God is good to Israel to those who are pure in heart.*** However, he goes on to say that his feet had almost slipped as he saw the prosperity of the wicked. In the verses that follow, the author describes how the wicked have no struggles, have health and influence over others. It seems that faithful and pure living hardly pays off and resentment sets in.

But God helps the writer to affirm
***Yet I am always with you;
You hold me by my right hand.
You guide me with your counsel.
And afterward you will take me into glory.
Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
But God is the strength of my heart
And my portion forever.***

God does not forsake the righteous man or woman. He is always present, holding our hand and guiding with wise counsel. Furthermore, the righteous one has the hope of glory. Even when one is exhausted in body and one's heart is discouraged, God provides strength. He is forever available.

***Those who are far from you will perish;
You destroy all who are unfaithful to you,***

“Since God is the Source of life, those who separate themselves from God have separated themselves from life itself”. (vs. 27-28) (The Disciple's Study Bible, p. 693).

We do not rejoice in the destiny of those far from God. In fact, it grieves us. But it is the inevitable destiny of those who have chosen to be unfaithful to God. The Psalmist is speaking to those Jewish people who knew the way of the Lord. They had received instruction, but had ignored it.

Psalm 112

Praise the Lord.

***Blessed is the man who fears the Lord,
Who finds great delight in his commands.
His children will be mighty in the land;
The generation of the upright will be blessed.
Wealth and riches are in his house,***

***And his righteousness endures forever.
Even in darkness light dawns for the upright
For the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.
Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely,
Who conducts his affairs with justice.
Sure he will never be shaken;
A righteous man will be remembered forever.
He will have no fear of bad news;
His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.
His heart is secure, he will have no fear;
In the end he will look in triumph on his foes.
He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor,
His righteousness endures forever;
His horn will be lifted high in honor.***

***The wicked man will see and be vexed,
He will gnash his teeth and waste away;
The longings of the wicked will come to nothing.***

The focus on this lesson has been on the contrast between the happiness of the righteous and the ruin of the wicked. This Psalm portrays that contrast very succinctly.

The righteous person is happy. He/she delights in understanding and living the commands of the Lord. There is great satisfaction in what his/her children have become. There is wealth and riches. These may be material in nature, but certainly are spiritual. The wealth and riches may in fact be healthy and happy relationships, shared interests, and shared worship. Rich indeed is the parent whose very young child prays at the dinner table or whose teenagers affirm their belief to others their age.

Generosity and justice are characteristics of the righteous person.

Bad news is received knowing that God is in control of the job situation, the major illness or the death of a loved one. ***His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.***

This lengthy and meaningful description of the righteous man is followed by only a few verses which describe the vexation and despair of the wicked whose longings will come to nothing. This is a powerful descriptive sentence: ***The longings of the wicked will come to nothing.***

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Learners will consider the truth of the teaching that the righteous will prosper.

Learners will consider the consequences of choosing wicked ways.

Learners will understand the theme of trusting in God rather than fretting about ways in which the wicked seem to prosper.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

The Happiness of the Righteous and the Ruin of the Wicked

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Psalm 1; Psalm 73: 1-3, 23-28; Psalm 112

Background Text

Psalm 14; Psalm 37; Psalm 53

Main Idea

The righteous are the friends of God and the wicked are the enemies of both God and his true people. The righteous man continually delights in God's revealed will. The Law is not a frustration to him but a source of freedom.

Question to Explore

How do we explain to the unbelieving world the truth that God's righteous people will prosper and the wicked will not do so.

Teaching Aim

Learners will consider the truth of the teaching that the righteous will prosper.

Learners will consider the consequences of choosing wicked ways.

Learners will understand the theme of trusting in God rather than fretting about ways in which the wicked seem to prosper.

Connect with Life:

Explain to the group: The Psalms we will look at today are designed to teach about the validity of living a righteous life as compared to the life lead by those who do not love and serve the Lord.

Suggest that each participant consider the implication for his/her life.

Guide the Study:

Have someone read Psalm 1: 1-3.

Discuss the meaning of *blessed*. (Happy)

Then comment: “The blessed person lives within the boundary God sets out for life with him and receives observable blessings, sometimes material and always spiritual, which bring happiness. Such blessings are not so much a reward for good acts as the natural product of life with God” (*The Disciple’s Bible*, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, p. 636).

If appropriate tell Ben Bonney’s story.

Inquire: What are three ways in which the righteous person avoids being influenced by the wicked? (Does not take advice of the wicked; hang out with sinners; join in with those who laugh at spiritual truth).

Dialogue with the group how these realities are confronted by people in today’s society.

Have the group consider this: How can we relate to non-believers without being influenced by them.

Ask: What would it mean to “delight in the law of the Lord”. (Enjoy Bible study; seek to understand the moral guidelines of Scripture; treasure devotional time)

Continue: What is the picture given by the “tree planted by streams of water”?

Have someone read Psalm 1:4-6.

Now ask: What lasting influence will the wicked person have?

Add this: What is the destination of the wicked?

Discuss with the group: How do we avoid a judgmental attitude to those whose actions seem to us to fit in the category here described as “wicked”?

Have someone read Psalm 73: 1-3; 23-28

Question: What almost caused the psalmist to slip? (Envy)

Examine with the group the affirmation of God's strength given in verses 23-26.

Ask: What is the destiny of those far from God? (They will perish. "Since God is the Source of life, those who separate themselves from God have separated themselves from life itself" (vs. 27-28) (The Disciple's Study Bible, p. 693).

Have someone read Psalm 112.

Request the group to help you list ways in which the man who fears the Lord is blessed. (You may want to write these on a white board or large piece of paper).

Delights in understanding and living the commands of the Lord.

Rejoices in what his/her children have become.

Has wealth and riches which may be material in nature, but are always spiritual.

Demonstrates generosity and justice.

Trusts in the Lord even when bad news comes.

Consider the tragedy of this statement: ***The longings of the wicked will come to nothing.***

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Be sure that you have discussed the following:

The truth of the teaching that the righteous will prosper.

The consequences of choosing wicked ways.

The theme of trusting in God rather than fretting about ways in which the wicked seem to prosper.

Have someone close the study with a prayer asking God to help each one to trust God completely for what is best for each of you.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

The Happiness of the Righteous and the Ruin of the Wicked Psalm 1; Psalm 14

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Walking, Standing, Sitting

*Blessed is the man
Who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
Or stand in the way of sinners
Or sit in the seat of mockers.*

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, (Psalm 1: 1-2)

Rewrite these verses in language your friends would understand. Capture the ideas that a person is happy if they don't listen to bad advice, hang out with people into drugs, theft, murder or even less drastic evil or take a mocking attitude to spiritual truth. Give special attention to how you would express the pleasure one can take in following God's commands.

3

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

The Happiness of the Righteous and the Ruin of the Wicked

Psalm 1; Psalm 73: 1-3, 23-28; Psalm 112

Beginning the Service:

Sing

He Knows My Name, *The Worship Hymnal* #44; CCLI #2151368 or other songs which speak of praising God for His faithfulness to us.

Offering:

Praying for the World:

On April 2, 2015, terrorists attacked Garissa University College in northern Kenya and killed 147 and wounded scores of others. Pray for the families of those killed and for physical and emotional healing for those wounded or involved in this killing. Christians were targeted in this attack. Pray for strength for Christians who are living in places where such attacks are becoming commonplace. Pray for those whose hearts are so filled with hatred that they plan and carry out terrorist attacks.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Blessed Is the One

"The blessed person lives within the boundary God sets out for life with him and receives observable blessings, sometimes material and always spiritual, which bring happiness. Such blessings are not so much a reward for good acts as the natural product of life with God" (**The Disciple's Bible**, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, p. 636).

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***The Happiness of the Righteous and the Ruin of the Wicked* – 25-52-08-en**

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We may sometimes feel that the emphasis on the righteous and the wicked is an Old Testament concept. It is certainly seen again and again in Old Testament teachings. However, that same emphasis exists in the New Testament. In fact, New Testament writers referred to Old Testament teachings as Peter did in 1 Peter which refers back to Psalm 34 ***Finally all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to his prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*** (Psalm 34: 12-16)

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. (1 Peter 3:8-14)

Peter said this even though Jesus had said to him ***Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.***

Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him "Follow Me" (John 21:17b-19)

Early church history indicates that Peter was in prison for Christ's sake and he was taken out to death at the end of a long ministry. They were going to nail him to the cross and he said he was not worthy to die as Jesus died. He asked to be hung on the cross upside down.

Peter was well aware of what fate awaited him. In 2 Peter 12-15 he said:

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

Peter remembered well that Jesus had told him he would die a death which involved stretching out his hands a being lead where he did not want to go. Peter would have understood that a death by crucifixion awaited him. Yet he taught others to be eager to do good. He said that even if one should suffer for doing good, he or she would be blessed.

We are to be a blessing and in doing so be blessed. Live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble, do not repay evil with

evil, but with blessing. Both Matthew and Luke record Jesus' teaching ***Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:44-45a) But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also.*** (Luke 6:27-29a)

Peter is clear in stating that we are called to do these things – to be a blessing so that we may inherit a blessing.

Peter quotes from Psalm 34 to remind his readers that one must keep from speaking evil or speaking in a deceitful way. We must turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Finally, Peter indicates that the Lord will not bring a blessing to those who do evil because ***the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.***

That is a truly wretched thought – the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. For this reason we are instructed to do good, seek peace, live a righteous life. We wish to live within the boundary God sets out for life with him. We long for blessings, sometimes material, but always spiritual, which bring happiness. This is the natural product of life with God. (See ***The Disciple's Bible***, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, p. 636).

Call to Commitment:

Sing:

Step by Step, *The Worship Hymnal* #480; CCLI #696994

Concluding the Service:

Ask the group to bow their heads for the benediction and conclusion of the service.

Circle me, Lord.
Keep protection near
And danger afar.
Circle me, Lord
Keep hope within.
Keep doubt without.
Circle me, Lord.
Keep light near
And darkness afar.
Circle me, Lord. Amen
(from a Celtic prayer)