
Psalm 119 Study

A supplemental
study guide for our
Sola Scriptura
teaching series

The Journey Church
Author-Tim Davis

Session 1

Welcome to the first session of our study of Psalm 119. Over the next 22 sessions we'll steadily make our way through this chapter to discover what it has to say about the collection of books that is called The Holy Bible and 'The Word of God'.

Background

The authorship of Psalm 119 is a mystery. Some scholars think it was King David. Others think it might have been Ezra, the prophet. Others think it is a compilation of the work of many writers, possibly written for a king.

When it was written is as much a mystery as who wrote it. Depending on author, Psalm 119 was written somewhere between 2400-3000 years ago.

Regardless of writer, Psalm 119 has some very special qualities. First of all, it has the distinction of being the longest chapter in the Bible. But, don't let the length of the chapter hinder you. It is written in a format that will allow us to read and study the key concepts with ease. Here are some other characteristics to remember:

- Psalm 119 is written in the form of an acrostic poem. An acrostic is a series of lines or verses, which begin with or contain particular letters that, when taken in order, spell out a word or phrase. For example, GRACE – God's Riches At Christ's Expense – is an example of acrostic. Acrostics are often used as tools to help with memorization.
- It is divided into 22 stanzas of 8 verses each.
- Each stanza begins with a different letter of the 22 letter Hebrew alphabet. The first stanza (vs. 1-8) begins with the first Hebrew letter called 'aleph'. The second stanza (vs. 9-15) begins with the second letter, 'beth', and so forth.
- It uses 8 different words for God's law. The psalm uses the full meaning of these 8 words to elaborate on The Word of God.
- Beginning with verse 17, it is written in the form of a prayer.

Why study Psalm 119?

The focus of the entire psalm is on The Word of God. Studying Psalm 119 as Pastor Erik teaches us about the reliability, the accuracy, the authority, the necessity and sufficiency of the Bible will allow us to find out what the Bible says about itself. It will allow us to dig deeper into The Word of God and find out how it applies to daily life. It will also allow us to read and pray The Word of God together.

Let's get started.

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119: 1-8)

119:1 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!
2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,
3 who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! **4** You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. **5** Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! **6** Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. **7** I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. **8** I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!

Something to Think About

- As we begin our study, what is your opinion of the Bible? *[We'll come back to this question at the end of our study to find out if any of your opinions have changed.]*
- The word 'blessed' also translates as 'happy'. Re-read verses 1-2 again substituting 'happy' in place of 'blessed'. Based on these verses, how can we pursue happiness?
- Living according to The Word of God has many positive benefits. What benefits are mentioned in verses 1-8?
- As previously mentioned, there are 8 different descriptions of The Word of God used in Psalm 119. As we begin our study, take a few moments to review the following list and then re-read verses 1-8 again to see how these words are used in the first stanza.

Descriptions	Meaning
Law	Generally, refers to the first 5 books of the Old Testament
Testimonies	God's standard of conduct according to the 10 commandments
Way (or Ways)	The pattern of life required by God's law
Precepts	A commandment or requirement
Statutes	Enacted laws
Commandments	Orders; God's decrees
Judgments (or Rules)	A binding law; judicial decision
Word (or Words, Promise, Promises)	A general term of God's revelation

Source: The Nelson Study Bible (NKJV), 1997, page 1003

Key Verse to Remember

“Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart...” (Psalm 119:2)

Prayer

Father, Thank you for Your Word. Give us wisdom to understand Your Word and to apply it in our daily lives. Help us pursue the happiness that comes from keeping Your Word and seeking You with undivided hearts. Help us follow Your Ways and avoid the harm of sin. We ask these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Also, please ask God to bless Pastor Erik's sermon series and our study time over the next 6 weeks. May the next 6 weeks kindle a desire in our hearts to read the Bible and become doers of The Word.]

Session 2

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:9-16)

9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

11 I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

12 Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes! **13** With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. **14** In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. **15** I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. **16** I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Something to Think About

- Why is it important to read, learn and live by The Word, based on these verses?
- What value does the writer place on The Word in verse 14? How much value do you place on The Word?
- Remember the 8 descriptions for The Word of God in verses 1-8? How many of them reappear in verses 9-16? *[The main theme of Psalm 119 is God's Word and the writer is emphasizing the importance of The Word by repeatedly using these descriptions throughout the chapter.]*

Key Verse to Remember

"I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."
(Psalm 119:11)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Help us store up Your Word in our hearts and minds and allow it to be our guide for life. Help us to think about Your Word and find joy in it.
Amen.

Session 3

Background

Even though the writer of Psalm 119 is unconfirmed, some of the verses below give credibility to David being the author of Psalm 119 because of similarity in language to the Davidic psalms.

Beginning with verse 17, Psalm 119 becomes a prayer. As the writer begins his prayer, note the requests he make of God as well as his testimonies about God.

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:17-24)

17 Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. **18** Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. **19** I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me! **20** My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times. **21** You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments. **22** Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies. **23** Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. **24** Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

Something to Think About

- Young's literal translation of verse 17 reads, "Confer benefits on Thy servant, I live, and I keep Thy word." Do you think it is appropriate to ask God for 'benefits' or to 'deal bountiful' with you?
- Do you think God's benefits and bountiful dealings are in any way connected with our obedience to His ways? *[Consider the writer's prayer in verse 17 to 'deal bountifully with your servant' as well as the writer's acknowledgement in verse 21 that God rebukes those who wander from His commandments. Obedience to God's Word is important for every believer. Find out what Jesus had to say about the importance (and benefits) of obedience by reading Luke 6:46-49.]*
- Do you have a desire know God's Word? *[In verse 19, the writer describes himself as a sojourner, a visitor passing through this world and asks God not to hide His commandments from him. In verse 20, the writer longs for God's judgments – for His Word. Do you see yourself in this way, as someone passing through life who desperately needs the direction and counsel (vs. 24) of God?]*

Key Verse to Remember

"Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word."
(Psalm 119:17)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Open our eyes that we may see wondrous things from Your Word.
Amen.

Session 4

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:25-32)

25 My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word! **26** When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes! **27** Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. **28** My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! **29** Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! **30** I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. **31** I cling to your testimonies, O Lord; let me not be put to shame! **32** I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!

Something to Think About

- Have you ever found yourself spiritually dry or disobedient to God's Word? What did you do for spiritual revival?
- What role does God's Word have in spiritual revival? *[These verses point us to The Word as a solution to a spiritual drought and as a catalyst for spiritual renewal.]*

Key Verse to Remember

"I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me."
(Psalm 119:30)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, When we are spiritually dry, revive us according to Your Word. When we sin and stray away from You, please forgive us and draw us back to You. Help us to choose faithfulness and hold on tightly to Your Word. Give us bigger hearts for your Word. Amen.

Session 5

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:33-40)

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. **34** Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

35 Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. **36** Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! **37** Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. **38** Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared. **39** Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good. **40** Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!

Something to Think About

- What do you do when you find yourself clearly in the wrong? *[Within this passage is the subject of repentance. When we find ourselves seeking selfish gain, we are to stop and incline our hearts to God's Word (vs. 36). When we find ourselves pursuing worthless things, we are to stop and pursue God's ways instead (vs. 37). Repentance is recognizing we're wrong, stopping what we are doing wrong and starting to do what is right in God's eyes. How do we know what is right in God's eyes? His Word tells us.]*

Key Verse to Remember

"Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways."
(Psalm 119:37)

Prayer

O Lord, Help us stop being selfishness and pursuing worthless things. Help us pursue Your Ways instead. Help us understand Your Ways by reading Your Word. Amen.

Session 6

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:41-48)

41 Let your steadfast love come to me, O Lord, your salvation according to your promise; **42** then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word. **43** And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules. **44** I will keep your law continually, forever and ever, **45** and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts. **46** I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, **47** for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. **48** I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.

Something to Think About

- In your opinion, is the Bible a book about freedom or restraint?
- As the writer continues to offer his prayer, he says to God, "I will keep your law...forever..." The writer then follows with "...and I shall walk in a wide place..." This statement, in verse 45, also translates, "...and I will walk at liberty..." The writer is equating keeping God's Word with freedom. Disobedience, going against God's Word, is bondage. We might think that living without The Word of God gives us freedom. On the contrary, disobedience binds us with guilt, regrets, consequences of bad choices, anxieties and all kinds of problems. Living in obedience to God's Word may not prevent us from ever experiencing these things, but an obedient lifestyle offers us a spiritual freedom that living disobediently can not provide.

Key Verses to Remember

"I will keep your law continually, forever and ever, and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts." (Psalm 119: 44-45)

Prayer

Father, Take away the bondage of our past disobedience and set us free to worship and serve You with clean hearts and minds. Thank you for the freedom we have in following You and living according to Your Ways. Amen.

Session 7

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:49-56)

49 Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. **50** This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life. **51** The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law. **52** When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O Lord. **53** Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law. **54** Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning. **55** I remember your name in the night, O Lord, and keep your law. **56** This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts.

Something to Think About

- What are some of the promises found in God's Word that give you hope, bring you comfort in difficult times and/or get you excited about living?
- As a review, take a look at the promises found in these verses: Romans 10:9 (salvation), Matthew 5:3-12 (the Beatitudes), Matthew 6:33-34 (God's provision), John 14:1-3 (Jesus' return for us). These are just a small sampling of the many promises that are found in God's Word.

Key Verse to Remember

"Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope."
(Psalm 119:49)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Thank you for Your promises to us that give us hope. Most of all, thank you for Your Son, Jesus, through whom we have the most wonderful promise and hope of all – peace with You. Amen.

Session 8

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:57-64)

57 The Lord is my portion; I promise to keep your words. **58** I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. **59** When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies; **60** I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. **61** Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law. **62** At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules. **63** I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts. **64** The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!

Something to Think About

- Is it OK to ask for God's favor on our lives? This is essentially the same question we asked ourselves back in Session 3. But, here in verse 58, the writer straight out asks for God's favor and/or His grace (depending on the Bible translation you read). But, notice the phrase, "...according to your promise." It is OK to ask God for things that He has promised us. *[Take a look at Matthew 7:7-11 to find out what Jesus had to say about asking things of God.]*
- How quickly do you obey God's Word? Do you take His Word's as advice to be considered or as commands to be obeyed? *[In our connected world, advice is readily available. We can shop for the advice that sounds best to us. But, if we aren't careful, advice – even seemingly good advice – can lead us to become entrapped in cords of wickedness (vs. 61). Remember, from Session 6, following God's Word brings freedom. Let's hasten to keep His commands (vs. 60).]*

Key Verse to Remember

"I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise." (Psalm 119:58)

Prayer

Father, Be gracious to us according to Your promises and grant us Your favor. Help us keep your commands given to us in Your Word. Amen.

Session 9

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:65-72)

65 You have dealt well with your servant, O Lord, according to your word. **66** Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments. **67** Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. **68** You are good and do good; teach me your statutes. **69** The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts; **70** their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law. **71** It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. **72** The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

Something to Think About

- What are some valuable lessons you've learned from past decisions – good and bad decisions?
- Thinking of lessons learned from bad decisions, have you reached the point that you can agree with the writer of Psalm 119 in saying, "...It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes (v. 71)...?"
- Sometimes we have to experience the painful consequences of bad choices in order to better understand the joy that comes with living according to God's Word. Like a child who gets burned by touching a hot stove after repeated warnings from a parent, we too sometimes have to experience the hurt that comes from going astray (v. 67). But, even though it may take time, once we learn the lesson we can often look back on the experience and say it was good. We learned a lesson more valuable than money (vs. 71-72).
- For more on this subject, go to Hebrews 12:5-11.

Key Verse to Remember

"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes."
(Psalm 119:71)

Prayer

Father, Forgive us when we go astray from You and Your Word. Thank you for dealing well with us and teaching us - even through the bad decisions we sometimes make. Help us see Your Ways as more valuable to our lives than gold and silver. Amen.

Session 10

Background

The letter of the Hebrew alphabet that begins this section is “Jod”. It is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet and the one Jesus mentions in Matthew 5:18 when he says, “...one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” (NKJV) Jesus is telling us that not even the smallest letter (Jod) or even a punctuation mark (tittle) will pass away until God’s law, His Word is fulfilled. It is one of God’s promises we can depend on.

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:73-80)

73 Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments. **74** Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word. **75** I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. **76** Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. **77** Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight. **78** Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts. **79** Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies. **80** May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!

Something to Think About

- Do you consider yourself to be a role model for others to follow?
- In verses 74 and 78, the writer prays that those who honor God would turn to him (the writer) and: (1) rejoice because he has put his hope in God’s Word (2) know God’s testimonies. He seems to be asking God to let others look upon him and have hope in God because God’s Word’s are alive and active in his life. Can others see God at work in your life?

Key Verse to Remember

“Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word.”
(Psalm 119:74)

Prayer

Father, Help us let Your Words be alive and active in our lives. Help us be examples for others to follow, for others to have reasons to hope in You. Amen.

Session 11

Background

In this session (vs. 81-88), the writer descends into despair. Throughout Psalm 119, generally from the 3rd stanza to the 21st stanza, the writer wrestles with external oppression. But, in this passage, the writer sinks into the depths of despair.

In verses 23 and 161, the writer identifies one of the sources of his oppression as princes – powerful men. In other verses, the oppression he suffers seems to be generally coming for ungodly people. The writer never specifically identifies the cause of the tension between him and his oppressors. However, based on the writings of the Psalmist, it might be inferred that is because of his steadfast stand on The Word of God.

Standing up for ones beliefs is not always popular and sometimes it causes friction. Jesus is a perfect illustration. During His earthly ministry great crowds of people sometimes came to see and hear Him. But, he was also very unpopular with others. Some leaders challenged him. Some people turned away from him because they did not understand him. In the end, powerful men conspired to have Jesus killed because he challenged their position and authority.

Hopefully, you will never experience the depths of despair, but if you ever do, perhaps the words of this passage will help you pray. Perhaps it will give you words to say to God that you could not otherwise speak and a hope you would not otherwise have.

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:81-88)

81 My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word. **82** My eyes long for your promise; I ask, “When will you comfort me?” **83** For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes. **84** How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me? **85** The insolent have dug pitfalls for me; they do not live according to your law. **86** All your commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me! **87** They have almost made an end of me on earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts. **88** In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

Something to Think About

- Ever feel like God has forgotten you? Perhaps you prayed your heart out and turned to the Bible for answers, but it seemed that God didn't show up.
- This is the situation of the writer of Psalm 119, in this passage. His hope is still in God. He longs for the fulfillment of God's promises. He clings to God's Word. But, where is God? To paraphrase verses 83-84, the writer is praying, 'God, I'm drying up. How long must I hold on? How long will it be before you help me?'

- If this has ever been your experience then you'll want to read on in Psalm 119. As the old saying goes, 'Night is darkest just before dawn'. Dawn is coming as we'll see in the next session.

Key Verse to Remember

My eyes long for your promise; I ask, "When will you comfort me?"
(Psalm 119:82)

Prayer

Father, When our days are darkened with sorrow, when we are burdened to the point of breaking, when our lives are falling apart, be near us. Even when we can't sense Your presence, be near us. Help us to find comfort simply from knowing You hear our cries, You love us and, in due time, You will raise us up again. In the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Session 12

Background

In this passage, at the point of desperation, the writer of Psalm 119 turns toward God in surrender and praise. He has not escaped the clutches of his despair, but he has turned toward his source of help.

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:89-96)

89 Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. **90** Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. **91** By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants. **92** If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. **93** I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. **94** I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts. **95** The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies. **96** I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

Something to Think About

- In our last session, the writer was in the pit of despair. 'I'm almost gone,' to paraphrase the first part of verse 87. But, in similar fashion to Job, the writer looks heavenward and proclaims, "Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations..." At the depths of his despair, the writer is moved to proclaim the sovereignty of God. He says that God's Word is firmly fixed – it is settled. God's faithfulness endures. God made everything and He is in control of everything. In verse 96, the writer seems to imply that he has seen boundaries, but God's Word exceeds what he has observed as boundaries.
- Next time you feel crushed down and defeated by life, turn to Psalm 119:89-96 and pray these verses to God.

Key Verse to Remember

"Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens." (Psalm 119:89)

Prayer

Father, When I am hurting, help me remember You are in control of everything. When I am ready to give up, strengthen me. I am Yours, O Lord. Save me. Amen.

Session 13

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:97-104)

97 Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. **98** Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. **99** I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. **100** I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. **101** I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. **102** I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. **103** How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! **104** Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Something to Think About

- Do you consider yourself to be a student of God's Word? Every follower of Jesus needs to be a student. To follow Jesus, we need to know His ways? We learn about His character, His Ways, His expectations of His followers by reading and studying God's Word.
- In verses 99-100, the writer tells God [*remember, this is still a prayer*] that he has more understanding than his teachers and those that are older. This seems to be a bold claim. But, by studying and applying The Word of God in our lives, it is possible to become wiser than those who oppose us with ungodly actions, to have more understanding than worldly teachers, to understand more than those who've lived long, but lived according to the world. No matter how young or old it is possible to acquire wisdom by reading and applying God's Word.
- If, as described in verses 102-103, God's Word is sweeter to us than worldly wisdom and if we are steadfast in following The Word, we can stand strong through the ups and downs of life...and bring glory to God.

Key Verse to Remember

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"
(Psalm 119:103)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Give us wisdom, Your wisdom. Help us become students of Your Word and also help us to be doers of Your Word and not just hearers only. Amen.
(James 1:5; 1:22)

Session 14

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:105-112)

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. **106** I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules. **107** I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word! **108** Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your rules. **109** I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. **110** The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. **111** Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. **112** I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

Something to Think About

- Verse 105 is one of the standout verses of the Bible. Google it and you'll get over 200,000 hits. You can listen to a song titled after this verse. You can watch a video of musicians performing the song. You can buy a book with the verse as its title. You can even buy a plaque for your wall or desk with this verse on it. What makes this verse so special?
- The simple, yet profound truth it conveys is the reason this verse is so special. God's Word is our light in a dark world. It is a beacon of light in spiritual darkness showing us the way home. It is easy to get lost in life. We have so many decisions to make and so many distractions. Even with the best of intentions, it is easy to get lost. How do we find our way back? Turning to God's Word. It is our lamp and our light.
- But, the power of this verse is not only in the truth it speaks. The power of this verse is also in applying this truth in our lives. When we stand firm in The Word and live by it as described in verses 106-112, the truth comes alive. We become living testimonies of the power of God's Word to illuminate darkened lives and transform people from being lost to being on a journey with God.

Key Verse to Remember

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105)

Prayer

Father, May Your Word be our light and our guide. Help us to live by Your Word and become examples of its life changing power. Amen.

Session 15

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:113-120)

113 I hate the double-minded, but I love your law. **114** You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word. **115** Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God. **116** Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope! **117** Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually! **118** You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain. **119** All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies. **120** My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments.

Something to Think About

- Are you good at handling peer pressure?
- Peer pressure, the negative kind, is a problem for kids and adults alike. We experience the pressure to take unnecessary risks, tell lies, cheat, steal, compromise our values and ethics and the list goes on and on. The writer of Psalm 119 dealt with it too. Even though he makes it abundantly clear that his intentions are to live by God's Word, it seems the pressure to compromise is strong. In verse 115, the writer prays for the evildoers to depart from him so that he can keep God's Word. In verse 116, he prays for God to uphold him so that he would not be put to shame.
- Perhaps your experience is different, but it seems that when we submit to peer pressure and compromise our values we gain little if any esteem from those who pressure us. It is as if the devil himself has tempted us and now smugly reassures himself that he was right about us all along. And, when our compromise is exposed, rarely do those who pressure us stand with us in support. We're left to bear the weight of our guilt alone.

Key Verses to Remember

"Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God. Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope!" (Psalm 119:115-116)

Prayer

Father, When I am tempted to go astray and compromise on Your Word, help me stand firm on what You have taught me and not fall. Help those who tempt me to sin to recognize their wrong and repent so that we can help one another worship and serve you always. Amen.

Session 16

Background

If you have followed Psalm 119 to this point, you have discovered the repeated use of the 8 words that describe The Word of God – law, testimonies, way, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word. You’ve also discovered that one of these 8 words is used in almost every verse in the chapter.

A unique feature of this stanza is that in verse 122 the writer does not use any of the words for The Word of God. Instead the writer appeals directly to God. The writer’s anguish has returned. He is frustrated by his oppressors and cries out to God in prayer for deliverance.

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:121-128)

121 I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors. **122** Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me. **123** My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise. **124** Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes. **125** I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies! **126** It is time for the Lord to act, for your law has been broken. **127** Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. **128** Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.

Something to Think About

- Have you ever wondered why the wicked prosper while good people suffer? It is a common question. Jeremiah, the prophet, once asked God the question (Jeremiah 12:1-2). Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrestled with the question (Ecclesiastes 8:11-13). The writer of Psalm 119 is asking this question too. In fact, he is so frustrated that he exclaims, “It is time for the Lord to act...”
- Perhaps you too are frustrated by the news of greed, corruption, bad decisions, bail outs and obscene payouts coming from Wall Street, corporate board rooms, the halls of government...and even some nonprofits and churches. Perhaps you too have exclaimed, “Lord, it’s time for you to act.”
- But, here is an assuring word as well as a word of warning from God himself, “...for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” (Exodus 20:5b-6).
- And, here is what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Galatia, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” (Galatians 6:7).
- Followers of Christ would be much better off praying for the wicked to repent rather than being frustrated by their prosperity. The prosperity of the wicked is only temporary and, without repentance, for this life only.

Key Verse to Remember

“It is time for the Lord to act, for your law has been broken.” (Psalm 119:126)

Prayer

Father, Forgive our sins and help those who choose to live wickedly to repent. We know You mercifully withhold judgment to allow time for repentance. We thank You for Your mercies and love in the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

Session 17

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:129-136)

129 Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them. **130** The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. **131** I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments. **132** Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. **133** Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me. **134** Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts. **135** Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes. **136** My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.

Something to Think About

- In session 1, a question was asked about your personal opinion of the Bible. In verse 129 of this passage, the writer gives us his opinion of the Bible. He declares it to be wonderful – wonderful enough to keep. If we were to consider the Bible to be a great book, we would be correct. It has been translated into numerous languages and is one of the best selling books of all time. If we were to consider the Bible to be a treasure, we would be correct. It is an ancient book, written by many authors over a period of centuries. It has been meticulously copied and preserved and passed down from generation to generation. Many have literally given their lives so that we can have a Bible and have a copy to read in our own language. But, to say that the Bible is “wonderful...therefore my soul keeps it” is a greater statement about the Bible. If we read the Bible, but don’t keep it, we have read a great book, a great treasure from the past. But, if we read it and keep it and let it transform our life, we will glorify God. We will be drawn to Him and He will draw near to us.
- The writer also declares The Word to be a source of light (or illumination) and to be a teacher of the simple (vs. 130). This statement is more than poetic language. The writer is telling us that the Bible can illuminate our lives. It can show us where we are spiritually and it can point us in the direction we need to go. The writer is also telling us that the Bible can teach us how to live. As for the phrase “the simple”, we are all simple before God. There are some who may consider themselves to be too intelligent to be taught by the Bible. But, in the end, we will find that the most simple person who puts their trust in God and in His Word will be more highly exalted than those with the greatest minds but have not trusted God.
- This passage also includes another often-quoted verse, verse 133b, “...let no iniquity get dominion over me.” The writer prays for God to steady his life according to the promises of His Word and not let any sin dominate him. Shouldn’t this be a prayer for every follower of Christ to pray for himself/herself, for their families, their friends, their co-workers, their acquaintances and everyone with whom they come in contact? *[The words of verse 133b are very similar to those found in Psalm 19:13, a Psalm of King David. If you would like to dig a little deeper, read the 14 verses of Psalm 19 and compare what it has to say*

about The Word of God to what Psalm 119 says about The Word.]

Key Verse to Remember

“Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.” (Psalm 119:133)

Prayer

Father, Look upon me and be gracious to me. Please forgive all my sins – the sins that are known by others and those that I keep in secret. Let no sin have control over me. Smile upon me and teach me Your Ways. In the name of Your Son, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Session 18

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:137-144)

137 Righteous are you, O Lord, and right are your rules. **138** You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness. **139** My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget your words. **140** Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it. **141** I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts. **142** Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true. **143** Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight. **144** Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live.

Something to Think About

- Is the Bible the authentic Word of God? Is the Bible true? Does the Bible contain the truth about the way we should live our lives? These are the key questions in this session and they are very important questions because the answers determine the direction of our lives. If we truly believe the Bible is The Word of God and that we should live our lives by its teachings, then we have to take immediate action. We have to read it and study it to know what the Bible says. We have to apply what it says to our everyday lives in how we relate to God and to the people around us and how we handle the circumstances of life.
- In the Apostle Paul's letter to his disciple Timothy, he wrote, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Also, consider the Apostle Peter's testimony in his letter to the church, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty...And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:16-21; NKJV)
- Both Paul and Peter believed Scripture was the authentic Word of God. They believed it was true. Peter not only believed, he knew. He was an eyewitness of Jesus. Both of these men went to their deaths believing in the truth of God's Word.
- How about you? In your opinion, is the Bible really God's Word? Does the Bible really contain the truth about how we should live and how we should conduct our lives? If your answer to these questions is yes, how are your beliefs reflected in your daily life? If your answer is no, in your opinion, why do you think Jesus believed the Scriptures to be true (see Matthew 5:17-18)?

Key Verse to Remember

“Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live.”
(Psalm 119:144)

Prayer

Father, As we read Your Word, give us understanding. Help us live by it so that our lives will bring You honor and testify to Your righteousness. Amen.

Session 19

Background

In this session, the writer of Psalm 119 returns to the point of despair. As Psalm 119 unfolds, the writer descends into despair – especially in verses 81-88 (Session 11). His mood then seems to rise for a while; only to fall into despair once again in verses 145-152. Here we find the Psalmist struggling with the question: God, why won't You answer me?

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:145-152)

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O Lord! I will keep your statutes. **146** I call to you; save me, that I may observe your testimonies. **147** I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words. **148** My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise. **149** Hear my voice according to your steadfast love; O Lord, according to your justice give me life. **150** They draw near who persecute me with evil purpose; they are far from your law. **151** But you are near, O Lord, and all your commandments are true. **152** Long have I known from your testimonies that you have founded them forever.

Something to Think About

- Have you ever been desperate, really desperate to hear from God? What did you do in order to reach out to God?
- In this passage, the writer is desperate for God. He is crying out to God from the bottom of his heart. "Answer me!" "Save me!" He rises before dawn to pray. He lies sleepless in his bed at night praying and meditating on God's Word. His oppressors continue to trouble him. They're bringing trouble closer and closer. But, the writer of Psalm 119 recognizes that God is near and he is relying on His Word.
- In verse 152, the writer makes a powerful statement about the eternal nature of God's Word. It is also a powerful recognition of the significance of God's Word. Just think. God's Word is the same today as it was before the world was created. Likewise, God's Word is the same today as it will be long after this world has passed away. The Word describes God as unchanging ("...who was and is and is to come!" (Revelation 4:8)) and Jesus, His Son as the same yesterday, today and forever more (see Hebrews 13:8). God's character does not change. His view on how humans should live does not change. His judgment of right and wrong does not change. He is the same and His Word is the same.

Key Verses to Remember

"But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true. Long have I known from your testimonies that you have founded them forever."
(Psalm 119:151-152)

Prayer

Father, Today I am bringing my greatest need to You. *[Right now, take some time to tell God your greatest need, the thing that is troubling you the most. Describe the situation to God. Tell Him how you feel about it. Ask Him for help with your situation.]*

Lord, thank you for hearing me. Help me to do what You instruct me to do whether it is to expectantly wait on You or take some action this very moment. I submit this need to You, Eternal God, in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Session 20

Background

In this passage, still near the point of desperation, the writer of Psalm 119 is anxiously seeking God. Reminiscent of the trials of Job, the Psalmist cries out to God for deliverance from his oppressors.

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:153-160)

153 Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law. **154** Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise! **155** Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes. **156** Great is your mercy, O Lord; give me life according to your rules. **157** Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from your testimonies. **158** I look at the faithless with disgust, because they do not keep your commands. **159** Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love. **160** The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

Something to Think About

- When you encounter difficulties and pray for relief, what do you ask of God?
- In this passage, the writer again turns his eyes to his oppression. But, there seems to be a difference in his requests of God this time. Three times he prays, “give me life.” The Hebrew word also translates to “quicken” or “revive.” The writer asks God for deliverance from his affliction, redemption from his situation and for life – give me life, make me alive, revive my life. For what purpose does the writer ask these things? So that he may continue to keep God’s Word, that he may experience God’s mercies, that he may enjoy the benefits of God’s love.
- The phrase “Plead my cause” in verse 154 is a legal term. The writer is asking God to be his advocate – essentially, he is asking God to represent him as his attorney. As followers of Christ, we have the promise of a divine attorney that represents us in God’s courtroom. His name is Jesus. The Apostle John writes, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2).” The term “propitiate” means “to appease.” In other words, Jesus paid the price for our sins. The separation from God we are due because of our sins is appeased by Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross.
- Finally, verse 160 continues the theme also found in verse 152 in the previous session (19). The writer again affirms his belief that God’s Word has endured and will endure forever. In verse 160, the writer also states, “The sum of your word is truth...” The Psalmist is affirming his belief that all of God’s Word is true. *[As a review, go back to the “Something to Think About” section in Session 18 and read through those scripture passages from 2 Timothy and 2 Peter again.]*

Key Verse to Remember

“The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.” (Psalm 119:160)

Prayer

[Please use the prayer time for this session to continue praying for the personal struggles you are facing or for someone else who is struggling. Remember, we have an advocate in heaven (1 John 2:1-2) who intercedes with God on our behalf (Romans 8:34-39).]

Session 21

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:161-168)

161 Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words. **162** I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. **163** I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law. **164** Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules. **165** Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble. **166** I hope for your salvation, O Lord, and I do your commandments. **167** My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly. **168** I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you.

Something to Think About

- The steadfastness and determination of the writer of Psalm 119 is remarkable. In previous sessions he has referred to his oppressors in general terms, but, in this passage, he is more specific. Powerful men, princes, are oppressing him without cause. Even though persons in authority are making his life miserable, the writer of Psalm 119 resolves to stand in awe of God, rejoice in God's Word, love God's Word, praise God and to keep God's commands.
- In a world struggling for peace, followers of Jesus have an opportunity to find peace. Not a worldly peace, but God's kind of peace – a peace that comes from being in right relationship with Him. Like the writer of Psalm 119, when we resolve ourselves to follow God regardless of the circumstances around us, we have the promise of God's peace - an inner tranquility of spirit that defies circumstances and the ability of the human mind to create or understand.
- To explore this a little further, here are some verses from the writings of the Apostle Paul regarding God's peace:

“For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” (Romans 8:6)

“...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:6-8)

Key Verse to Remember

“Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.”
(Psalm 119:165)

Prayer

Father, Grant us Your peace in times of trouble. Help us stand firm and follow You regardless of our circumstances, in good times and in bad. Thank You for the promise of peace with You through Jesus, Your Son. In His name we pray. Amen.

Session 22

The Bible Passage (Psalm 119:169-176)

169 Let my cry come before you, O Lord; give me understanding according to your word! **170** Let my plea come before you; deliver me according to your word.

171 My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes. **172** My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right. **173** Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts. **174** I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight. **175** Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me. **176** I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.

Something to Think About

- This is the final stanza of Psalm 119. As we conclude our study, we return again to the question asked in session 1. What is your opinion of the Bible? Perhaps you find it a frustrating book to read. If so, don't give up on reading the Bible. Pray, as did the writer of Psalm 119, for more understanding and pledge yourself to further study. Find an easy to read translation, maybe a study Bible with notes to help you and try reading a book like John or Mark in the New Testament. Perhaps you find the Bible fascinating to read and want to dig deeper. If so, you might consider a reading plan that will take you through the entire Bible. Reading plans are available online and special Bibles are available to help you achieve this goal.
- Here are some final observations on verses 169-176. With the conclusion of this section, the writer concludes the prayer he began in verse 17. He is still struggling with his oppression and he is still crying out to God. Hopefully, the writer's struggles will be an inspiration to you to hold on to God during difficulties. As one commentator on this passage wrote, we have no where else to go. As followers of Christ, where else can we turn but to God in prayer and to His Word.
- In verse 176, the final verse, the writer makes a comment that seems to connect back to our very first session. "I have gone astray..." the writer confesses. Back in verse 5, he remarks, "Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!" In another translation, this verse reads, "If only my ways were committed to your statutes." Even someone with the spirituality to write such a mighty Psalm confesses his problem with staying committed to God. If you struggle with staying committed to God, don't despair. Open God's Word and read what it has to say. Make the Bible the foundation of your life. Allow The Word to draw you closer to God. *[For more about drawing closer to God, see James 4:7-11.]*

Key Verses to Remember

“I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight. Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me.” (Psalm 119:174-175)

Prayer

Father, Thank You for this Psalm and for what it teaches us about Your Word. Thank You for using the writer of this Psalm to teach us about life and to show us that even people who seem to be spiritual giants struggle with things just like we do. Thank You for the promises of Your Word and for the hope we have in Your promises. Thank You, most of all, for Your Son, Jesus and we pray in His name. Amen.

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