

*Messengers
For
Christ*

*Outreach Program
Handbook 3*

If your Bible is like mine, you'll notice that Psalm 119 is divided into eight verse sections. Each of my eight verse sections is preceded by a Hebrew letter followed by how it is spelled in English. These are not part of the text, but have been inserted into our Bibles to communicate the acrostic arrangement of the psalm. Each of these eight verse sections begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The first section begins with *aleph*, the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, then each section that follows proceeds through the Hebrew alphabet until we arrive at the last one, the *tau* section.

There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and eight verses in each of the 22 stanzas. That is a total of 176 verses which makes this not only the largest psalm, but also the longest chapter in the Bible. As early as the 1st & 2nd centuries B.C. the Jews noted that the number "22" was significant in not just being the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet but also the number of generations from Adam to Israel, the number of works of creation, and the number of books in the Jewish canon of the Bible (Josephus, The Book of Jubilees 2.23).

Psalm 119 stands out because of its acrostic format, considerable length and singular focus on God's Word. That's why I call Psalm 119, The Acrostic Psalm of God's Word. An acrostic is a composition, usually in verse, in which the initial or final letters of the lines, taken in order, spell a word or phrase or follow the regular order of the alphabet. Psalm 119 is an example of the most fully developed form of alphabetic acrostic, the repeating stanzaic acrostic.

Although the alphabetic structure may be an aid to memory, Bullinger says in *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* that through "the use of this peculiar figure, our attention is attracted to the special importance of certain passages." He notes thirteen such passages in the scriptures and states that "whenever we meet with them we are asked to give great attention to them and put marked emphasis upon them." In these poetic acrostic texts we have consecutive units of lines, verses or groups of verses which begin with the sequential letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This form draws our attention to these special contexts that God wants to group together and highlight.

Another suggestion is that the acrostic format is used when a thorough handling of a subject is presented. As such, it is symbolic of totality or completeness (Basics of Biblical Hebrew, Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, page 6.) Motyer also suggests it is "a poetic way of saying that a total coverage of the subject was being offered."

Even today, when they try to sell us a multi-vitamin, and they want to communicate that it has everything that we need, what do they say about it? They say it has everything from A-Zinc. That's one way to show completeness.

The individual verses of Psalms 9-10, 25, 34, and 145 begin with words whose first letters consecutively course through the Hebrew alphabet from aleph to tau. In Psalm 37 we find the same arrangement for alternating verses and in Psalms 111 and 112 we find the form in each line not each verse. In Psalm 119 we find the form in eight verse sections or stanzas. Each of these units or stanzas testifies to the value of the Word of God in the life of a believer or to some special effectiveness, usefulness or benefit of the same.

So then we find thorough praise of the qualities of God in Psalms 111 and 145, the just man in Psalm 112, the virtue of the good wife in Proverbs 31, the complete grief of a man who saw Jerusalem overthrown in Lamentations 1-4, or, in the case of Psalm 119, complete devotion to and appreciation of the Word of God as the psalmist describes and praises God's Word in an all-encompassing fashion by working through the entire alphabet in an eight-fold manner.

Psalm 119 is largely a collection of prayers and meditations on the Word of the Lord. I am amazed at its variety and profundity as it seems to be the result of deep experience, meticulous observation and earnest meditation. In every verse the psalmist either praises some excellent quality of God's Word, declares his love and affection for God's Word, affirms his awareness and awe of the power of God's Word, or expresses thanksgiving for the usefulness and efficacy of God's Word. There is no doubt that Psalm 119 is a unique presentation that God highlights so we do not miss its special purpose and impact.

Affirmations: God's Word has everything I need to live a more abundant life. God has drawn my attention to Psalm 119.

Conversation Starters: What are you thankful for today? Do you take vitamins?

Recommended Reading: Proverbs 31; Psalms 111 & 112; Lamentations 1-4

The Word of God is referred to by fourteen Hebrew synonyms, translated into eleven different English words in the King James Version. There is immediate value in recognizing that they all refer to the same Word of God. However, we would lose much to not differentiate between them. Each of these terms designates the same word of the Lord, but each represents different aspects or functions or signifies a different mode of its reception and promulgation.

The very use of fourteen different Hebrew synonyms is the figure of speech *synonymia* which is the repetition of words similar in sense, but different in sound and origin. Not one of them separately can portray the magnitude of the Word's magnificence, but collectively they convey the fullness of the divine revelation that is the Word of God.

1. **God's law**, because they are enacted by him as our Sovereign. Hebrew *torah* [08451], which is always translated "law," occurs 25 times in Psalm 119, always in the singular. This word comes from a verb which means to direct, to point out, to guide, to aim, to shoot forwards. Its etymological meaning, then, would be a rule of conduct, something that directs us as we move forward in life. It is frequently used to refer to just the first five books of the Old Testament, but it is used to refer to the entire Old Testament, too.

2. **His way**, because it lays out a course for life and morality easily established by habit over the course of time. Hebrew *derek* [01870] and *orach* [0734], are always translated "way" or "ways" in Psalm 119, and occur thirteen and five times respectively. However, only half of them refer to God's way of His Word, the other half refer to man's ways.

3. **His testimonies**, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. It comes from related Hebrew words meaning to repeat or go over again. Hebrew *edah* [05713] occurs 26 times in the Old Testament, fourteen of which are in Psalm 119 and *eduth* [05715] which occurs nine times in the psalm, all but one time in the plural.

4. **His commandments**, because they are given with authority and mandate a course of action. This word emphasizes the authority of what is said, and the right to give orders. Hebrew *mitsvah* [04687], which is always translated commandments, occurs twenty-two times in Psalm 119; all but once in the plural. You may have heard of bar and bat mitzvah celebrations. Under Jewish Law, children are not obligated to observe the commandments, although they are encouraged to do so as much as possible to learn the obligations they will have as adults. A Jewish boy automatically becomes Bar Mitzvah when he turns 13 years old, and a girl at age 12. This is the time when young people reach the stage of obligation and must take responsibility for their actions by keeping God's commandments.

5. **His precepts**, because they are prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. Derived from a word, which means "to place in trust," it means something entrusted to man. Like a written prescription, it will fix what ails you. Hebrew *piqqed* [06490] occurs 24 times (always in Psalms) and 21 of them are in Psalm 119. This word was almost designed for its particular use in this Psalm. Many of us wear eyeglasses. However, if we were to switch or trade eyewear we might not find them working as well. That's because the prescriptions were made specifically for the vision problem we each have. Similarly, God's Word prescribes applications of each of us which minister to each of us individually.

6. **His word**, or saying, because it is the declaration of his will, and Jesus Christ, the red thread, is in it. Hebrew *dabar* [01697] and *imrah* [0565] occur twenty-three and nineteen times respectively; all but four in the singular. It exalts the spoken word proceeding from the mouth of God to us. As such it is God's revealed word to man.

7. **His judgments**, because they are framed in infinite wisdom and by them we must both judge and be judged. It's derived from a word signifying "to govern, to judge or to determine." It means judicial ordinances and decisions; legal sanctions. They cause us to discern what is right and wrong. Hebrew *mishpat* [04941] occurs twenty-three times in Psalms 119; all but twice in the plural. *Mishpat* is also translated "ordinances" once and "usest to do" once.

8. **His righteousness**, because it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard for righteous living. Hebrew *tsedeq* [06664] occurs twelve times in Psalms 119. *Tsedeq* is also translated justice once.

9. **His statutes**, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. The verb from which this word is formed means "to engrave or inscribe." Hebrew *choq* [02706] occurs twenty-one times in Psalm 119, always in the plural. I know it says statutes and not statues, but I often think of them that way, as being etched in stone. Like when the ten commandments were written by the finger of God on tablets of stone. It exalts the written word of God.

10. **His faithfulness**, because it represents how faithful God is to what he has declared. It shows His firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, and steadfastness in bringing to pass what He has declared. It is used 49 times in the Old Testament and is translated faithfulness eighteen times and truth thirteen times. Hebrew *emanuh* [0530] occurs five times in Psalm 119.

11. **His truth**, because God is not a man and does not lie. What He asserts is true and righteous altogether. It shows His sureness, reliability and stability. It is used to confirm, support, uphold and certify its veracity. It is used of spoken testimony and judgment and of written ethical instruction. Hebrew *emeth* [0571] occur four times in Psalm 119.

Those are the eleven English words with their Hebrew counterparts. They all represent the wonderful word of God and show it in all its different forms and in all its variations displaying all its greatness. God didn't just use one word to cover how magnificent and diverse it really is in the life of a believer.

Affirmations: God magnified His Word above all His name. I testify that His testimonies are true and righteous altogether.

Conversation Starters: Do you have a special name for the Bible? What is truth?

Recommended Reading: Psalm 19

On Day 2 we looked at the synonyms used for the scriptures. They all represent the wonderful word of God and show it in all its different forms and in all its variations, displaying all its greatness. God didn't just use one word to cover how magnificent and diverse it really is in the life of a believer.

The total count of these synonyms in Psalm 119 is 216. Remembering that there are 176 verses in the psalm, we realize that, on average, there is more than one per verse. One of these synonyms occurs in every verse except 122. After the three verse introduction God is addressed in every verse except 115, where He is mentioned. There are also two other facts that are obvious to me now, but were not observed until I did a word frequency list for Psalm 119.

The most frequently occurring word in Psalm 119 is, "thy" which occurs 209 times. The second most frequent is "I," used 142 times followed by "me," occurring 89 times. When we total all the first and second person pronouns we find:

1. First person pronouns (I, me, my, mine, myself — those referring to the Psalmist) occur 312 times.
2. Second person pronouns (thy, thee, thou, thine —those referring to God) occur 261 times.
3. The different English synonyms used for God's Word occur 231 times.

Since there are only 176 verses in Psalm 119, we will usually find at least one 1st person pronoun (representing the psalmist), one 2nd person pronoun (representing the Lord), and one of the synonyms for God's Word in every verse, on average. What we find in each verse is the psalmist relating to God, talking to God, developing his relationship with God through His wonderful, matchless Word. It is the interaction of these three that gives the psalm depth and framework. The building of the relationship between the psalmist and God with God's Word is at the very heart of this magnificent psalm. Noticing this as you read can add a remarkable personal aspect, infusing the longest chapter of the Bible with an intensely intimate *I-Thou* relationship focus.

The frequency of this chord is increased as we note two other additions. Besides the pronouns referring to God, we also find "Lord," Jehovah, occurring 24 times, 22 of which are in direct address. Furthermore we read, "Thy servant" thirteen times. This is another way the psalmist speaks of himself. He is God's servant.

These three elements form a chord that plays through the psalm after the three verse introduction. What a harmony is set for life when these three notes are played together. Indeed, verse 54 speaks of the Word as the song the psalmist sings, saying, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." What a melody of prayer and praise echoes throughout this beautiful psalm.

The example that God sets before us in Psalm 119 is of someone seeking to build his relationship with God through the Word of God which was magnified above all God's name. It's such a beautiful enfolding of the Psalmist's relationship with God showing how it is built on the solid foundation of His Word. We see how he yearns for it as he says, "Look thou upon me..." (132) and "Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant..." (135). As such, it is an example for us to follow as we yearn to know our heavenly Father more intimately.

As born-again sons of God we have a right to intimacy with our loving heavenly Father. Our intimacy with God is based on the exceeding riches of His grace and kindness toward us, which He communicates in His Word. Part of the relationship we see develop between Jehovah and His servant is seen in the servant's dependence and the Lord's faithfulness. Our dependence upon God is counter-balanced by God's faithfulness to us. They relate to each other.

Man, the dependent creation, can relate to God, the dependable Creator. God is dependable. His faithfulness to His Word which He has declared and prescribed for us, never wavers. He doesn't change and neither does His Word. That's the standard. That's how we relate to each other. We depend upon God to fulfill His Word, and He is faithful to do so. We relate to God through His Word. We meditate upon it, speak about it, remind Him of it, and He faithfully brings it to pass.

What a privilege our heavenly Father has given us, to speak directly to Him. What a lesson for us to direct our hearts to the Lord in prayer and praise for what He has done. The Psalmist was building his relationship with the Lord God Almighty through the greatness of God's wonderful matchless Word. We can do the same. There is no way for us to know the will of God without knowing the Word of God.

Affirmations: God and I get it on with His Word! I am building my relationship with God every day.

Conversation Starters: Do you know what the longest chapter in the Bible is? Do you talk to God? Has He ever talked to you?

Recommended Reading: 2 Timothy 1 & 2

God uses figures of speech in His Word to point out what He wants emphasized. The ones that follow emphasize important points germane to the proper understanding of Psalm 119.

As we mentioned in the Day 3 teaching. The use of fourteen different Hebrew synonyms is the figure of speech synonymia. This repetition of words similar in sense, but different in sound and origin emphasizes the singular focus upon the Word of God and its use in bringing blessedness to God's people. Although not one of them separately can portray the magnitude of the magnificence of His Word. Collectively they convey the fullness of the divine revelation that is the Word of God.

The first three verses of Psalm 119 are an introduction. It is an example of the figure of speech benedictio or blessing. It is an expression of feeling by benediction or blessing. What an exuberant way to open this psalm.

Psalm 119:1, 2: ALEPH.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

² Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

³ They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

What a description! Blessed are they... Blessed are they... That's what the rest of the Psalm declares: the blessedness of the one who keeps God's Word. God declares the blessedness of those who walk in His ways. That's what the psalm is about, the blessedness of those who keep the Word of God. This blessing invites the believer to follow the psalmist's example and use the Word of God to build their relationship with God. God declares in no uncertain way the blessedness that awaits those who keep His testimonies and seek him with their whole heart.

Another thing to note about these first three verses are that they are written in the third person. (These first three verses use "they" and "him" and "his.") After verse three, the form of the psalm changes. It is no longer written in third person; it is written in first person. Starting with verse four, every verse is spoken to God except one, verse 115 which mentions God though it is not spoken to Him. Herein the psalmist turns aside to speak to evildoers, but he still mentions God. This is the figure of speech apostrophe. It is "when the speaker turns away from the real auditory whom he is addressing (which is in this case God), and speaks to an imaginary one. It is a sudden breaking off in the course of speech diverting it to some new person or thing." After speaking to God throughout the entire psalm after the introduction the psalmist turns aside to speak to evildoers.

This apostrophe emphasizes the importance of the chord of three notes which is composed of the psalmist, God and God's Word. These three elements harmonize into a beautiful melody that resounds throughout the psalm. The next figure gives us instruction on how to read God's Word.

The exclamation or interjection "O" shows the earnestness with which the psalmist addresses God and makes requests and vows to Him. "O" occurs twenty-five times in Psalm 119. What does O mean? "O" doesn't mean anything, but it has a specific function. "O" is used before a name in direct address, especially in solemn or poetic language, which Psalms is, to lend earnestness to an appeal. Of the twenty-four times that Jehovah occurs twenty-one of them are preceded by "O" in direct address. When it occurs with requests and vows it shows an emotional investment in what is said. It communicates intensity, involvement, longing, emotion, passion etc. What a lesson for us! If we want to develop our relationship with God as the psalmist did, it will require us to put some umph, some verve, some commitment into it.

Bullinger also lists "behold" and "yea" as examples of the figure of speech asterismos. The figure occurs when instead of the use of a star another word is used to direct the eye and the heart to some particular point or subject. "Behold" is used in verse forty to call attention to how the psalmist "longed for God's precepts." "Yea" is used in verses 34, 103 and 127 to affirm and call attention to other poignant statements.

Affirmations: I will keep the commandments of my God! I seek God with my whole heart.

Conversation Starters: Do you want to be blessed? What does OMG mean?

Recommended Reading: Ephesians 1 & 2

Throughout church history many Christian leaders have been drawn to Psalm 119. John Calvin preached 22 sermons (one for each stanza) from Psalm 119. Warren Wiersbe (*Back to the Bible* broadcasts) has 22 messages online on Psalm 119, one on each of the sections. Charles Spurgeon (the great London preacher of the late 1800s) devoted 398 pages of his Treasury of David (the finest commentary on the Psalms ever written as far as I am concerned) to this psalm. In 1927 Charles Bridges wrote a 480-page exposition of Psalm 119 and at least twenty-four editions of it were published in his lifetime. But the prize belongs to Thomas Manton, the puritan pastor, who preached 189 sermons on these 176 verses. Those sermons were published in three volumes that run over 1600 pages and are available online.

In our day James Montgomery Boice preached 14 sermons from this chapter (later published as *Living by the Book*, Baker Book House, 1997). He mentions an amusing story (told first by Spurgeon) about a man named George Wishart, the first Episcopal bishop of Edinburgh, who during the 1600s was sentenced to death by hanging. He came to the day of his execution hoping for a pardon that had not yet arrived. It was a custom in those days to allow a condemned man to call for the singing of a psalm before he was put to death. Bishop Wishart, stalling for time, called for the singing of Psalm 119. As the story goes, before the psalm was 2/3 sung, the pardon arrived and Wishart was spared.

David Livingstone, the great pioneer missionary to Africa, when he was only nine years old won a Bible from his Sunday School teacher by repeating Psalm 119 from memory. In the midst of political crisis in 1819, William Wilberforce, the man who, more than any other, ended slavery in the British Empire, wrote in his diary, "Walked from Hyde Park Corner repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort." He had committed it to memory and had repeated it to himself bringing great comfort. Henry Martyn, the great missionary to India and Persia often referred to this psalm in his diary. Once he said: "... the evening grew better by reading the 119th Psalm, which generally brings me into a spiritual frame of mind." It was also a favorite of Blaise Pascal who once said of it that "it contained the sum of all the Christian virtues." He singled out verse 59 as giving the turning point of man's character and destiny. It says, "I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes." David Jeremiah a California preacher also uses that verse as the basis for his ministry which he calls, "*The Turning Point*."

Keil & Delitzsch in their multivolume Old Testament commentary called Psalm 119 a twenty-two-fold string of aphorisms by one who is persecuted for the sake of his faith. They also called it "The Christian's golden A B C of the praise, love, power, and use of the Word of God." They said in Psalm 119 "we have set forth in inexhaustible fullness what the word of God is to man, and how man is to behave himself in relation to it." Spurgeon also said of this psalm, "This wonderful psalm, from its great length, helps us to wonder at the immensity of Scripture. From its keeping to one subject it helps us to adore the unity of Scripture; for it is but one. Yet, from the many turns it gives to the same thought, it helps you to see the variety of Scripture.... Some have said that in it there is an absence of variety, but that is merely the observation of those who have not studied it. I have weighed each word, and looked at each syllable with lengthened meditation; and I bear witness that this sacred song has no tautology in it, but is charmingly varied from beginning to end. Its variety is that of a kaleidoscope: from a few objects a boundless variation is produced. In the kaleidoscope you look once, and there is a strangely beautiful form. You shift the glass a very little, and another shape, equally delicate and beautiful, is before your eyes. So it is here."

Charles Bridges suggested that one study Psalm 119 the same way that Philip Henry advised his children—that they should "take a verse of Psalm 119 every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the Psalm twice in a year;" and that—said he—"will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scripture."

I wonder what impact the brilliant Psalm 119 will have on you. Take time to read it, study it, meditate on it, draw truths from it and make commitments based on it. Regardless of how extensive and glowing accolades for Psalm 119 have been throughout the centuries from biblical scholars, it is how it impacts you personally that will determine its dearness to you.

Affirmations: Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee. I love God's Word!

Conversation Starters: Have you ever rememorized scripture? Have you ever had a turning point in your life?

Recommended Reading: Psalm 118

In Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics, J Edwin Hartill discusses the full mention principle. He defines it as the principle by which God declares His full mind on a subject. Although I am of the mind to call it the extended mention principle, instead of the full mention principle for I am not so sure God ever declares His full mind on any particular subject in any one particular place in His Word. I do agree that this principle is where God gathers the scattered fragments that have to do with a particular truth and puts them into one exhaustive statement. These all-encompassing, exhaustive texts handle the subjects most completely. I Corinthians 13 is such a text on love. I Corinthians 15 is such a text on the resurrection. Hebrews 11 is such a text on the manifestation of faith and James 3 is such a text on the tongue. I believe Psalms 119 is such a text on the Word of God and how to use it to build one's relationship with God.

One of the great benefits of the acrostic format in Psalm 119 is that it clearly displays the structure of the passage. When trying to study structure one of the toughest things for me is figuring out the parameters. Where does one section start and another begin? Well in an acrostic it is clearly visible; it's the alphabetical repetition that delineates the sections. There are 22 paragraphs, strophes, or stanzas with eight verses in each. Each of the eight verse sections focuses on some benefit or blessing that God's Word provides. The Word of God is living and real and is meant to be of practical blessing and benefit in our lives. Each stanza in the psalm gives some practical way that it can be used.

This is more important than some might think, for if the Word of God is only a source of information or knowledge we lose so much of its benefit. We want the Word of God to become a living, vital thing for us, where we can apply it to our lives in everyday circumstances and find in it the source of what we need.

I've noticed that the practical benefit of each section is usually presented in the opening verse or two of each section. The aleph section gives us the basis for blessing. The first three verses are the figure of speech benediction or blessing, and the first verse tells us what that basis is. That blessing is guaranteed for the "undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." The word "keep" occurs four times in these first eight verses. We secure blessings by keeping God's Word.

To the right you'll find a list of some of the ways the psalmist used God's Word. You'll see what he thought about, what he did with it and how he acted on it.

Some Truths about the Psalmist and the Word

- He walked in harmony with it (1,3).
- He kept its commands (22,55,56,60,67,158,166,167,168).
- He longed to obey it (5,20,123,131,157).
- Had respect for it (6,15)
- He learned its contents (7,73).
- He prayed to be true to it (10,133).
- He hid it in his heart (11).
- He preached it (13,26,46,172).
- He rejoiced in it (14,16,24,47,70,77,92,111,143,163,174).
- He meditated upon it (15,23,48,78,148).
- He remembered it (16,52,61,83,109,141,153,176).
- He prayed for more light from it (18,27,73,108,124,125,↓ 135,169).
- He prayed for its strength (28).
- He chose it (30,173).
- He stuck to it (31,51,87,93,110,157).
- He prayed for its quickening power (37,40,50,107,149,↓ 154, 156,159).
- He prayed for its fulfillment (38,175).
- He prayed for its salvation (41,170).
- He trusted in it (42).
- He hoped in it (43,49,74,81,114,147).
- He sought its laws (45,94).
- He loved it (47-48,113,119,127,140,159,163,167).
- He abhorred men forsaking it (53).
- He made it the theme of his songs (54).
- He prayed for its mercy (58).
- He gave thanks for its blessings (62).
- He became a companion of others who kept it (63).
- He acknowledged its blessings (65).
- He valued it more than riches (14,72,127).
- He acknowledged its judgments to be right (75,128).
- He recognized it as the source of mercy and comfort (76).
- He prayed for stability in it (80).
- He longed for it (82,123,131).
- He esteemed it to be faithful (86,138).
- He declared it to be eternal (89,160).
- He was quickened by it (93).
- He considered it (95).
- He made it a lamp and a light (105,130).
- He made it part of his heritage (111).
- He prayed for its sustaining power (116-117).
- He revered it (120).
- He testified it was wonderful (129). simple (130).
- He had faith in it as the source of understanding for the ↑
- He was grieved for those who did not obey it (136,158).
- He believed it was upright (137).
- He believed it to be eternally righteous (138,144,172).
- He believed it to be true from the beginning (160).
- He was zealous because others had forgotten it (139).
- He believed in its purity (140).
- He believed it to be truth (142,151).
- He believed sinners to be far from it (150,155).
- He knew it to be of old (152).
- He was awed by it (161).
- He praised God because of it (164,171).
- He had peace because of it (165).
- He longed for its salvation (174).

Affirmations: I trust God's Word. I value it more than riches.

Conversation Starters: What do you believe about the Bible? What's your favorite book?

Recommended Reading: Ephesians 3&4

This first stanza has an obvious division. The first three verses are general and introductory and deal with characteristics of a blessed man. The final five verses are a dialog between the psalmist and God on obedience the basis for blessing. The three verse introduction sets the subject and purpose of the psalm, and the five verses that follow show how the believer can enjoy the blessing that is presented in the introduction.

Psalm 119:1-3 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.² Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.³ They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

The basis for blessedness in life is settled in verses one and two and established in verse three. God's Word is the basis of blessing. How we respond to the commandments of the Lord forms our character and sets the course of our journey in life. Walking in the law of the Lord keeps our way, and keeping His testimonies testifies to a heart dedicated to seeking God. Verse three then characterizes the blessed using both the negative and positive statements. "He does no iniquity," and "he walks in God's ways."

"Undefiled" in verse one is the Hebrew *tamiyim*. It occurs 91 times and is translated "undefiled" only here. It is usually translated "without blemish" (44 times) or "perfect" (18 times). It carries the primary idea of being complete, whole, entire, sound, unimpaired, and having integrity. It has the essence of being complete and entirely in accord with truth and fact.

However, it is not avoiding evil that keeps us undefiled; it is deliberately deciding to walk in the truth. Those who walk in the law of the Lord find themselves enjoying the completeness that God's Word provides. Like II Timothy 3:17 which describes the purpose of God's Word in the New Testament, Psalms 119:1 sets its purpose in the Old Testament, to complete and fully equip believers for their journey in life.

E. W. Bullinger in the Companion Bible notes that the blessedness spoken of here is in the plural in Hebrew. He suggests the translation, "O the great happiness." The Emphasized Bible translates it "How happy." The blessedness the psalmist describes is extreme, excessive, immoderate, or more than abundant. God's Word sets a standard of the abundant blessing God desires for His people.

Psalm 119:4,5: Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. ⁵ O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

Verse four shifts from general, introductory statements to specific dialog between the psalmist and God. After verse three every verse except 115 is directed to God. We find the psalmist developing his personal relationship with the Lord based on the greatness of the Word He has committed unto us. Verse four is the first of many declarations of what God has done, and it is followed by the psalmist's heartfelt confession of desire to do as God has asked.

This is the only place in the Psalm that the first person plural pronoun is used. Yes, it is in italics, but it is properly supplied. God didn't just command the psalmist, but He has commanded all His people to obey. Anyone intent on building a relationship with God will have to start with the same acknowledgement.

In verses six and seven the psalmist acknowledges that although he has begun his pursuit, he has not yet realized his desire. He understands it is a process, a growth and anticipates the benefits of having his heart's desire fulfilled.

Psalm 119:6,7: Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. ⁷ I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

He declares or confesses both his desire to walk with the Lord without any sense of shame and to freely praise Him with uprightness of heart. He acknowledges that only by interacting with God's Word will he be able to realize these desires of his heart. When he respects all of God's commandments, he will not be ashamed.

"Respect" from the Hebrew means to "look to," "show regard for," "consider," or "pay attention to." This reminds me of II Timothy 2:15. When we are diligent in doing God's Word we can be workman, who are not ashamed. His desire to learn God's righteous judgments, are not primarily for personal benefit, but so that he can praise God. His relationship with the Lord is important and valuable to him. His knowledge of the Lord provides the wherewithal to praise and worship God, as he should.

This beginning stanza closes with an affirmation, a declaration of intent and resolve. He also requests God's gracious response to his confession. His heartfelt reliance upon the Lord's help provides the foundation from which he draws the strength to affirm his decision to act.

Psalm 119:8: I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

The psalm began extolling the blessings of those who keep God's Word and the first stanza ends with the psalmist declaring his resolve to do so. This is the first of more than eighty requests the psalmist makes of the Lord in Psalm 119. He trusts God will honor his request, for he desires to do as God has directed him. God has commanded him to keep his precepts diligently (verse 4) and the psalmist declares his resolve to obey.

In this first stanza in the Acrostic Psalm of God's Word we see the basis for blessing, God's Word, and the means for securing the blessing obedience. The psalmist declares his resolve to develop his relationship with the Lord through the magnificence of His Word, and he acknowledges his reliance upon God's help in doing so. The relationship he is pursuing is based on God's goodness and His grace, and he resolves to pursue it from the very depth of his being, drawing upon his assurance that the Lord will help him to do as He has asked.

Affirmations: O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes! I want to learn Thy righteous judgments.

Conversation Starters: Do you ever feel forsaken by God? Have you ever promised God something?

Recommended Reading: Ephesians 5 &6

Right in the center of the three verse introduction we find the declaration that “Blessed are they that keep [*natsar*] his testimonies.” This psalm has among its many purposes to direct the believer to keep God’s Word. Indeed, “keeping God’s Word” is the underlying theme that runs through the entire psalm. It’s what facilitates the promised blessing.

The first verse spoken to God from the lips of the psalmist is an acknowledgement of his responsibility to do so. He directs his heart to the Lord and says, “Thou hast commanded *us* to keep [*shamar*] thy precepts diligently.” He immediately follows that acknowledgement with his earnest cry, “O that my ways were directed to keep [*shamar*] thy statutes!” Then three verses later we find his first commitment to do so, as we read in verse eight, “I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.”

These two Hebrew words, *natsar* and *shamar*, are used 31 times in Psalm 119. They are translated “keep” or “kept” on all but two occasions where they are translated “taking heed” and “observe.” These Hebrew words are closely related. *Natsar* is used 63 times and means to watch, guard, keep, preserve, or observe. *Shamar*, used much more frequently (468 times), means to keep, guard, observe, give heed, protect, or observe. They occur only in the qal, the simple active, conjugation in Psalm 119.

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says of *shamar* that its closest synonym is *natsar*. The basic idea of the root is “to exercise great care over” or “to do carefully or diligently.” This is certainly one of the underlying themes of Psalms 119. The psalmist opens his heart to God recognizing that God’s Word is a very tangible point of contact he has with the God of the universe. It is God’s Word that makes known God’s will. It is God’s Word that establishes the psalmist’s expectations and formulates his desires.

The first octet of verses closes with the psalmist vowing to keep God’s Word, and the next octet begins with the psalmist asking a question, which he immediately answers. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* [keeping, *shamar*] according to thy word.”

The psalmist shows resolve in Psalm 119 with the frequent use of “I will.” Not only is “keep” the most frequently occurring verb in Psalm 119, It is also the most frequently recurring vow he makes. Six times he vows to keep God’s Word. They begin in verse eight where the psalmist says, “I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.” Verse 69 establishes his resolve and determination, when he asserts, “The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.”

The third statement of resolve is worded very emphatically. In verse 106 he says, “I have sworn, and I will perform it that I will keep thy righteous judgments.” He swore and committed to perform the keeping of God’s righteous judgments. This threefold declaration shows how completely he has committed himself to do so. The fourth vow is spoken to evil doers. In verse 115 he says, “Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.” Four is the number of the world, and in the fourth utterance of this vow he turns aside to speak to those in the world who would oppose him. God marks this out with the figure, apostrophe.

The fifth vow is in verse 134, where he says, “Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.” If God would be so gracious to deliver him, he would continue his resolve to keep His precepts. Then the sixth and final one is in verse 145. He declares, “I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes. This sixth occurrence shows his human frailty as well as his resolve.

Remember that in the very first verse after the introduction the psalmist acknowledges his responsibility to keep God’s commandments. Then in the very next verse he responds with emotion declaring his desire to do so. Then the first stanza closes with his vow to keep God’s statutes. This resolve is expressed five more times through out the psalm for a total of six. Finally we see toward the end of Psalm 119 that he declares unequivocally that he has indeed accomplished what he had previously resolved to do.

Psalm 119:167: My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.

That’s an interesting way to say it. He did it; his resolve was accomplished. Hallelujah! He followed thru. He vowed a vow unto God, and he performed it. Then in the next verse he repeats it, establishing the truth.

Psalm 119:168: I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

Like the psalmist we should exercise great care over God’s Word and carefully or diligently do it. Keeping God’s Word is vital. We express our love for Him by keeping His Word. Our interaction with God revolves around His Word. Once we know His will, it behooves us to keep it. Being careful and diligent to observe and do His Word is a most rewarding lifestyle for God’s people.

Affirmations: I will keep God’s righteous judgments. His way have I kept and have not declined.

Conversation Starters: What do you treasure most in life? What do you plan on accomplishing today?

Recommended Reading: Ephesians 3 & 4

The second stanza starts with a question, which it immediately answers. Then in the next seven verses the psalmist opens his heart speaking to God about what he has done in taking heed to His Word. Verse nine begins asking, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”

“Wherewithal” simply means “that with which to do something.” It refers to the necessary means for fulfilling the purpose or meeting the need. The psalmist asks, “What’s it going to take for a young man to cleanse his way.” This Hebrew word for cleanse, *zakah*, is used only eight times in the Old Testament, and all but one is in the piel (active intensive) conjugation. This cleansing is ardent, something you really have to get after. It takes effort, diligence, intensity.

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says *zakah* is used “only in poetry and always in a moral sense.” This question is also asked in Job and Proverbs. The term appears twice in Job (Job 15:14; 25:4), and both times Job’s miserable comforters are asking how a man can be pure in the sight of God. A similar question appears in Proverbs 20:9 where one may wonder if it is even possible. Reading from Job and Proverbs it becomes obvious that there is some difficulty attached to this. In these three verses the questions are rhetorical. They are to cause us to think. They are not designed to breed defeat and discouragement, but to spur us on to focus our attention on the matter at hand so we can get the job done.

However, the question is both asked and answered in Psalm 119:9. We cleanse ourselves by taking heed to God’s Word. Taking heed was used in the previous verse, verse eight, where it is translated keep. In verse eight the psalmist promises to keep God’s statutes and in the very next verse he acknowledges that by doing so he will cleanse his way.

Those who walk in accordance with God’s Word can be cleansed. At times the wicked appear to be happier and more prosperous than the one who keeps his heart pure (Psalms 73:13), but in the end it’s really not so. That this cleansing can be accomplished is established in Isaiah 1:16 where God demands that His people do so.

Psalms 119:10: With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

Here the Psalmist declares his undivided allegiance to God, recognizing that His Word provides the avenue to reach his desire. Seeking God with our whole heart has great reward. The Psalmist could make his request in the second half of the verse because of his declaration in the first part. Whether or not we wander from God’s Word is not His responsibility, but ours. The Psalmist asserts his resolve to pursue God with his whole heart and emotionally rests in the Lord’s graciousness to help him in his pursuit. “Whole heart” occurs six times in this psalm. Taking heed to God’s Word requires and deserves our whole heart.

Psalms 119:11: Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Spurgeon says of this verse that we find the best thing, Thy Word; hidden in the best place, mine heart; for the best of purposes, that I might not sin against Thee. Our hearts will be kept by God’s Word because we keep God’s Word in our hearts. The treasuring of scripture by memorization allows us to have it ever with us. We may not always have the book in our hands, but we can always have the Word in our hearts. Hiding the Word in our hearts is a must if we are to take heed unto it.

Psalms 119:12: Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

That’s the kind of longing that will serve one well. “O LORD teach me thy statutes.” For the second time in this stanza we find an “O.” This exclamation shows earnestness, emotion and passion. The psalmist addresses God directly and because of his recognition of God’s blessedness he asks, “Teach me thy statutes.” Taking heed to God’s Word is made easier when our attitude is appropriate. Meekness to God and His Word is seen in our frequent requests to be taught.

Psalms 119:13: With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

In verse 13 we find the reason for his request from verse 12. We want to be taught of God so we can make known the judgments of His mouth. Receiving, retaining and releasing God’s Word are all involved with taking heed to it, keeping it. We find here one of the purposes for hiding it in our heart, one of the purposes for wanting to be taught, so that we can declare it. This also provides a barometer of how well we are taking heed unto it. If we neglect to declare it, we have neglected to take heed unto it for God repeatedly asks us to do so.

Psalms 119:14: I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

What we cherish, we return to regularly. Our attitude either helps or hinders our actions. We cleanse our way (verse 9) as we rejoice in His ways. When the way of his testimonies becomes dear to us, we will not be stubborn or defiant. Rejoicing is clear evidence that we have given heed to His Word.

Psalms 119:15,16: I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.¹⁶ I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

The Psalm closes with three affirmations. (“I will” occurs at least twenty times in the King James Version of Psalm 119.) These serve a purpose similar to an oath. The Psalmist declares his resolve and solemnly pledges to meditate in God’s precepts, have respect unto His ways, delight himself in His statutes, and not forget His Word. In these assertions the psalmist confirms or ratifies that he acknowledges what God requires from verse 9. He pledges to take heed to God’s Word, and he sets off on his adventure to cleanse his way.

Affirmations: I cleanse my way by keeping God’s Word. I rejoice in God’s testimonies.

Conversation Starter: How does a young man cleanse his Way? What do you like to talk about?

Recommended Reading: Philippians 1 & 2

The psalmist declares his great longing for God's Word, affirming that: "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times (verse 20). "...I have longed after thy precepts..." (verse 40). "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (verse 103). "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments." (verse 131). Jesus said that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. In Psalm 119 we see someone so hungering and thirsting being filled.

The psalmist cries out for instruction in different ways. He pleads with God to: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (verse 18) "...hide not thy commandments from me." (verse 19) "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts..." (verse 27) However, I'd like to concentrate on the frequently repeated request, "Teach me!"

In the King James Version "teach me" occurs 15 times and nine of them are in Psalm 119. Job is the first to make the request, but he wasn't speaking to God. He was speaking to the miserable comforters, saying if you're so smart teach me something. The other 14 are all in Psalms with nine of those fourteen in Psalm 119. The five not in Psalm 119, were all in Psalms written by David. (That's one of eight reasons I believe David wrote Psalm 119.) There is a blessedness associated with him whom God teaches and a benefit of rest.

Psalms 94:12-13a: Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; ¹³ That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity....

This heartfelt request of "teach me" often follows an expression of God's greatness. It is as if after graciously expressing how magnificent God is, he requests further instruction that will take him even deeper into how important this awareness is to his life.

Psalm 119:12: Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes. [Then I'll know more about how blessed you really are.]

Psalm 119:64: The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes. [Then I'll understand your mercy to an even greater extent.]

Psalm 119:68: Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes. [Then I'll know you are better than I ever thought.]

How's that for an accurate Biblical picture of how God is. Do you see the fervor that the "O LORD" adds to the request? There is indeed a longing to be taught. This same request, "teach me," follows the psalmist's declaration of his own ways. Again, it is as if after graciously expressing or confessing what he has done, he requests further instruction that will take him even deeper into how important the lesson has been.

Psalm 119:26: I have declared my ways, and thou hearest me: teach me thy statutes. [Then I'll get even better at this.]

Psalm 119:108: Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments. [Then I will have even more reason to praise and worship you.]

He also commits himself to action that flows from this request.

Psalm 119:33: Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.

That's the proper heart; that's why we want to learn... so we can do it. He acknowledges what he has learned from God's Word as reason for his request.

Psalm 119:66: Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

Psalm 119:124: Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

Psalm 119:135: Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

The psalmist also acknowledges the responsibility that comes from this request. For once we know the Word, we're responsible to do it.

Psalm 119:102: I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Note what the psalmist says about his interaction with the Bible. As he read it, he realized that God was teaching him. He heard the voice of God in the pages of the Bible! What a tremendous truth! We can be personally taught by God as we read His Word. Would you like God to speak to you? He has! He does! He absolutely will continue to! When we come to the Bible reverently, humbly, with open hearts, God speaks directly to us.

The frequent repetitions of "Teach me!" in Psalm 119 are not frivolous. They proceeded from a sound heart and a zealous affection. Indeed, the repeated cry addresses not only his desire to obtain it, but also the necessity which he acknowledges it to be. Those blessed with the most instruction, are often those seeking for even more.

Affirmations: God teaches me when I ask Him to. I declare God's ways words and will.

Conversation Starters: How does God deal with you? Have you ever asked God to teach you something?

Recommended Reading: Philippians 3&4

In the gimel section we find the first two uses of *servant* in Psalm 119. This stanza presents the basis of servanthood. The psalmist speaks of himself as God's servant (verses 17 & 23), and the importance of God's Word to his service to God. Sometimes the oppression and persecution of people cause us to ruminate on their words, but the servant of the Lord chooses the statutes of the Lord for his meditation as we'll see in verse 23.

The first two verses contain requests to which the psalmist attaches a reason. He asks God to deal bountifully with him so he can live, and keep God's word, and he asks God to open his eyes, so he may behold wondrous things out of God's law.

Psalms 119:17,18: Deal bountifully with thy servant, *that I may live, and keep thy word.* ¹⁸ Open thou mine eyes, *that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

He expects God's abundance because he wants nothing more than to live and keep God's Word. Additionally he asks that God would open his eyes so that he might see wonderful things from God's law. Learning more of God's law would allow him to keep more of God's will, which is his purpose for living. God's Word forms the basis of his relationship with God.

Psalms 119:19: *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.*

The Psalmist confesses that he is a stranger in the earth. The emphasis in this word is on the transitory nature of our sojourn. We sing "this world is not my home" and we have different obligations and loyalties than those for whom this world is home. Our allegiance is to God and His Word, not to this world and the things of the world.

In the Old Testament all God's people were considered strangers and sojourners looking forward to God's messianic Kingdom (Leviticus 25:23; I Chronicles 29:15). Similarly in the New Testament, believers are referred to as strangers and pilgrims who look for a better country (Hebrews 11:13; I Peter 2:11). Jesus foresaw the difficulties His disciples would confront as they lived *in* the world while not *of* it. He prayed that God would protect them from evil and set them apart by His word of truth (John 17:14-17). Similarly, the psalmist asks God to open his eyes and he longs for God's judgments.

Psalms 119:20: *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.*

Next the psalmist acknowledges God's rebuke of those whose pride causes them to err from God's commandments. Because he lives without this pride and keeps God's testimonies he requests that the reproach and contempt that comes upon the prideful be removed from him.

Psalms 119:21,22: *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.* ²² Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

Many try to exercise rulership over the servants of the Lord, but the servant of the Lord acknowledges only the direction of the Lord upon which he meditates. Why does he meditate upon them? Because he has found the testimonies of the Lord to be his delight and his counselors.

The psalmist puts his situation in God's hands and takes comfort in serving Him. Rather than taking vengeance or succumbing to the slanderers, he delights in God's laws as his "counselors." Of course, even when there are faithful teachers to learn from, their teachings must be confirmed through the direct counsel of Scripture (Acts 17:11; 20:27).

Psalms 119:23,24: *Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.* ²⁴ *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*

When we delight in God's Word, we will find that they shall become our counselors. Our delight to ascertain what God has graciously disclosed to us in His Word, fosters a reverence and awe for His Words. They become our counselors because we heed the gracious counsel they provide. Despite the persecution from the world the servant of the Lord prays for enlightenment from God's Word as the basis for the life he lives. A life of service to Him who deals so bountifully with him.

Affirmations: I delight in the things of God. I long for God's Word.

Conversation Starter: Do you ever feel estranged? How has God blessed you today.

Recommended Reading: Colossians 1 & 2

I have come to think of Psalms 119 as a series of aphorisms, terse sayings and astute observations about the truth of God's Word. In it we have at our fingertips great truths about putting the Word in one's mind and working it into one's lifestyle. Exactly how does the Word become effectual and transform us? How do we use the Word to safeguard our fellowship with God? How do we build integrity into our heart and living? Psalm 119 has much to say.

We can follow in the footsteps of the psalmist and interact with God around the greatness of His wonderful, life-giving Word. That will require that we read it, study it, memorize it and meditate upon it frequently. The greater our delight in it, the greater will be our frequency in its hollowed pages. Like the psalmist we can learn to truly love God's Word. We can find in it everything we need—life, light, hope, help, salvation, deliverance, encouragement, joy, reproof, correction, restoration, peace, and every thing else necessary for instruction in righteousness.

Every verse in Psalm 119 after the three verse introduction is spoken to God with the exception of verse 115. Each of them could be considered a short prayer as they unveil the relationship between the psalmist and the Lord. I was intrigued to look at the requests the psalmist made of the Lord. He didn't ask for his daily bread or other things which would be perfectly fine to do. Rather his requests involve interaction with God and revolve around building his relationship with Him.

We see his desire to learn about the Lord as he asks: Teach me thy statutes (12, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135), Open mine eyes (18), Hide not thy commandments from me (19), Give me understanding (27, 34, 73, 125, 144, 169) and Grant me thy law graciously (29).

We see his desire for fellowship with God as he asks: Forsake me not (8), Let me not wander from thy commandments (10), Make me to go in the path of thy commandments (35), Incline my heart unto thy testimonies (36), Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity (37), Stablish thy word unto thy servant (38), Let thy mercies come unto me (41,58,76,77,132), Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth (43), Remember the word unto thy servant (49), Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed (80), Accept the freewill offerings of my mouth (108), Make thy face to shine upon thy servant (135), Consider mine affliction (153), Plead my cause (154), Consider how I love thy precepts (159), Let my cry come near before thee (169), Let my supplication come before thee (170) and Seek thy servant (176).

We see his desire for God's abundance as he asks: Deal bountifully with thy servant (17), Be surety for thy servant for good (122), Let not the proud oppress me (122), Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy (124), Order my steps in thy word (133), Let not any iniquity have dominion over me (133)

We see his longing to be right with God as he asks: Remove from me reproach and contempt (22,39), Remove from me the way of lying (29), Look upon me (132), Let the proud be ashamed (78), Let those that fear thee turn unto me (79) and Let me not be ashamed of my hope (116).

We see his cries for help and deliverance as he asks: Quicken me (25,37,40,88,107,149,154,156,159), Strengthen me (28), Put me not to shame (31), Help thou me (86), Save me (94,146), Uphold me (116), Hold thou me up (117), Leave me not to mine oppressors (121), Deliver me (134,153,154,170), Hear me (145,149), Let thine hand help me (173), Let my soul live (175) and Let thy judgments help me (175)

The psalmist expected God to respond to his requests. He had proven God over time and became assured that God would perform His Word. Those willing to invest time onto their relationship with God always receive great return on their investment. God is more willing to give than we are to receive. How He rejoices to find an eager heart wanting to know Him better. He will make Himself manifest to those who want to know.

What requests have we made recently? How is our relationship developing? When we allow God to work in us we get to enjoy the pleasure of His company. Lives that acknowledge God's gracious working in them glorify the God they come to know. God loves you with a passion greater than anything you could fathom until this point. Enjoy the pleasure of His company, He's enjoying yours.

Affirmations: I know God works in me. God answers my prayers.

Conversation Starters: What have you asked God for recently? What do you need from God.

Recommended Reading: James 4

God's Word is quick and powerful. In the daleth section, the psalmist presents the trouble of his soul and asks for God to quicken him through His Word. In pouring out his distress he says:

Psalm 119:25: My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

Psalm 119:28: My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

These verses indicate the great mental anguish he is going through. They show how down in the dumps he was. If the first verse didn't convince you, the repetition three verses later should convince us that the psalmist is declaring that he is about as low as he could get. The New Living Translation render these verses: "I lie in the dust, completely discouraged; revive me by your word." and "I weep with grief; encourage me by your word."

Because of the nature of life, discouragement and grief are things we must deal with at times. Indeed about sixty-five verses in Psalm 119 mention the psalmist's affliction, trouble and distress. We must be taught how to deal with them. They should be transient states, and we endure them until our souls are revived with the greatness of God's Word. The psalmist's admission and request in verse 25 acknowledges the transforming power of God's Word to heal our souls of the hurt and anguish that it receives at times.

"Quicken" is the Hebrew word, *chayah*, and it means "to live, have life, remain alive, sustain life, live prosperously, live for ever, be quickened, be alive or be restored to life or health." It occurs sixteen times in Psalms 119. In the piel [the intensive active conjugation] it is translated "quicken" (verses 25, 37, 40, 50, 88, 93, 107, 149, 154, 156, and 159) and in the qal [the simple active conjugation] it is translated "live" (verses 17, 77, 116, 144, and 175). It is used of being revived from sickness, discouragement, faintness, and death.

Psalms 107:20 says that God "sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." The psalmist's acknowledgment of the power of God's Word is evident. In both verses 25 and 28 the psalmist's honest admission of the condition of his soul is followed immediately by his request to be revived by God's wonderful matchless Word. He cries both, "Quicken Thou me!" and "Strengthen Thou me!"

"Strengthen" is the Hebrew word, *qum*, and it means to raise up or establish. It occurs four times and is translated in four different ways: "strengthen" in verse 28, "stablish" in verse 38, "will rise" in verse 62, and "perform" in verse 106. God's Word gives us life and puts us back on our feet again so we can stand for Him.

The "quicken" and the "strengthening" are according to God's Word. God's Word sets the standard in at least two ways. First, it provides the promise, and second, it purveys the power. It's because of what we read in God's Word that we know what to ask because when we ask according to His promise we have the confidence that God will perform His promise (I John 5:14). Furthermore, when we believe what we read, that Word furnishes the power to accomplish what it promises. It is both quick and powerful; it is both living and energetic (as Hebrews 4:12 says) and can accomplish all that God intends for it to do. Remember Isaiah 55 which we read in segment one.

Isaiah 55:11: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

God's Word not only communicates God's will. God's Word accomplishes God's will. The psalmist says plainly that he has chosen the way of truth (verse 30). He deliberately chose to go the way of God's Word and laid it out before him like a road map showing the way. He further asserts that he has stuck with it and anticipates God's support so that he is not ashamed (verse 31).

He finishes up the section with a declaration of his resolve. "I will run the way of thy commandments, when (translated "for" in the Hebrew Interlinear) thou shalt enlarge my heart." When we run physically we build our endurance and get better as we stay faithful and continue to run. Just as we can build our physical conditioning, we can build our conditioning spiritually as we run to do God's Word. As we do, God will enlarge our hearts. The more we run, the larger our hearts can get. We should condition ourselves and think about the long haul.

We can take our hurts and distress to God knowing He will heal and deliver. His Word quickens and establishes us. He not only heals our souls and our hearts, but He will help us condition them. When we condition ourselves to God's Word instead of our circumstances our lives can take on new vibrancy. We can run the way of God's Word for He will enlarge our hearts.

Affirmations: God quickens and strengthens me. God sends His Word and heals me.

Conversation Starters: What do you enjoy the most about life? Did you count your blessings today?

Recommended Reading: Colossians 3 & 4

“Affliction” is another word for misery; it is a state of pain, distress or grief or the cause of such. There are seven uses of afflict or affliction translated from two Hebrew synonyms in Psalm 119. Indeed there are about 65 verses that deal with difficult or painful circumstances. Sometimes our troubles come because we do stupid things and when we are repeatedly stupid it may bring big trouble. Other times we suffer because we live in a fallen world and things happen to both the just and unjust. Still other times we suffer not because we do wrong but because we do right and someone else doesn’t like it. Peter even tells us to not be ashamed if we suffer (I Peter 4:16).

Psalm 34:19 also reminds us that “many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Most of us like that second part about deliverance, but deliverance would not be necessary if trouble did not come. Psalm 119 has a lot to say about trouble. Evidently he had suffered so much that he had become a sort of expert in the field. Psalms makes it clear however that it’s not what happens to us that matters, it how we respond that makes the difference.

There are seven verses that speak specifically about affliction. The psalmist tells us what happened before, during and after the affliction. Before the affliction was characterized by straying:

Psalms 119:67: Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

Before we are afflicted we don’t usually think much about it. We are busy with our lives and don’t always ponder the paths of our feet. Like the proverbial sheep of Isaiah 53:6, the psalmist didn’t intend on wandering off. It just sort of happened. The word “astray” simply means to go our own way, a situation we all face at times. Indeed the psalmist admits in the last verse of the psalm that he has strayed again.

C. S. Lewis remarked that God whispers in our pleasure, but he shouts in our pain. Pain is God’s megaphone to rouse a sleeping world. That’s what the psalmist meant in verse 67. His afflictions have led him back to the Lord. Where once he followed his own way, now he runs the way of the Lord.

Four of the verses concern what happened during the affliction. During the affliction it was holding fast to the Word that brought comfort and allowed him to make it through.

Psalms 119:50: This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

The psalmist requests nine times in Psalm 119 to be quickened, but this is the only place where it describes how God accomplished it. It was through His Word. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that the Word of God is quick and powerful. It’s a living word of a living God, and it brings life in all its abundance to God’s people. The Word upon which he hoped quickened him; it made him alive in the midst of his affliction.

Psalms 119:92: Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

It was his delight in the scriptures that kept him coming back to them. It was the joy and rejoicing of his heart which encouraged him to press on and not give up in the midst of the tribulation.

Psalms 119:107: I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

Psalms 119:153: RESH: Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

The affliction is what pushed him to go to God, and he expected God’s Word to deliver him (Psalm 107:20).

Two of the verses concern what happened after the affliction. The positive outcome of the affliction was the learning that was gained and confidence and trust the experience provided.

Psalms 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Since affliction is painful to endure. Our first reaction might not be, “It was good for me to be afflicted.” Yet that is exactly what the psalmist said about his suffering. It’s not that the affliction itself is less painful or that something sad has been made happy or that evil has somehow become good. It was good for us to go through hard times because we learned things about God and about ourselves that we might never have known otherwise. We have a God of all comfort, Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God (II Corinthians 1:3-4)

Psalms 119:75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

“I know” speaks of settled knowledge, the kind that comes only by looking back over the years and seeing again and again how God has helped you in times of heartache and trouble. It is this kind of experiential knowledge that build depth and strength into our souls. The lost we suffered, the trial we endured provided valuable experience that allowed us to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.. We saw God’s Word work and we become even more convinced that it will work in the future. Romans 5:3-5 describes the process of gaining experiential knowledge saying, “we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope,” a hope that makes us not ashamed.

Affirmations: God deals with me according to His Word. God’s Word sustains me in my trials.

Conversation Starters: What comforts you? What makes you happy?

Recommended Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1-3

He is the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and it is used at the beginning of verbs to make them causative. So the requests in this section are stated, “Cause me to know” and “Cause me to understand” and “Cause me to walk” and so forth. This sets up a kind of swinging rhythm until we end with a final flourish of “behold!” in the last verse, 40.

Psalm 119:33-35: Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.³⁴ Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.³⁵ Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

The first three verses of this octet is a plea for guidance and each begins with a separate, but similar request from the psalmist. “Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes,” “give me understanding” and “make me to go in the path of thy commandments.” In this plea for guidance not only does he desire to learn and understand God’s Word, but he wants his behavior and heart to conform to the greatness of God’s Word, also. He does not seek a head-knowledge, but rather a transformed life. He knows he is not there, yet, but should God teach him and give him understanding he sees “keeping God’s law” a vital part of his future.

Indeed, the “yea” functions to affirm and extend the statement. “Give me understanding and I shall keep your law; yes I shall and not only shall I keep it I shall observe it with my whole heart.” “To the end” in verse 33 means without time limit, as long as he lived, and “with my whole heart” means without reservation, fully committed to doing what he learned of God’s Word and will. Until we do what we learned there is no evidence of learning. Until we walk in the path of His commandments there is no proof that we know or understand what they are.

Verses 36 and 37 address the problem posed by material things, and the psalmist seeks God’s help asking:

Psalms 119:36-37: Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.³⁷ Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

The psalmist knows that while he must personally strive to do what God says, he must depend on God’s help to succeed or his labor will be in vain (Psalm 127:1-2). The Psalmist rightly understood that covetousness was a threat to walking in God’s way. One devoted to God’s Word must conquer the desire to acquire what covetousness dangles before him. The Bible is replete with examples of how covetousness has ruined many a life. Balaam sold out God’s people and his own soul for covetousness (Numbers 22, II Peter 2:14-16). Achan stole and brought Israel to defeat by covetousness (Joshua 7:21). David committed adultery and murder because he coveted (II Samuel 6:2-17). Ahab murdered for covetousness (I Kings 21:1-13). Gehazi betrayed Elijah and lied for the sake of covetousness (II Kings 5:20-27). Judas stole from his fellow disciples and betrayed Jesus for covetousness (John 12:6 and Matthew 26:14-16). Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit out of covetousness (Acts 5:1-10).

Covetousness ensnares because of the value placed on things, but there is equal temptation to set one’s eyes on worthless things, too, things of no value for eternity and little value for the present age. Today’s media and entertainment industry brings before us an endless barrage of worthless things to occupy not only our eyes and time, but also our heart and minds. O that God would quicken us and deliver us from covetousness and vanity.

These last two requests are more in the realm of empowerment and motivation. He needs God’s assistance to do what is right: “incline my heart” (verse 36), “turn my eyes away” (verse 37). God would never force a course of action upon the psalmist, but what the psalmist wants is that God would motivate and strengthen his will and provide revelation when needed. This is the kind of thing the apostle Paul describes in Philippians 2:13. “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

Psalm 119:38-40: Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.³⁹ Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.⁴⁰ Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

The psalmist is devoted in his reverence for God. Despite the reproach of others he stays faithful. These last three verses are an expression of longing for God’s Word which would establish, deliver and quicken him. “Behold,” the figure asterismos, calls our attention to his longing which is a result of his reverence.

Affirmations: God establishes His Word for me. I say “Yes!” to God’s Word.

Conversation Starters: If you could have anything you wanted, what would it be? What do you enjoy doing?

Recommended Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4 & 5

In verse 28 of Psalm 119 the psalmist asks God to strengthen him according to His Word. Perhaps he had sung Psalms 27 and 31 many times. Each of those psalms instruct God's people to be courageous, and God promises to strengthen them if they do. Knowing the Word allowed him to pray according to it.

Psalms 27:12-14: Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.¹³ I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.¹⁴ Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Psalms 31:23-24: O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.²⁴ Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

There is a phrase in God's Word [KJV] designed to encourage God's people. The admonition "to be strong and of good courage" is found eleven times in the Bible. It occurs three times in Deuteronomy, five times in Joshua, and three times in Chronicles.

Although they all involved specific challenges confronting God's people at the time, the principles behind them demonstrate the need for personal courage for God's people at all times.

God told Moses how to help Joshua and the people prepare for taking the Promised Land. His instructions were to "Charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see" (Deuteronomy 3:28). This was vital as we see when Moses follows through and does what God directed him to do.

The first occurrence of our phrase to "be strong and of a good courage" is in the command given by Moses to the Israelites just before his death as they were about to enter the Promised Land. He said, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deuteronomy 31:6). Then in the very next verse, Moses gave a similar exhortation to Joshua, their leader, before all the people saying, "Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it."

The word "courage" occurs more in Joshua than in any other book of the Bible, and so does the phrase we are following through God's Word. This specific exhortation is given five times. In addition to Moses' dramatic word of encouragement, God speaks to Joshua declaring the same thing. Three times he tells him, "Be strong and of a good courage/very courageous." The instruction has been complete by now, but it is not finished.

After the people pledge to follow Joshua into the Promised Land they, too, encourage him saying, "Only be strong and of a good courage" (Joshua 1:18). Then after the victory, Joshua calls the captains of the men of war and tells them to put their feet on the necks of the three kings that were captured. He directs them to "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight" (Joshua 10:25). In these accounts in Joshua, the context stresses obedience to the Word of God. That's what we need the real strength and courage for—keeping His Word. God commanded Joshua, "Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law. . . that thou mayest prosper" (Joshua 1:7). Strength and courage was required so that they could keep God's Word and prosper.

David's instruction to his son Solomon concerning the building of the temple contained the same admonition for the same reason, so that he could keep the law and prosper.

I Chronicles 22:13: Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.

I Chronicles 28:20: And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

It is interesting to me that these exhortations occur in Chronicles but not in the parallel records in Samuel and Kings. Chronicles was written from God's point of view, and Samuel and Kings were written from man's point of view. From God's perspective including these specific words of encouragement were important and significant for them to accomplish their tasks.

The last occurrence of our phrase comes from the lips of Hezekiah when he was comforting the people during the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib.

II Chronicles 32:7-8: Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him:⁸ With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

This final record states the effect of the words of encouragement spoken by Hezekiah. The people rested upon his words. They leaned upon these words for strength, and these words saw them through to victory under siege. Regardless of what God calls on us to do, we will have success as we act. We saw from the example earlier that whether they were engaging in battle, beginning a new adventure or entering a new field of service for God those words of encouragement proved profitable to those to whom they were spoken. We all must buck up to face the challenges before us. Knowing that God is with us and that He fights for us is certainly comforting. We, living in the grace administration, have the extra blessing of knowing it is "Christ in us the hope of glory." Let's be strong and of good courage so we can observe to do all that God lays before us. Whatever the task or challenge, we have the wherewithal to succeed.

Affirmations: I am strong and courageous. God prospers me.

Conversation Starters: Are you strong and courageous? Are you more than a conqueror?

Recommended Reading: 2 Thessalonians

In this stanza we find the psalmist interacting with the Word of God. It is appropriated (v 41), trusted (v 42), hoped in (v 43), kept (v 44), sought (v 45), spoken of (v 46), loved (v 47) and sworn to (v 48). Furthermore, he vows to delight himself in it and meditate in it. Thus he establishes a personal witness and testifies to its efficacy in his life.

After appropriating God's mercy and salvation he realizes he has the wherewithal to answer when reproached. In verse four he pleads that the Word of truth would remain in his mouth. In verse 46 he resolves to speak of God's testimonies before kings without shame. His interaction and deep involvement with the Word of God provides the basis for his freedom and resolve to testify to it.

Psalms 119:41: VAU

Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word.

The psalmist appropriates God's mercy even His salvation without hesitation because he knows what God has declared in his Word. Therefore he like Mary can declare, "Be it unto me according to Thy Word."

Psalms 119:42:

So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

"So" indicates a result. The result is that he has "wherewith to answer." "Wherewith" is the Hebrew word *dabar*, one of the synonyms for God's Word. Once the psalmist receives God's Word, he can use it to answer for himself. He trusts God's Word to be effectual in handling the reproach. He speaks it freely.

Psalms 119:43:

And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.

What an ardent plea. He wants his mouth ever ready to speak for his God. The Word of his God have provided for him in the past and he reasons from God's judgments that what he has learned of right and wrong will prove effective once again.

Psalms 119:44:

So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

The result is that he shall continue in the future as he has done in the past. Indeed for the rest of his life he intends on obeying this wonderful Word of the Lord.

Psalms 119:45:

And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.

He vows to walk at liberty for he seeks God's precepts, individual and specific details of the Word of the Lord that He has prescribed for his benefit.

Psalms 119:46:

I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

This verse is a specific illustration of the general truth that the previous verse declared. As a workman of the Word he is not ashamed of his workmanship (II Timothy 2:15).

Psalms 119:47,48:

And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

⁴⁸ My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

In verses 47 and 48 the psalmist repeats "Thy commandments, which I have loved." This doubles and establishes his profession of love for God's Word. This repetition of "thy commandments, which I have loved" falls between his resolve to delight himself in and to meditate upon God's Word. It is not unusual to find "delight," "meditate," and "love" occurring in close proximity. When it comes to loving God's Word, we can often gage our love by our delight in it and our meditation upon it.

Regarding the phrase "I will lift up my hands unto Thy commandments." Bullinger has a note in the Companion Bible that says "to lift up the hand" is an idiom that means to swear. Its first use is in Genesis 14:22 & 23, where Abraham swears an oath to not receive anything from the hand of the King of Sodom.

The Psalmist relinquished himself to God's will as declared in His Word. He swore allegiance to what God's Word declared. He professed his love for the Word and declared his resolve to keep it in the forefront of his mind repeating, musing and meditating on it.

The Psalmist relinquished himself to God's will as declared in His Word. He swore allegiance to what God's Word declared. He professed his love for the Word and declared his resolve to keep it in the forefront of his mind repeating, musing and meditating on it. God's Word provided the basis for his personal witness. Indeed, he made God's testimonies his testimony and spoke with resolve.

Affirmations: I testify to God's goodness. I walk at liberty for I seek God's precepts.

Conversation Starters: Are you enjoying God's mercy? What's your hope for the future?

Recommended Reading: Daniel 3

“According to” is a phrase that sets a standard. It appears nineteen times in Psalms 119. Thirteen times it says, “according to thy word” and three more times it uses another synonym for God’s Word. Twice it says “according to thy lovingkindness” and once “according to thy mercy”; both of which we learn of from His Word. There is no other standard for life and particularly for its cleansing.

Psalms 119:9: BETH: Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

I wonder if this Psalm came to mind when Mary said, “Be it unto me according to Thy Word (Luke 2:38).” Perhaps verse nine was one of her retemories. Perhaps she, like the psalmist, was intent on building her life with God around His Word and wanted to do everything according to His will. There is power in declaring, “Be it unto me according to Thy Word.” Saying, “be it unto me according to Thy Word” was her way of leaving this whole matter in the hands of God.

When the angel came to Mary, and said, “Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus” (Luke 1:31). Then, after a short interchange with the angel Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.” Verse 45 gives us the result of Mary’s declaration when Elizabeth said, “Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

Our words make a difference. Look what Mary’s words accomplished; they put her right into the center of God’s will. She said, “Be it unto me according to thy word,” and it happened just as the angel said. She was blessed when she experienced the performance of God’s Word according to the desire expressed in her confession.

The first occurrence of “according to” in the King James Version is in Genesis.

Genesis 6:22:

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

How thankful we should be that Noah obeyed. We are here because of what he did; the Christ line continued because of what he did. Because he **did** according to all that God commanded him. The appearance of “did” at the beginning and end of the verse is emphatic. It was “according to” that made all the difference. He acted according to all that God commanded. He did the Word. He acted according to God’s spoken Word.

I John 5 has another verse important along this theme.

I John 5:14-15: And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us:¹⁵ And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

How do we know what God’s will is? We know God’s will from God’s Word. God’s Word is His will! We can find out God’s will for us in the Bible because the Bible is the revealed Word and will of God. It is God’s will for us to have whatever God has promised and provided for us in His Word. Praying “according to Thy Word” both directs and limits his desires to what God has declared in His Word.

People have remembered that phrase “according to his will,” and mistakenly thought they had to pray, “Lord, do this or that, if it be thy will.” But inserting “if it be thy will” into a prayer when God’s Word already states that what we’re praying for is His will is confessing that we don’t believe God’s Word is His will. That kind of praying is not necessary.

The psalmist prayed: “Quicken thou me according to thy word.” “Give me understanding according to thy word.” “Deliver me according to thy word.” He prayed according to God’s Word because he knew the Word of God is the will of God. Like him we must know what the Word says. Therefore we must first find the scriptures that reveal God’s will to us. Then we can go to God with great boldness and confidence: “...this is the *confidence* that we have in him.” When we pray for things that God’s Word tells us are His will, we know that He hears us! Then when we know God hears us, we know we have the petitions we ask of Him. We know we have them, praise God!

Affirmations: I have boldness toward God. When I ask anything according to God’s Word and will, He gives me it!

Conversation Starters: Do you have confidence in God? Do you know God hears your prayers?

Recommended Reading: Luke 1

The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 15:4 that Psalm 119 was written that through the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope. We should never be a hopeless people. Whether in the midst of a trial or even when suffering affliction such as we never thought would come our way, we should never be utterly hopeless. Should we ever feel that way, we must regard it as a transient state. We can find hope in the Word of God for God has said that through the patient endurance and comfort of the Scriptures, we find hope.

“This” (verse 50) is a demonstrative pronoun and it points to something close. The previous verse identifies his comfort. He was sure God would remember His Word upon which God had caused him to hope. God is dependable. His faithfulness to His Word which He has declared and prescribed for us, never wavers. God doesn’t change and neither does His Word. We can take comfort in that God is faithful to fulfill His Word.

The psalmist never declined or turned aside from God’s Word. He comforted himself by remembering God’s judgments of old. God had proven Himself faithful in the past and would show Himself faithful in the future. Therefore the psalmist sang songs of rejoicing raising his voice to declare God’s Word in the house of his pilgrimage.

“This” occurs once again (verse 56) and refers once more to the comfort that God’s Word brought him. The comfort of which he spoke, he enjoyed because he kept God’s Word. His obedience to remember God’s Word allowed him to retain it in his mind and perform it. Let’s read the entire stanza.

Psalm 119:49,50: ZAIN

Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

⁵⁰ This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

The psalmist makes nine requests in Psalm 119; verse 51 here is the only place where it describes how God accomplished it. It was through His Word. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that the Word of God is quick and powerful. It’s a living word of a living God, and it brings life in all its abundance to God’s people. The Word upon which he hoped quickened him; it made him alive in the midst of his affliction.

Psalm 119:51,52:

The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.

⁵² I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

“Declined” is the word *natah* which is used four times in Psalm 119. When stated in the positive it is translated, “incline” and when stated in the negative it is translated “decline.” In verse 36 the psalmist asks God to incline his heart to His testimonies, and in verse 112 he states that he has inclined his heart to perform His statutes. Here in verse 51 he states that he has not declined from the law, and in verse 157 he states that he has not declined from His testimonies. In both verses 51 and 157 he stays the course in the face of his enemies. His decision to remember God’s Word and incline himself to perform it brought comfort to his soul.

Psalm 119:53,54:

Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

⁵⁴ Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage [sojourning].

The psalmist knew this world was not his home, but he sojourned through it with a song in his heart. Although we may be afflicted now, there is a time coming where there will be no more tears and no more sorrow.

Psalm 119:55,56:

I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

⁵⁶ This I had, because I kept thy precepts. (KJV)

He had this comfort, this hope in the promise, this remembrance of God, this song in his heart, this courage to face the enemy, because he had earnestly kept God’s precepts. Memory furnishes us with consolation. Two of the four uses of “comfort” in Psalm 119 are in this section as are all three uses of remember. God’s Word is the basis of our comfort. Remembering God’s Word is how we appropriate it, and keeping God’s Word is how we enjoy it.

Affirmations: I remember God and He remembers me. God’s Word is my song in the night.

Conversation Starters: Do you have a happy song? What comforts you?

Recommended Reading: Daniel 6

We find in verse eighteen a beautifully simple prayer. It is one that I have repeated frequently before beginning to read or study the scripture. My searching of the scriptures always seems more profitable when I do so because it helps me acknowledge God's participation with me as I enjoy my fellowship with Him.

Psalms 119:18: Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from your law.

The Psalmist could open his eyes. He was not blind. He could see. But is he really talking about physical eyesight? This is something he felt that he could not do by himself. He needed God's help. Hence his prayer was directed to God, "Open Thou mine eyes."

Exactly, for what did he pray? To read the Bible? No, he could do that. To understand the words? No, he knew what the words meant. He wanted more out of his time in the scriptures! He wanted a relationship with the Author of the book. He wanted to know God's Word as a personal communication to him. One in which he might see the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that God has for them that love Him.

He felt that God had laid up great bounties in his Word, and he asks for power to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy the same. We need not so much that God should give us more blessings, but rather the ability to see and appreciate what he has already given us. The Psalmist asks for no new faculty. He does not desire a "sixth sense." The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened. It is our joy and responsibility to use the eyes, and God's delight and responsibility to open them.

It is during our time spent with God in His Word when we begin to learn how God speaks to our hearts. God's Word expressly declares God's will and lights our path so we can walk with Him. There is no substitute for being diligent to present ourselves approved unto God as workmen who need not to be ashamed as we rightly divide the Word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15: Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

When we know what the Word says, we know what God wants us to do. There is no way to get around the importance of spending time with God in His Word. If we do not know His Word, we will never know His will and our attempts at walking by the spirit will be nothing but vain imaginations.

The psalmist's request here is quite adamant; it's very forceful. The Hebrew word for open is *galah* which means to uncover, discover or lay bare in the sense of looking beyond the garments, the outward appearance, and see what is covered up. *Galah* is in a piel (intensive) imperative form. The psalmist is not satisfied with a cursory reading; he wants to know the deep things of God (I Corinthians 2:10). Our eyes have an appetite and we must be careful what we feed them.

I John 2:16: For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

How wonderful to train our eyes to feed upon the wondrous things of God instead of the mundane things of the world.

The psalmist wanted to "behold" the wonderful things of the Word of God. The Hebrew word behold is *nabat* which has the idea of showing regard for, paying attention to or looking expectantly at. It is a hiphil conjugation which is causative. He wanted God to cause him to understand; he was aware that he could not do it on his own. "Wondrous things" is the Hebrew *pala* which means to be marvellous, awe inspiring, extraordinary, distinguishing by being beyond one's power to understand completely.

How could David get so excited about the Word of God? He anticipated the benefit he would receive from it. There are wondrous things in Scripture; but they can only be seen when our eyes are opened by God. This means that *prayer* is an important (and often neglected) part of Bible study. There is so much more to the Word of God than just a surface reading provides. The psalmist's heart would settle for nothing less; neither would his eyes be satisfied. If we ever have trouble reading the Word of God, or get bored when doing so, perhaps we should cry like the psalmist, "Open my eyes so I can behold the hidden wonders of your Word." Once God begins to do that, we will never get bored with His Word again.

Affirmations: God opens my eyes so I can behold wondrous things from His Word. I study to show myself approved unto God.

Conversation Starters: What excites you? Has God ever shown you something?

Recommended Reading: Romans 8

This section of Psalm 119 demonstrates that the Word of God is the basis for our priorities. God's Word actually lays out clear priorities for us to live by so we can receive God's *best*. A priority is "the right to precede others in order, rank, privilege, etc.; precedence." To "prioritize" means "to arrange or do in order of priority" or "to give a high priority to." When we seek Scriptural priorities, we discover those relationships, activities, and pursuits that should precede others in term of rank and order. God does want us to prioritize all of the possible activities in life according to these spiritual priorities. We need to recognize the priorities that God wants in our life.

Psalm 119:57,58: CHETH:

Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

⁵⁸ I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

"Portion" is an allusion to the apportioning of the land of Canaan to the tribes of Israel. The Levites were not given an inheritance in the land because the Lord was their inheritance and their portion (Deu. 10:8-9). Jeremiah, a priest called to be a prophet, called the Lord "the portion of Jacob" [i.e., of all Israel] (Jer. 10:16; 51:19; Lam. 3:24), and David used the same image in Psalm 16:5-6. We, too, would be wise to consider God as *our* portion, through whom all our needs and wants are supplied for eternity.

The psalmist declares the Lord is his portion; nothing else qualifies. God has first place in his life and he maintains his loyalty by keeping His Word. The same earnestness that "O" communicates in verse 57 "intreat" conveys in verse 58. "Favour" is the word face, and the psalmist wants to know the Lord face to face as Moses did. Although he knows he is not deserving of the intimacy he seeks he invokes God's mercy to get it.

Psalm 119:59,60:

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

⁶⁰ I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

Setting priorities takes deliberation. It requires pondering the paths of our feet, considering our ways. If God's ways are not our ways something needs to change. Turning our feet unto His testimonies is the only logical choice. The psalmist prioritized his actions to pursue God's testimonies, and he didn't waste any time doing it. It is the neglect of this haste that allows convictions to wane. Delayed obedience is disobedience. A sound conviction sweeps away all excuses and delays. Why hesitate when you know the truth.

Psalm 119:61,62:

The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.

⁶² At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.

The psalmist allowed nothing to deter him from his priorities. When confronted by the wicked he didn't allow their actions to change his. He refused to forget God's law, and his priorities never suffered because of the onslaught of evil or negative circumstances. If he needed more time to get things done, he simply got up in the middle of the night. He was thankful to know God's righteous judgments, to be able to acknowledge the difference between right and wrong.

Psalm 119:63,64:

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

⁶⁴ The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

The author is at great odds with his lawless oppressors but sees as companions all those who reverence and obey God. He realizes he is not alone in his struggle. (This will come up again in verses 74 & 79.) That was no doubt a source of encouragement, as it should be to all of us today. He further recognizes that in spite of his present troubles, the earth is still full of God's *hesed*, his lovingkindness and mercy (verse 64).

The psalmist spent his time socializing or fellowshipping with other kindred spirits who shared his priorities. Having experienced this broad companionship, the Psalmist felt the goodness of God filling the earth. This experience of God's mercy increased his desire for knowledge and obedience. Hence his close, "teach me Your statutes."

Affirmations: God is my portion. I change my ways to follow God.

Conversation Starter: What do you do with your whole heart? Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night?

Recommended Reading: Romans 12

The psalmist was living in a hostile environment. People were speaking against him (vv. 22, 23, 51, 69). He repeatedly says he was being afflicted (vv. 50, 67, 71, 75, 107). Evil men were persecuting him (vv. 84-87, 109, 110, 161). The Bible is clear that godly people are not exempt from trials. Indeed, it's a promise you can count on: "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (II Timothy 3:12). But in all his trials, God's Word gave the psalmist stability and comfort (vv. 50, 52, 61-64, 75, 76, 92, 165).

What believer hasn't had similar difficulties? I think we have all seen a day of trouble or at least, spent time pondering troubling things in our lives. Who hasn't felt overwhelmed like Asaph (Psalms 77:3)? Yet God tells us to call upon him in the day of trouble (Psalms 50:15).

Psalm 77:1-4: I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. ² In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. ³ I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. ⁴ Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

Although Asaph sought the Lord in his day of trouble, he did not immediately get comfort in his day of trouble. That does not mean that God's help wasn't immediately available, because God is certainly ready to comfort and strengthen any time. It says that he refused to be comforted. That what it says about Jacob when he found out about losing Joseph (Genesis 37:35).

Psalms 77:7-9: Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? ⁸ Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? ⁹ Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.

What a series of radical questions! Asaph thoughts were rather extreme. He actually asks God if His promises are at an end "forever!" Of course we have never thought that. Sometimes we get the idea that only unspiritual people respond with turmoil during trouble. Not so! We know that God will either calm our storms or calm our hearts as we endure them. However the deliverance comes, we hang in there until it comes. There are some very godly bible characters (like Job) who wrestled over problems of life and whether God was taking notice or even there.

Notice there is a lot of dialogue in the Psalm 77. Asaph is having a conversation with God and with himself over these things. When we are in turmoil, stop and consider what we are saying over and over to ourselves. The example of Psalm 119 encourages us to always make sure what we say is in sync with God's Word and that we expect God to respond according to His Word. The key is to take heed to the Word. It is the stabilizing force in our lives

Psalms 77:10-14: And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. ¹¹ I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. ¹² I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. ¹³ Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?

The solution was to remember and meditate upon how God has come through with deliverance in the past. He had to think about it over and over again. The continued reflection on these things led Asaph to say truly, "who is so great a god as our God?"

Even Jesus learned obedience through the things which he suffered. I do think it's important to note, however, that the Greek word for "suffered" in Hebrews 5:8 is *paschō* which means to undergo or experience. It encompasses both positive and negative experiences. In a good sense it means "to be well off, in good situation, and in a bad sense it means "to suffer sadly, be in a bad plight." Negative things are not just the consequence of sin. Sometimes we endure grief precisely because we are godly and are doing the right thing (I Peter 2:19-23; 5:10-11). Let's always expect the best, but never faint should adversity comes our way. We can overcome. God will help.

Affirmations: I talk to God about everything on my mind. God is good and does good.

Conversation Starters: What brings you stability in life? Do you have God figured out?

Recommended Reading: 1 Corinthians 1 & 2

The Bible is profitable for doctrine, reproof and correction. When we are not believing rightly we need someone to correct us and bring us back to right believing. The Word of God provides chastening when we need it. Hebrews 12:7 reminds us that “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” The psalmist admission that God had dealt well with him must acknowledge at least some chastisement.

The Hebrew words *tob* and *tub* (translated well, good and better) are used six times in this stanza. The psalmist acknowledges that God has dealt well with him (65). He asks God to teach him good judgment and knowledge (66). He declares that God *is* good and *does* good (verse 68). He admits that it was good that he was afflicted (71). He states that God’s law *is better* than thousands of gold and silver (72; compare verses 14, 127 & 162). What a context to set the chastening of the Lord in.

Psalms 119:65-66: TETH Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.⁶⁶

Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

The psalmist had prayed in verse 17, “Deal bountifully with Your servant.” Here he graciously and thankfully acknowledges the answer to his prayer, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.” After expressing his thankfulness for God’s good dealing with him which has come according to His word, the psalmist then requests more teaching from God’s judgments which, like the commandments he has learned, he will believe. Don’t we all have this same need for judgment and knowledge. Yet how often to do acknowledge it or pray for it.. Indeed, Proverbs 2:3-5 instructs us to cry after them.

Psalms 119:67-70: Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.⁶⁸ Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.⁶⁹ The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.⁷⁰ Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law.

The psalmist calls his enemies “proud.” He states that they have “forged a lie” against him and later that they “almost consumed me on earth” (verse 87). He says their hearts are “fat as grease” (verse 70) i.e. “fat, without feeling” (Green’s Literal Translation). The imagery is that of being covered in thick fat and difficult to penetrate. The NIV uses “callous” for “fat.” Yet, in spite of being persecuted, the psalmist will keep God’s precepts and delight in His law (verses 69-70).

Since the Lord is good does us good, should we not expect the devil to do us evil for he is a “liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). Certainly some of the fiery darts of the wicked come in the form of lies directed at God’s people (Ephesian 6:16). The psalmist often recalls this kind of attack. Whether tempted himself (remove from me the way of lying v.29), or the victim of it as here in verse 69, he speaks of lies eight times (although the Hebrew word *sheqer* is not always translated lie or lying). Again in verse 79 he notes the proud “dealing perversely with him without a cause [*sheqer*]” and in verse 86 he states “they persecute me wrongfully [*sheqer*]”; he describes their deceit as “falsehood [*sheqer*]” in verse 118. He declares his hatred for lies in verse 104 and 128 repeating, “I hate every false [*sheqer*] way.” Finally, it culminates in verse 163 where he adamantly asserts, “I hate and abhor lying [*sheqer*].” Hebrews instructs us to look unto Jesus for strength to endure. “Consider Him, therefore, that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds (Hebrews 12:3).” Yea, they may “say all manner of evil” against us (Matthew 5:11), and they may cause “the way of truth to be evil spoken of” (Romans 14:16; I Corinthians 10:30; I Peter 4:14; II Peter 2:2). However, “let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised” (Hebrews 4:14).

Psalms 119:71-72: It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.⁷² The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

Surely it was not pleasant to live through the situation, but the psalmist can look back and say that it was “good.” Indeed, it was more than worth it. What he learned from the law of the Lord from it was worth more than thousands of gold and silver. This agrees with the book of Hebrews which tells us, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (12:11; see verses 5-11). How thankful ought we to be when we are corrected in our ways. Reproofs of instruction are a way of life we should get used to them (Proverbs 3:25).

Affirmations: God chastens me when I need it. God’s Word is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.

Conversation Starters: What makes you mad? What delights your soul?

Recommended Reading: 1 Corinthians 3 & 4

There is a phrase in Psalm 119 that grabs my heart every time I read it. It opens the mem section. We find it in verse 97 where the psalmist exclaims, “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.” (There’s our “O” again.) He so loved God’s law that he asks God take note of it. He says in verse 159, “Consider how I love thy precepts.”

Why wouldn’t he love God’s Word when he loved the God Who authored it. How can you love the Word if you don’t love the God Who authored it, and how can you love the God Who authored it if you don’t love what He said! For it was through God’s Word that he learned about his God. He cherished God’s communication of Himself; his love for God and His Word was so rich and so full. This Word of God is how we get to know Him; it’s how we understand His heart. This is how He introduces us to Himself.

His meditation was both the cause and effect of his love. He meditated on God’s word because he loved it, and then loved it even more because he meditated on it. He could not get enough of it, so passionately did he love it. Familiarity with the word of God fosters affection for it, and affection for it seeks yet greater familiarity.

The Psalmist avowed his love for God’s Word and meditated on it. Indeed, the twelve occurrences of love are almost all professions of love for the wonderful Word of God. A great key to loving God’s Word is declaring or professing that love.

Psalms 119:47-48: And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. ⁴⁸ My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

In verses 47 and 48 the psalmist repeats “Thy commandments, which I have loved.” This doubles and establishes his profession. The repetition of “thy commandments, which I have loved” falls between his resolve to delight himself in and to meditate upon God’s Word. It is not unusual to find “delight,” “meditate,” and “love” occurring in close proximity. When it comes to loving God’s Word, we can often gage it by our delight in it and our meditation upon it.

Regarding the phrase “I will lift up my hands unto Thy commandments.” Bullinger has a note in the Companion Bible that says “to lift up the hand” is an idiom that means to swear. Its first use is in Genesis 14:22 & 23, where Abraham swears an oath to not receive anything from the hand of the King of Sodom.

The Psalmist relinquished himself to God’s will as declared in His Word. He swore allegiance to what God’s Word declared. He professed his love for the Word and declared his resolve to keep it in the forefront of his mind repeating, musing and meditating on it.

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Psalms 119:106: I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

It was not just the commandments he loved; he professed the same love for the law in verses 113 and 165, for the testimonies in verse 119 and for the precepts in 159. Of course we know all these synonyms refer to the wonderful Word of God.

Sometimes he offers a reason for his love.

Psalms 119:140: Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

Sometimes he acknowledges the blessings and benefits of his love for God’s Word.

Psalms 119:165: Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

There are two of the great benefits of love for God’s Word. Lovers of God’s Word will live without offense and have great peace.

Psalms 119:132: Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto [Complete Jewish Bible: in keeping with [Your] judgment for] those that love thy name.

The psalmist could expect God to look on him and be merciful to him because he knew how God related to the upright believers of the past. He craved to experience what the others who loved God did. Do with me, “as thou usest to do,” you know, what you promised to do [i.e. What your Word said you would do.] for all that love thee and indeed performed for others in the past.

The word “how” in verse 97 indicates a superlative love. It imports a comparison, and notes a greater love in David towards the word than towards any thing else. Indeed, in verse 127, he declares that he loves the Lord’s commandments “above gold, yea, above fine gold.” He even says in verse 167 that he loved them exceedingly.

There was no comparison. His love for the Word far surpassed his love of gold. “Yea” as it is used in verse 127, adverbially, means “not only this but even.” Even the finest of gold sank in comparison. Wealth brings with it so many conveniences and advantages so that men naturally esteem it, and gold as the symbol of it is much esteemed. Yet in the judgment of the psalmist, God’s laws are more enriching, and bring with them more comfort and blessing than the choicest treasures. The Psalmist could not boast that he always kept the commands; but he could declare that he loved them above anything else in life.

Affirmations: I have great peace and nothing offends me. I perform my vows

Conversation Starters: What do you love the most in life? Are you easily offended?

Recommended Reading: 1 Corinthians 13

Every letter in the Hebrew alphabet carries special, specific meanings. Jod, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, literally means “hand” and is also used symbolically of what is done with the hand. Verse 73 is an example of the figure of speech anthropopathea or condescension, attributing to God human characteristics. God is spirit and has no hands; we do however. We know what we do with our hands, and therefore when God is figuratively spoken of as using his hands, we see the exercise of His power in His handiwork. This figure occurs again in verse 173 where the psalmist requests the help of God’s hand.

Since we are His handiwork, and the psalmist recognizes that Our Maker would understand best how man is supposed to function. God’s design would have included incorporating the ability to learn and understand the scriptures. Therefore he seeks God’s direction in how to live. He relies on God to teach me what he needs to learn.

Psalm 119:73-80: JOD: Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.⁷⁴ They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

The psalmist knew that as God’s handiwork he was made and fashioned to learn and understand the scriptures. He also knew he wasn’t alone. There were others that revered God as he did. These kindred spirits had much in common. The psalmist desired to encourage others who also revered God by maintaining hope in God’s Word. All those who revered God would be glad to see him for there would be much they would have to share with one another. The phrase “they/those that fear thee” occurs twice in this stanza in verse 74 and again in verse 79.

Psalm 119:75-76: I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.⁷⁶ Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

He knows that God has allowed his present affliction and that His judgments have been right. Yet he now prays for relief and comfort, as God has promised in His Word. This will be a powerful witness to God’s people and so will the final outcome of all this.

Psalm 119:77-78: Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.⁷⁸ Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts.

The psalmist chooses to let God deal with his enemies while he finds comfort in the law, striving to be blameless, praying that they will be put to shame rather than him. The psalmist reiterates that his enemies are proud and continues the pattern of contrasting their wrongdoing with His faithfulness. “They treated me wrongfully...but I will meditate on Your precepts” (verse 78). “They have forged a lie against me, but I will keep your precepts” (verse 69). They “have bound me...but I have not forgotten Your law” (verse 61). They “have me in derision...yet I do not turn aside from Your law” (verse 51).

Psalm 119:77-78: Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.⁸⁰ Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

The psalmist would encourage and gladden other righteous people because his hope and attention were put upon the word of God. Without this hope, his righteous life would be impossible. Only the Word of God could make righteous living possible

In this strophe the psalmist proclaims God as Creator, and understood certain obligations to God because he was fashioned by the hands of God. Recognizing God as our Creator is to recognize: 1) That we are obligated to Him as the One who gives us life. 2) That we respect Him as One who is greater and smarter than we are. 3) That He, as our designer, knows what is best for us. 4) That He has made us to learn and understand His Word. and 5) That we have an obligation to others who share our reverence for God and His Word.

Affirmations: God’s tender mercies flow my way. My heart is sound in God’s Word.

Conversation Starters: Who are you happy to see? What’s your favorite song this week.

Recommended Reading: 1 Corinthians 5 & 6

Our reverence and esteem for the Word of God demonstrates what we really treasure in life. We want a true and vital spiritual relationship with God, and therefore we want to continue to develop our love and appreciation for His communication of Himself in His Word.

The importance of the heart comes up as early as verse two, right in the middle of the blessing.

Psalms 119:2: Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

If we want to obediently keep His testimonies, we will need to seek Him with our whole heart or as some translations put it wholeheartedly. A half-hearted effort will not do. God deserves our best and should get our total allegiance and fidelity. This idea of acting with a “whole heart” is an integral part of Psalm 119. Whole heart occurs 13 times in the KJV and 6 of them are in Psalm 119.

Psalms 119:7: I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

Uprightness of heart results from learning right and righteous judgments. A heart which so stands before the Lord will sound forth His praise, and there is no more glorious sound than praise which comes from a pure heart standing in its integrity.

Psalms 119:10: With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

After declaring the blessing upon them that seek God with their whole heart, the psalmist declares that he has done so. Such action in pursuit of God gives one the confidence to make the request he did. “O” indicates that he was emotionally invested in keeping God’s Word and requested God’s assistance so that he did not wander from the path. He knew, as he declared in verse four, that God commanded him to keep His Word, but he humbly requests His help in doing so.

Note the psalmist’s concern. He did not dread deliberate transgression but inadvertent wandering. Like sheep which get lost, it was never a deliberate intention but rather an inadvertent wandering away. The psalmist exerted himself with his whole heart, but he knows that even his whole strength is not enough to keep him right unless his Shepherd should be his keeper. However this sense of need and request for help never produced idleness; for while he prayed to be kept from wandering he still took care to seek the Lord with his whole heart. The very next verse shows us how he accomplished it.

Psalms 119:11: Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

His heart would be kept by the Word because he kept the Word in his heart. We must in this imitate the psalmist. First, we must accept God’s Word as God’s will and then we must esteem, hide or treasure it ourselves. Not simply as a mere feat of the memory, but as the joyful act of the affection.

Psalms 119:32: I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Running, as used here, means the cheerful, ready, and zealous observance of God’s commandments. It also connotes a speedy or a ready obedience, without delay. We need a large heart, because the command is exceedingly broad (verse 96). Just like the physical exercise of running builds aerobic endurance. The same endurance of heart is achieved by running the way of His commandments.

Psalms 119:34,36: Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea [yes I will and not only will I keep it, but], I shall observe it with my whole heart.³⁶ Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

Again we see the importance of observing God’s Word with our whole heart. When we commit to God’s Word and delight in it, we can expect God to help us direct and guide our hearts unto it.

Psalms 119:58: I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

God loves it when we approach Him with our whole heart. We have confidence to do so because we expect His mercy according to God’s Word.

Psalms 119:69,70: The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.⁷⁰ Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law.

Regardless of what anyone else does, we respond to God and His Word wholeheartedly. Our delight in it makes a difference..

Psalms 119:80: Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

Again the psalmist asks God to do what God has asked of him already. The workman that is diligent and approaches God’s Word with his whole heart never needs to be ashamed of his workmanship.

Psalms 119:112: I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

Remember in verse 36 the psalmist asked God to incline his heart unto His testimonies. Well apparently God did because here the psalmist declares that he has done so. With God’s help he did it and would continue to do so unto the end.

Psalms 119:145: KOPH: I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

His love for God and His Word required him to approach Him with his whole heart, and he was earnest in His request.

Psalms 119:161: SCHIN: Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

How evil is amplified from the consideration that it is the very persons who ought to be protecting us, who employ their position and strength in hurting us. How inflated the aggravation becomes when there is no reason or cause for it at all. The psalmist might have been overcome by awe of the princes had it not been that a greater reverence drove out the lesser. His awe of God’s word was like reigns by which he controlled his mind. The influence of crowns and scepters shrivel in the judgment of one who perceives a more majestic royalty in the commands of his God.

Affirmations: I seek God with my whole heart. I have great awe for God’s Word.

Conversation Starters: How big is your family? Do you have a place in your heart for God?

Recommended Reading: 1 Corinthians 7 & 8

The caph section describes a time of trouble filled with great discouragement, disappointment and despair. In it we find the only unanswered questions of the psalm. We hear in this section the psalmist pouring his heart out before God. The psalmist cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel until he comes to the last verse when he says, “Quicken me after Thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimonies of Thy mouth.” In verses 81 and 82 he talks about fainting and failing which he illustrates in verse 83. Then in the next four verses he questions the Lord’s delay, fears the devices of the proud, seeks the Lord’s defense and expresses his own determination. Only in the last verse do we see his expectation for God’s lovingkindness to change things.

Our only true hope in this world is in God and His Word. The world uses “hope” as a fond wish or desire. Biblically “hope” is much more sure and secured. Biblically there is no doubt associated with “hope.” Hope affords us a deep settled confidence that God will keep His promises. **THE HOPE** for the Old Testament believers was the first coming of Messiah, whereas **THE HOPE** of us New Testament believers is rooted in Christ’s return where we shall be changed and be like him. What an important part of the believer’s armor is the hope. It is the helmet of salvation that covers our head in the day of battle. The psalmist here faces his crisis with his helmet on.

The psalmist begins the stanza speaking of the condition of his soul and his sight which he illustrates with an orientalism.

Psalms 119:81-83: CAPH: My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.⁸² Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?⁸³ For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.

The Hebrew word *kalah* is used four times in Psalm 119 and three of them are in this section. It is translated “fainteth” in verse 81, “fail” in verse 82 and “consumed” in verse 87. All of which are good translations. The fourth occurrence is in verse 123 where it echoes verses 81 and 82 saying, “Mine eyes fail, *kalah*, for thy salvation.” It carries the idea of being “spent,” “used up,” or “exhausted.” It is clear that the psalmist is in dire straits and longs for God to move. He seems desperate for God’s comfort.

He uses the metaphor of a bottle in the smoke to describe his situation. This oriental expression is quite graphic. This refers to an Eastern leathern bottle blacked and shriveled up in the smoke. It is suspended from the ceiling and has no escape from the smoke from the fires that cook the food. It is powerless to change its condition; it just hangs there helpless. Bishop Pillai taught us that using this is figurative of a tremendous crisis. A bottle in the smoke had no control over its circumstances and could not get out of them by itself.

Despite the crisis and calamity he faces, he refuses to forget God’s statutes. Then in the next four verses he presents his desperate circumstances. He questions the Lord’s delay, fears the devices of the proud, seeks the Lord’s defense and expresses his own determination.

Psalms 119:84-87: How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?⁸⁵ The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.⁸⁶ All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.⁸⁷ They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

He considered whether he would even live through the crisis, and was concerned that those who persecuted him would get what they deserved. He so wanted God to act, but wondered at His delay. He was concerned about the traps the insolent had set for him. They were so presumptuous that they disregarded God’s law to do so. His only defense was to cry out to the Lord. Surely He would be faithful to His faithful commandments. The key word in verse 87 is “almost.” They had pressed hard upon him, but he was determined not to falter. Despite the crisis and calamity he faced, he refused to forsake God’s precepts. He continues to expect change.

Psalms 119:88: Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

He asks for God to make him alive through His lovingkindness, and maintains his vow to keep God’s testimonies. He fully expected to come through the crisis and have his own testimony of God’s lovingkindness to declare.

Affirmations: I do not faint in the day of adversity. God helps me to be my best.

Conversation Starters: Where do you put your hope? Have you ever memorized scripture?

Recommended Reading: 1 Corinthians 9 & 10

God has provided for us most abundantly and most liberally in Christ Jesus. He has given us holy spirit. He has given us His Word which lays a wonderful path before us. Jesus Christ “blazed the trail” before us, and we have the privilege to continue in the path, to walk in his steps, and do the works of Jesus Christ. In order to do the works of Jesus Christ we must believe the same words of God that Jesus believed. When we hide God’s Word in our minds and hearts, we can have the same success that he did.

Psalms 40:7,8: Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, ⁸ I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Hebrews quotes and identifies this scripture as referring to Jesus Christ. Jesus knew what the book said about him, and he didn’t forget it. Jesus Christ could do the will of God because he had hidden God’s Word in his heart, and he delighted in doing God’s will day by day. We have the same privilege and opportunity to take this wonderful Word of God, the greatest reality in life, and hide it in our hearts (Psalms 119:11). There’s no greater place to put it. We do it for the same reason, “to not sin against Him.” Then we can walk with power and might, vitality and joy and be the men and women He has called us to be.

When I was a young boy growing up in a small Methodist Church in my hometown our minister had a favorite benediction he would give quite frequently. It came from Psalm 19:14. He would say, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”

I think that helped to instill in me from my earliest years the desire to want my life to be pleasing to God. If the Lord truly was my strength and my redeemer, then I would want my mind and heart and the words which came out of my mouth to be acceptable with Him. Another favorite of his was one of the first verses I memorized as a freshman in high school. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalms 139:23,24).

During my teen years I was never quite sure what I thought and felt. It seemed I would fluctuate and change often enough that I was never as convinced about things as I thought I should be. I took comfort in knowing that God really knew my heart even when I was not sure that I did. I knew He had to know it better than I did, because I was not sure. But I longed for a relationship with Him and frequently poured my heart out to Him. I so wanted to think and feel about Him the way the Bible described others doing. It is of no surprise I guess that Psalms was a favorite book of the Bible for me. The more I read the book, the more convinced I became that God wanted a relationship with me as badly as I wanted one with Him. Therefore I knew He would help me and guide me along the way.

I Kings 8:39 says that God knows the hearts of all the children of men, and I Chronicles 28:9 says, “the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts” Psalm 139 also tells of how intimately God knows us and how precious His thoughts are to us. God knows our hearts so completely, we never need to be concerned about hiding things from Him – we can’t! It is not possible to hide things from Him. Besides, we don’t need to. He is concerned with us committing and dedicating our hearts to Him. I Samuel 16:7 says that the LORD looketh on the heart. We can develop our heart. We can make our heart strong. We can make our heart a place of great fruitfulness for God.

Proverbs 21:2 says, “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.” We don’t always know when we are off, but God does. He ponders our hearts. We should ponder our heart too. We should be concerned about our heart, also. In the leadership epistles of Timothy, Titus and Philemon whenever “heart” is used, it is always prefaced with the word “pure.” We should be concerned about keeping our hearts pure. We do not want any impure motivation or ulterior motives. We purify our hearts by keeping God’s words in them.

Proverbs 4:20-21 says, “My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. ²¹ Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.” Do you see the gradual development, and how it builds through those four phrases? We pay attention and are eager to hear. We do not want to miss anything so we incline our ear. We have great anticipation. We open our Bibles so we can keep our eyes on the page. Look how it builds to the last phrase “keep them in the midst of thine heart.” We put effort into it because we want to keep them tenaciously.

“Keep” is a Hebrew word with the basic idea of “to exercising great, care over” or “to do carefully and diligently.” Why should we keep them carefully? Because “they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh (Proverbs 4:22).

This Word of God is a living word; it breathes health into us. When we have this word we have life. Without it we have a mere existence. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus said, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” We are to live by every word. That’s what makes life full and rich for us.

Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence [above all keeping]; for out of it are the issues of life.” “Keep above all keeping” is a figure of speech. God is very emphatic. We must guard our hearts. The issues of life come out of our hearts, and that’s why God tells us to guard and protect it. Make sure this Word is in it, for if God’s Word is in it, God’s Word will issue in our lives and that’s what we want.

Affirmations: I keep my heart with all diligence. God’s Word brings me life. My heart is a place of great fruitfulness for God.

Conversation Starters: Did you know God’s Word brings health to our bodies? How’s your heart?

Recommended Reading: Proverbs 4

The eighth section beginning with lamed deals with the faithfulness of the Word of God. It shows that the Word of God is everlasting, immutable, and infinite in perfection. We continue to see the interaction of the Psalmist, God and God's Word. We will see the Psalmist opening his mouth and heart in praise and adoration of God. He speaks to God as one would talk to a friend. There is a reverence and honesty in his speech, but his words are full of passion and commitment. The psalmist is not talking to a new acquaintance, but a trusted friend... a friend Who has proven Himself time after time after time.

Before we look at the resolve and determination of the Psalmist, I thought it good that we remember God's resolve. The greatest commitment ever made is the one God made to His Word. God's faithfulness to His Word which He has declared and prescribed for us, never wavers. He doesn't change and neither does His Word. That's the standard. That's how we relate to each other. We depend upon God to fulfill His Word, and He is faithful to do so. We relate to God through His Word. We meditate upon it, speak about it, remind Him of it, and He faithfully brings it to pass. God's Word is not fickle or uncertain; it is settled, fixed, determined, sure, immovable. It stands!

The lamed stanza speaks of the faithfulness of the settled, sustaining and sought after Word of the Lord.

Psalm 119:89: For ever, O LORD, thy Word is settled in heaven.

"Settled" is the Hebrew *natsab*. This is the only place it is translated settled. It is usually translated "stand." The Word stands! This is its only occurrence in Psalm 119. It doesn't matter what men think about it or say about it. The Word stands. It is everlasting, immutable and infinite in its perfection. This truth is established in verse 152, "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever." and completed in 160, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."

Not only is this Word of God a Settled Word, One that stands! It is also a Sustaining Word. Not only does it never change; it always performs.

Psalm 119:90-91: Thy faithfulness [as displayed in His commitment to His Word] is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. ⁹¹ They [the heaven and the earth] continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all (the heaven and the earth and all that's in them) are thy servants.

"Faithfulness" is one of the fourteen synonyms for God's Word. This Hebrew word is also translated "truth" elsewhere. Some translations including the Geneva Bible, the Douay-Rheims, the Septuagint and the New American Bible translate it "truth" in this verse. God has established His truth and is faithful to uphold it. It never fails continuing from generation to generation.

God has been and will always be faithful to all generations... to all that call upon His name. His truth endures. It wasn't written to be forgotten and neglected. It was written to provide life for all who find it and health to all their flesh (Proverbs 4:22). Nature is governed by fixed laws, the earth keeps its course by the divine ordinances established in the beginning. The earth owes its existence and orderly arrangement to the Word of God. Remember, in the beginning God said.... He spoke words... His Word! That word continues regulate and uphold the heavens and earth

Hebrews 11:3: Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

God said it, and it happened just like He said. He spoke it into being. This word, "established" in verse ninety, occurs three other places in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119:5: O that my ways were directed [established] to keep thy statutes!

If the earth was established to keep God's ordinances, why not me? Why not us?

Psalm 119:73: Thy hands have made me and fashioned [established] me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

Because he realizes that God has made him, he is assured that God made him to understand and know His commandments.

Psalm 119:133: Order [establish] my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

It is the sureness of the words proceeding from His mouth that establishes the world that is upheld by His hands. The word, "ordinances" in verse ninety-one is the Hebrew *mishpat* usually translated judgments. It is derived from a root word meaning to govern, judge or determine. It refers to judicial ordinances and decisions; legal sanctions. It shows how God ruled in this case which has set the president that continues unto this day.

The word "servant" occurs fourteen times in Psalm 119. The other thirteen are used to refer to the Psalmist, himself. He talks about himself as "Thy servant" "God's servant." It is his recognition that if the heaven and earth serve God, shouldn't he. If the heavens and earth keep God's commandments, shouldn't we?

Psalms 119:92: Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

The psalmist goes from the general to the specific. Not only does God sustain His creation, He sustained the psalmist in particular as well. Just how important is delight. Keeping our affection for God's Word keen helps us endure the difficulties we face in life. Job's esteem for the Word of God is what got through his trials and tribulations as well (Job 23:0-12).

Psalm 119:93: I will never forget thy precepts: [WHY?] for with them thou hast quickened me.

God's Word was the difference between life and death for the psalmist. This is something he made up his mind to remember. I will never forget. That is a function of our will. We remember what we choose to remember... what we deem significant or important enough to not forget.

Psalms 119:94,95: I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts. ⁹⁵ The wicked have waited for me to destroy [same as "perished" in verse ninety-two] me: but I will consider [also translated discern or understand] thy testimonies.

Because the Word is sustaining it is sought after. "Sought" can also be translated inquired, consulted, investigated, followed or studied. We seek God's Word because we want to know God and what He wants for us. What's God's prescription for my life? What will make me whole and save me from destruction?

Psalms 119:96: I have seen an end [boundary or border] of all perfection [completeness]: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

"I have seen the end of all perfection" means "I have seen the boundary of every thing that has been completed (in context, it refers to the heavens and the earth)." But, the Word of God knows no bounds. It is infinite or scopeless. Take any field of knowledge you want... Take any part of this creation, and it is finite, limited. However, the Word of God is not. It covers every situation. It answers every question. It applies to every person. No one and nothing is exempt from its scope.

This wonderful Word of God is settled, sustaining and sought after. It supplies all that we need; it communicates God love and compassion to us completely. God declared it freely and is faithful to it absolutely. Because we know the Word stands and sustains life as we know it, we resolve to seek it out and use it as God intended. We build our life with God interacting with it.

Affirmations: God's Word sustains me. I will never forget God's Word

Conversation Starters: How settled is your life? Are there things you are afraid of?

Recommended Reading: 1 Corinthians 11 & 12

Psalm 119:11 is one of the first verses that I memorized and really lays a good foundation for getting scripture into our hearts. It says, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. If we want to develop our intimacy with God, it is going to require us acknowledging Him and His Word in our daily living. When God’s Word is hidden in our hearts it will issue in our lives.

God’s Word gets into our heart because we put it there. If we want to get God’s Word into our heart, we must put it there. Remember Psalm 119:11 said “Thy Word have I hid in my heart.” It was something he accomplished. The Word got into David’s heart because he put it there. He hid God’s Word in his heart. If David could do it so can we. We want to hear it over and over again. We want to saturate our minds with it.

The Hebrew word for “hid” here means “to conceal something with a definite purpose.” What’s the purpose in Psalms 119:11? It is recorded in the end of the verse: “That I might not sin against thee.” We are going to use it and apply it; it makes a difference in our lives. It keeps us from blowing it and missing the mark.

It also connotes storing or treasuring things on account of their value. What’s the value of God’s Word? When we know the Word of God we can do the will of God. How valuable is it? In the first few occurrences of this word, God paints a beautiful word picture of what it means to hid.

The first is in the record of the birth of Moses. In chapter one verses 16 and 22. Pharaoh commanded every Hebrew son to be killed. Let’s see what Moses mother did when facing that possibility.

Exodus 2:1-3: And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. ² And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. ³ And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river’s brink.

What kind of care do you think went into this hiding? What was at stake? Moses’ life was at stake. For three months Moses’ mother kept him hid and alive. How often do you think she thought about it? Do you think it was a casual thing, or do you think there was much commitment and attention to detail involved? Look at the value she placed on her son. She was willing to defy Pharaoh and put her life on the line to protect her cherished, goodly child.

The next occurrence is in Joshua, in the account of Rahab’s hiding of the spies.

Joshua 2:1-4: And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot’s [innkeeper’s] house, named Rahab, and lodged there. ² And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. ³ And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

⁴ And the woman took the two men, and hid [That’s our word, to conceal with a purpose] them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:

Why did she hid them? Why was it so important to her that they live? Let’s continue reading.

Joshua 2:9-14: And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. ¹¹ And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. ¹² Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token: ¹³ And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. ¹⁴ And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

Rahab hid them to not only spare their lives but also her life and the lives of her family when the city was overtaken. This hiding preserves life. Look at the value placed on the items hidden. Moses’ mother decided to hid Moses and Rahab decided to hide the spies for the purpose of preserving their lives. They valued their lives and loved enough to do whatever it took. The only way we will ever live a life that is more than abundant is to do it God’s way. To a vast degree our abundant life depends on hiding the Word in our hearts. Hiding the Word in our hearts will preserve us and keep us like it did Moses and the spies.

Affirmations: I hid God’s Word in my heart. I greatly esteem God’s Word.

Conversation Starters: What business are you in? Where do you work? How long have you worked here?

Recommended Reading: Joshua 2

Loving God's Word is correlated with meditation on the scriptures.

Verse 97: O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

"All the day" does not mean to imply he thought of nothing else. Obviously he thought about other matters. "All the day" intends to imply that there was no time of day when other concerns prohibited him from doing so. Yes, he thought about other things; yet he made nothing else his "meditation." Familiarity with the word of God breeds affection, and affection seeks yet greater familiarity. When "God's law" becomes "our meditation," our day will grow dear and pleasant as God enlightens our heart.

One of the great benefits of meditation is wisdom. Like a cow chewing its cud, meditation extends our rumination on the scriptures helping us digest and understand it.

Verse 98: Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they [Thy commandments] are ever with me.

What great understanding we gain from this verse. The Word was his textbook, but God was his teacher. The letter can make us knowing, but only God can make us wise. Wisdom is knowledge applied or put to practical use. Then understanding comes to us through obedience as we will see from verses 100 and 101.

By his choice God's Word was his constant companion. If we keep God's Word with us, we shall become wise. Then, when our adversaries assail us we shall be prepared for them with the word of God at our fingertips. As a soldier in battle must never lay aside his sword, so must we never have the word of God out of our minds; it must be ever with us.

Verse 99: I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

Understanding is the fruit of the faithful or repeated application of wisdom. We may hear the wisest teachers and remain fools, but if we faithfully meditate upon the greatness of God's Word we develop understanding. There is more wisdom in the testimonies of the Lord than in all the teachings of men, and we would do well to place or efforts and priorities in that which pays the greatest dividends.

Remember the psalmist is speaking to God. He is not egotistic. Rather, he is extolling the law and the Lord, not himself. There is not a grain of boasting in these bold expressions, but only a sincere childlike desire to set forth the excellence of the God's Word.

Verse 100: I understand more than the ancients [the elderly or experienced people], because I keep thy precepts.

Do you want understanding? Then, keep His Word. Some say experience is the best teacher. Well, when it is experience garnered from keeping God's Word, it's a grand teacher.

Verse 101: I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

The psalmist explains his practice and his reason for it. He refuses to walk in the evil way so that he may continue to keep God's Word. Many are the snares of the adversary, but we avoid them all as we are intend upon and content with God's Word.

"Refrained" warns us that we quite naturally may wander into evil. We must check our human passions lest they hurry us along to do evil. The Hebrew verb here translated "refrained" is much stronger and forceful than "refrain" may connote in English. We are to "fetter," "restrict," "restrain" "withhold," or "keep our feet back from going astray." It will take more than just a light resistance to prevent us from erring. Those with a hunger for the truth will likewise develop distaste for evil. The psalmist like Job both feared God, and eschewed evil.

Verse 102: I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Our reverence and appreciation for God's instruction propels us to keep and remain in the protection of His truth. When God teaches we see things more clearly and know things more surely. Our adherence to the truth comes not from our personal power or the discipline of regimen, but rather from our affection and appreciation of our relationship with our loving Heavenly Father. The more dear He is to us the more resolve we muster to do His will.

Verse 103: How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

The psalmist found God's Word indescribably delicious. It satisfied more than anything else. This verse echoes the longing and desire that verse 97 initiated. What he had sanctified in his heart, brings sweetness to his lips as he speaks from the abundance of his heart.

Verse 104: Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

In verse 101 avoiding evil was the means by which he was profited by the Word, and in this verse the profiting from the Word was the means by which he avoids evil. We put off the old and put on the new. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13). Let our hearts exclaim its love for God. Let our reverence of him be demonstrated in detesting of that which He abhors. Let's keep His Word and enjoy the wisdom and understanding it provides.

Affirmations: O how I love Thy Law! It is my meditation all the day. God's Word are sweet!

Conversation Starters: Do you believe on Jesus? Would you like to do the works of Jesus Christ? Do you have Christ in you?

Recommended Reading: 1 Corinthians 13 & 14

The words “meditate” and “meditation” occur seven times in Psalm 119. (There is also an eighth occurrence of the Hebrew word that is translated, “talk.”) Six of the 20 occurrences of the Hebrew verb, *suach* in the O.T. occur in Psalm 119, along with two of the three occurrences of the noun form, *siach*. It means “to put forth thoughts, mediate, muse, commune, speak, complain, ponder, sing, study, and consider.” The basic meaning of this verb seems to be “rehearse,” “repent” or “go over a matter in one’s mind.” This meditation or contemplation may be done either inwardly or outwardly. Since English differentiates these two notions the word is usually rendered “meditate” or “talk.”

It is used of both silent appreciation and outward complaining, but in either case it denotes involvement and deliberation. The aspect of involvement and interaction is seen in Proverbs 6:20-23.

Proverbs 6:20-23: My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:²¹ Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.²² When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk [suach] with thee.²³ For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

The son who has bound his father’s teaching to his heart will find that the teaching will, in turn, “lead” him, “keep” him, and “talk,” [suach], with him. It’s the conversation or interaction between him and the Word that forms the meditation.

Psalm 119:15: I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

Notice that the psalmist is addressing God. The “I will” shows his resolve. We will get into this more extensively in our next and last segment. If we want to develop a respect for God’s Word and ways, meditating is the most direct route of which I am aware.

Psalm 119:23: Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

Again, he speaks to God. When others spoke evil of him, he did not react in the same way. Rather, he went to God’s Word and did not respond in like manner. On what did he meditate? What did he think about? What conversations did he have with himself in his head? Did they revolve around what the princes said? No, he meditated on what God said.

Psalm 119:27: Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk [suach] of thy wondrous works.

Think things over, aloud if necessary. Ramble; say what you are thinking; try to articulate what you are learning. He asked God for understanding promising to talk or meditate about the wonderful things He had done as a result.

Psalm 119:48: My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

The Psalmist relinquished himself to God’s will as declared in His Word. He swore allegiance to what God’s Word declared. He professed his love for the Word and declared his resolve to keep it in the forefront of his mind repeating, musing and meditating on it.

Psalm 119:78: Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts.

The Psalmist is not telling God what to do. Since he knows God’s Word, he is simply asking God to do as He has declared He would. Even when he was disparaged without a cause, his resolve was to not respond in kind, but to keep His thoughts in the stronghold of God’s Word. That’s how Job responded to situations, and the psalmist is following his lead written in God’s Word. (Job 40:11,12)

Psalm 119:97: O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

When we love something, it joyously fills our thinking and affection. The exclamation or interjection “O” shows that there was strength of emotion that went beyond merely knowing “the right thing to say.”

Psalm 119:99: I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

The Psalmist considers deeply what God said about Himself and therefore had more understanding than all his teachers. It’s the presence of the Word in his mind that brings the understanding.

Psalms 119:130: The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Praise God I qualify as simple. I’m simple enough to read it and believe it. You are too I imagine, right.

Psalm 119:148: Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

When he woke up in the middle of the night what did he think of? He thought of God’s Word. This has happened to me more in the last few years than ever before. God wants my undivided attention and some times He wakes me up in the middle of the night so He can get it. If I’m too busy and things are too hectic, He just wakes me up for a conference. Sometimes that’s what it takes. The psalmist made time to meditate on God’s Word, even if it meant staying up late or getting up early. We put time and effort into so many things in life, why not put them into developing intimacy in our relationship with God.

Affirmations: I meditate on God’s Word. I speak the Word to myself and out loud.

Conversation Starters: Do you meditate? Do you know the benefits of meditation?

Recommended Reading: Psalm 1; Joshua 1

The Nun section begins with one of the most recognizable verses of Psalm 119, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Typical of Hebrew poetry it has a parallel structure where the thought is repeated in similar words. “A lamp unto my feet” is an expression similar to “a light unto my path.” There is a bit of a difference however. A lamp is for night when the light of day is no longer present to illuminate our paths. This may be one way to say God’s Word provides direction both day and night or in every way necessary.

In Bible times there were no flashlights. The Easterner that needed to travel at night carried one of two items: a small oil lamp (whose flax wick gave off only a little light) or a rope (the end of which was lit and gave off sparks as it burned). It barely put out enough light to see by. It wasn’t enough to see what lay ahead down the path, but it was enough to take the next step without stumbling or falling. God’s Word gives us the light we need to take our next step in life. (See also Proverbs 6:23.)

As we get into this section we will see that God’s Word guides us (105-106), guards us (107-110) and gladdens us. God’s Word guided the psalmist so he could step forward confidently. Therefore he swore to perform it.

Psalms 119:105-112: NUN: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. ¹⁰⁶ I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Verse 106 shows some great resolve. His language is emphatic; it sounds almost like a legal oath. He has vowed to keep God’s righteous judgments and reminds God that this is something he has sworn to do and he again commits to perform the doing of it as it applies to the situations he faces in life. His ethics are absolute rather than relative. They are not determined by what unfolds as he takes his next step, but by his previous commitment to God and His Word. He is guided by its light and expects to be guarded by its power even though it may be the cause of persecution.

Psalms 119:107-110: I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word. ¹⁰⁸

Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments. ¹⁰⁹ My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law. ¹¹⁰ The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

The psalmist is experiencing distress and affliction and he cries out for help. The psalmist expects God to act according to His Word. He trusts his speech is acceptable acknowledging he is in a precarious position. In spite of tenuous nature of his predicament he doesn’t forget God’s Word or err from its precepts. The “freewill offerings of my mouth” are what the Book of Hebrews calls the “the sacrifice of praise to God... the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name (Hebrews 13:15). Then with his heart open to God he asks, “Teach me Thy judgments.” After opening his heart to Him in praise he was ready to receive what He had for him.

The psalmist laments that his life is “continually in my hand,” that is, that it is continually at risk [Judges 12:3]. Even though his life [soul] is in jeopardy [I Samuel 19:5, 28:21] he still remembers God’s law. Indeed, this divine law sustains him through the fears and trials of this life. He acknowledges the wicked’s attempt to trap him, but found protection in God’s precepts. Regardless of the suffering and persecution he faced, the psalmist found confidence in God’s Word. It alone shields us on the path of truth and safety.

Psalms 119:111-112: Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. ¹¹² I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

The psalmist is gladdened by God’s testimonies. He pursues God and His word with his whole heart. He has taken them as his inheritance forever. The promises in the Word of God had become his Promised Land and he set out to claim them little by little or, returning to verse 105, one step at a time (Exodus 23:30).

What precious treasures are in the Word of God. It’s like a deep mine filled with gold, silver, and precious gems which takes time to dig them out. As we do we will rejoice over what He is teaching us and how our relationship with Him is getting more intimate. We must know the Word of God in order to know the God of the Word. However, we must never stop at merely gaining biblical knowledge. It must always lead us to a more intimate joy-filled relationship with God Himself. The psalmist knows that if he is to rejoice in his heart he must incline his heart to do so and he determines to perform the Word of God all the days of his life.

Affirmations: I have learned to be content. I have everything I need to make the gospel known.

Conversation Starter: Do you have everything you need? You don't look content. What's up? Are you satisfied with life?

Recommended Reading: 1 Corinthians 15 & 16

There are two verses in Psalm 119 that refer to “light.” One uses the noun and the other uses the verb. They show both the nature of the word of God, and God’s intention in giving it to the world.

Psalm 119:105: NUN: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light [owr, noun] unto my path.

Psalm 119:130: The entrance of thy words giveth light [owr, verb]; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Biblically “light” is associated with truth and understanding as opposed to error and ignorance, and the illumination that comes from embracing the truth is often shown as a guiding light. In verse 105 we have the image of the brightness of daylight which allows us to walk without stumbling (John 11:9). Walking at night requires a light which is not in man (John 11:10) that light comes from God and is provided by His Word which illuminates our path. Much like a flashlight or auto headlights that illuminates the path before us as we journey at night, God’s Word shines, illuminating our way in life allowing us to “not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).

The Hebrew word translated “entrance” in verse 130 is used nowhere else in scripture. It is derived from a verb which means “to open.” The American Standard Version of verse 130 reads, “The opening of thy words giveth light; It giveth understanding unto the simple.” Perhaps it alludes to the image of a doorway or window which allows light into the house. The Combined Jewish Bible and God’s Word Translation translates verse 130: “Your word is a doorway that lets in light.”

When I think of verse 130 my mind goes Nehemiah 8:5-8 where Ezra literally opened the scroll and then opened the people’s understanding as he read it distinctly and gave the sense. I also think of the two men on the road to Emmaus who conversed with Jesus without knowing it initially. Jesus opened the scriptures to them and later to the eleven. The description of the two men of their experience was, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” It is the opening of the scriptures that gives light and understanding. The narrative of the scriptures states that when Jesus talked to the eleven he opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures (Luke 24:45). They were enlightened by the truth he shared.

God’s Word can enlighten our understanding in the same way. When we allow it in, it lights our way giving understanding where we need it. No wonder that the psalmist was constantly bringing up God’s Word. It was his source of delight and he loved it above all riches.

God has called us “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9). Indeed, we have been delivered us from the power of darkness, and have been translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son (Colossians 1:13). How grand is it that, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 4:6). There’s no substitute for God’s Word. Let’s enjoy the lamp and light of God which gives us understanding as we walk with Him. [Amy Grant sings a song about Psalms 119:105 you may enjoy it.]

Thy Word

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.

When I feel afraid,
And think I’ve lost my way.
Still, you’re there right beside me.
Nothing will I fear
As long as you are near;
Please be near me to the end.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.

I will not forget
Your love for me and yet,
My heart forever is wandering.
Jesus be my guide,
And hold me to your side,
And I will love you to the end.

Nothing will I fear
As long as you are near;
Please be near me to the end.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.
And a light unto my path.
You’re the light unto my path.

By Gill & Amy Grant & Michael W. Smith

To hear the song go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAfSvk5NM2s>

Affirmations: God’s Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. The entrance of God’s Word gives me light and understanding.

Conversation Starters: How do you light your path? What do you do when you feel afraid?

In this section we will see the psalmist taking refuge in God. We will see him relying on God. We will see him continuing to respect God's Word and reject those that err from His statutes. The section closes with him declaring his continuing reverence for God and His judgments.

"Thou art my hiding place and my shield" (Psalms 28:7). With these metaphors, he shows us that God is his protection and his protector. Like a deep cave, he hides in the Almighty. Like a shield in battle, his God covers him, so no enemy can corrupt or damage him. To dwell in the Presence of the Lord brings shelter and protection. God is our refuge and defender in the storms of our troubles. God is the source of our protection from all the world throws at us.

Psalms 119:113-114: SAMECH: I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.¹¹⁴ Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

The Hebrew word for "vain thoughts" is used only in this place in the Bible, and my Brown, Driver Briggs Lexicon says it means "ambivalent, divided or half-hearted." Most versions other than the King James render it similar to the ESV's "the double-minded" or to the NET's "people with divided loyalties." James 1:8 tells us, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." Double-minded people refuse to make up their mind between good and evil. They are more concerned with popularity than with truth. They vacillate between opinions. That's how Israel was when Elijah confronted them.

I Kings 18:21: And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

James says, the double-minded man is "unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). When it comes to obeying God there is no sitting on the fence. You must take a stand. Either you do or you don't. In opposition to this vacillation, the psalmist loves God's law, which is straightforward, trustworthy, and absolute. The opposite of the eternal and infallible law of God is the wavering, changing opinion of men. In proportion to his love of the law was his hate and rejection of man's thoughts, opinions and inventions. We too like the Psalmist must choose to love God's Word. We must not be pliable to the thoughts and ways of fallen man, but be devoted to God's unchanging Word.

Psalms 119:115-117: Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.¹¹⁶ Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.¹¹⁷ Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

Since we are influenced by the company we keep, evildoers are not to be a part of our company (1 Cor. 15:33). God emphasizes verse 115 with the figure apostrophe, where the psalmist turns aside from speaking to God to address these evildoers. He tells them exactly what he has been telling God all along, that he will keep the commandments of God. He is relying on God uphold him according to His Word upon which he has come to hope. In a similar appeal to verse 116 he prays in verse 117 for God to wrap him in His care and carry him through it all. The result of God upholding him is that he will be safe (or "saved"). Thus he pledges respect for God's statutes continually.

Psalms 119:118-119: Thou hast trodden down [rejected or made light of] all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.¹¹⁹ Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.

The alternative to the psalmist's godly lifestyle is given in verses 118–19. To "trodden down" is "to reject, shake off or make light of." God rejects them that err from His statutes because their deceit is a lie; it's useless. They say they know what is best, but cannot for they have strayed from walking in the light and wisdom of God's Word. In their attempt to deceive others they have deceived themselves. What ever they do is a lie; it's useless or holds no value before God.

The destiny of these deceivers is made clear in verse 119. Dross is that which is burned out of metal when it is refined in the fire (see I Cor. 3:11–15). In a smelter where molten ore or metal is purified this dross or scum rises to the top to be skimmed off and thrown away. Those who err (v. 118) from God's statutes are treated like dross [the Hebrew for dross is a pun on the word err]. This is a very frightening picture of how God will treat those who reject His Son and His Word.

The Lord's goodness in removing the wicked delights the psalmist as he confesses: "Therefore I love Your testimonies." Not only is it right to separate out the dross from those being purified, it is in his self-interest. By loving God's Word, he will not be among the wicked who will be removed. Furthermore, as God removes the wicked, He Himself will be vindicated and His Word will be shown to be true.

Psalms 119:120: My flesh trembleth for fear [reverence] of thee; and I am afraid [reverent] of thy judgments.

The section closes with an expression of reverence for God. The psalmist trembled in awe at the judgments of God quivering out of his deep reverence for God. This is godly fear or reverence evoked because of the greatness of God and the certainty of His judgments against all the double-minded and evildoers.

The psalmist is concerned for the evildoers of his day. He talks to them about God, and he talks to God about them. Because He accepts God's Word, he must reject man's opinions. Though such resolve makes him a target of the proud wicked, he has committed himself to trust wholly in God and His Word. O that we become like him.

Affirmations: I will not be pushed to make a decision until I am ready. I look for God's way out of temptation.

Conversation Starters: How do you handle making tough decisions? Ever ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?"

Recommended Reading: John 8

God's Word was designed to be a delight to our souls. However, that doesn't happen automatically. We have to cause ourselves to respond to the Word of God in that manner. In Psalms 119:16 the psalmist declares, "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word." It's reflexive; if we do not act upon ourselves it doesn't happen. Because he delighted so in God's Word, he said "I will not forget Thy word." When God's Word is such a cause for rejoicing we remember it. (See verses 14, 111 and 162) Nine times in Psalm 119 the Psalmist declares his delight in the scriptures. Let's read the remaining eight.

Psalm 119:24: Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.

Psalm 119:35: Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

Psalm 119:47: And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

Psalm 119:70: Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law.

Psalm 119:77: Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

Psalm 119:92: Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

Psalm 119:143: Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.

Psalm 119:174: I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight.

That was David's declaration and it can be ours, too. There is such a bounty in God's Word and He wants us to have it. Psalms 119:19 records David's cry, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law!" David had a longing for and a delight in God's wonderful matchless Word. But, he wasn't the only one. David taught his son Solomon who in turn taught his son the same in Proverbs 2.

Proverbs 2:1-5: My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and **hide** my commandments with thee; ² So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; ³ Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; ⁴ If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; ⁵ Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

Jeremiah also delighted in God's Word and hid them in His heart.

Jeremiah 15:16: Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Do you remember Jesus' promise in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." That is the Greek word that means filled according to appetite. How much do you want? God can do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think? However, He still wants us to ask and think. When we do He excels our wildest imaginations and provides exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think. Spiritual hunger is every bit as real as physical hunger. Once our hunger has been satisfied with truth in a certain area we can dine upon it forever. God's Word can be a continual feast. With God, it's always all you care to eat.

Jeremiah 20:9: Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

Jeremiah in a moment of weakness decided that he would no longer speak for God. He was ridiculed for it and the people didn't want it, so he just decided to keep his mouth closed. However, he couldn't do it? Why, because he had hid it in his heart, and it kept him for sinning. God said speak! Jeremiah said, No! Could God violate Jeremiah's freedom of will? Absolutely not! But Jeremiah had hidden God's Word in his heart, and it kept him from sinning. He couldn't help but speak the greatness of God's wonderful matchless Word.

Remember how Psalm 119:92 said, "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." The same could be said for Job. He went through trying times without faltering.

Job 23:10-12: But he [God] knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. ¹¹ My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. ¹² Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed [That's our word hid.] the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Job was not circumstance controlled, he was Word conditioned. He faithfully declared God's Word and His righteousness amid the most vicious of attacks. God's Word was more important to him than his necessary food. We do not have trouble remembering to eat physically because our appetite is trained. We get hungry for food. Our spiritual appetite for the truth of God's Word can be similarly trained. God will satisfy our hunger for the Word.

Job never blamed God for his problems. He maintained his desire for God's Word and hid it in his heart. Had he not done so he would have perished in his iniquity. We also must never lose our desire for God's Word. If we do, the power of God's may vanish from our lives. We are after a relationship with the Creator of the heavens and the earth. We desire to know Him and His Word so we can do His will. And, His will is not grievous. What do you want in your life? Where do you want your relationship with your heavenly Father to go? Whatever your desire is, God can make it into a reality (Ephesians 3:20 style).

God can pull it off, but He won't do it against our freewill. We must make God's Word a part of joyful affection. As we put Him first we can see our hearts' desires come to pass before our eyes.

Colossians 3:1-3: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

If we hide God's Word in our hearts God will hide us in the hollow of His holy hands. Our lives are hid with Christ in God and no one can pluck us out of His hands. When we keep God's Word in our heart we will be kept by the wonderful Word of God.

Affirmations: I delight myself in God's Word. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Conversation Starters: Have you ever tasted living waters? Would you like to know my benefactor?

Recommended Reading: 2 Corinthians 1 & 2

Deliverance is a major need in life and is the theme of this section. So the psalmist asked God to deliver him from arrogant oppressors and to deal with him in justice and love. He sought to motivate God to respond to his loyalty as a servant imploring Him to work on his behalf. Though his adversaries regard God's Word as empty or void, the psalmist knows it stands as true. It is for this reason that God must intervene against them, showing Himself to be the Living God Who upholds His Word.

In this stanza we will see the psalmist expressing dire concerns over his oppressors, making desperate cries for his deliverance and salvation and responding with daring claims of fidelity and esteem for the words of the Lord. First let's look at his expressions of concern over his oppressors.

Psalms 119:121-122: AIN: I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors. ¹²² Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

Verse 121 opens with the psalmist's confession of integrity. He has obeyed the Word of God and can with a clear conscience boldly ask, "Do not leave me to my oppressors." Oppressors appear for the first time in the Psalm here. The word describes the abuse of power and authority, the taking advantage of others by deceit, coercion, or violence. Since man is unjustly oppressing him, he pleads with God for just action or deliverance that is swift and decisive.

"Have done" is the Hebrew *asah* meaning, "to do, fashion, accomplish, make, work, produce and deal with." It occurs three times in this section and is translated three different ways. Besides "Have done" in verse 121, there is "deal with" in verse 124 and "work" in verse 126. Both "judgment," *mishapt*, and "justice," *tsedeq*, are synonyms for God's Word. The psalmist asserts the fact that he has done God's Word and uses it as the basis for asking for God to not abandon him to his oppressors.

Verse 122 is unique in that it is the only verse in Psalm 119 which does not have a synonym for God's Word in it. In verse 122 the psalmists asks God to guaranty his deliverance. He asks God to be his surety, to make Himself responsible for His servant. A *doulos* who made a commitment to love and serve his master could would and should expect His master to respond with the same kind of commitment to him.

The desperation and determination of the psalmist is expressed cogently again in the next four verses as he relates the longing with which he hopes for God deliverance and salvation.

Psalms 119:123-126: Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness. ¹²⁴ Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes ¹²⁵ I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. ¹²⁶ It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

The psalmist repeats the lament of verse 82 that his "eyes fail" and asks God to deal with him according to His mercy. He knew he didn't deserve the gracious treatment God had bestowed upon him, but he asks for it to continue calling on God's mercy. Twice he declares himself to be God's servant, and he pleaded for instruction and understanding so he would be the best servant he could possibly be. His cries in verses 123-125 gives way to an exclamation: "It is time for thee, LORD, to work!" He calls on God to intervene and uphold His law for his oppressors had broken and violated it. Like the psalmist, we can learn to hate falsehood and love integrity.

In the last two verses we see his daring claims of fidelity and esteem for the words of the Lord.

Psalms 119:127-128: Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. ¹²⁸ Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

This octet closes with audacious claims. Having already professed his love for God's commandments several times he addresses the magnitude of it here. He loves it more than gold, yea more than fine gold. As Job esteemed the words of His mouth more than his necessary food (Job 23:12) so, too, does the psalmist maintain a high regard and honor for it. He is not particular or choosy about that which he values. All God's precepts concerning all things are right or upright, pleasing and agreeable. With this state of mind regarding God Word, it seems only natural that his distain for its counterfeits be so succinctly expressed.

The God who speaks in and through His Word is also the God who goes to work on its behalf. As the truth of His Word is maligned, He will intervene in His time and His way to uphold it and assure its performance in the life of a believer. Like a good medicine God's Word works if it is applied to the need or affected area. God's Word will uphold us we apply it, and we should stay alert for lessons, commands or examples that we can put into practice. Then we too can be men of integrity upheld by the living Word of a living God.

Affirmations: God and Jesus are surety for me. God gives me mercy.

Conversation Starters: Do you have a friend with whom you agree on most things? Do you read the Bible?

Recommended Reading: 2 Corinthians 3 & 4

The psalmist had chosen truth as the foundation for his life. He wanted his life established upon God's truth. Therefore he secured his attitude tenaciously to it. We can do the same if we are willing to confess the same.

Psalm 119:38: Establish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

Psalm 119:128: Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

Psalm 119:160: Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

Everything God says and does is true and faithful. It's His Word that declares His will and provides understanding for us.

Psalm 119:104: Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

He gains understanding as he learns God's Word and uses it to develop an aversion to other ways. God's Word can direct even the most simple or naïve of us.

Psalm 119:130: The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

How blessed I am that I'm among the simple people, and I want my life to stay simple. I want my life to stay so simple that when I read God's Word I believe it. I want to take God at His Word; I count it to be true and righteous altogether. I rely upon it and go for it with all the gusto I can muster.

The phrase "Give me understanding!" occurs five times in the King James Version and all of them are in Psalm 119. Understanding is a fruit of obedience. The psalmist explains, "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts" (verse 100). When we faithfully do what God asks of us, we will understand why.

Knowledge provides a basis for action. Wisdom is demonstrated when we act on what we know. When we faithfully apply wisdom over time we gain understanding. Obedience fosters understanding, and understanding provides more reason for continued obedience. In Psalm 119 the psalmist asks God specifically for understanding knowing that it would foster greater understanding.

Psalm 119:34: Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea [That's an exclamation that shouts affirmation and adds "not only that, but..."], I shall observe it with my whole heart.

Without understanding whole hearted observation of the Word may be difficult, but even when we cannot muster wholehearted obedience we can still be wise enough to do what the Word says, just because it says it.

Psalm 119:73: Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

However our body/soul package has been put together, we can learn God's commandments and establish godly habits that will foster understanding. God's Word and the law of believing afford all of us the opportunity to overcome any physical weakness or predisposition of the mind that hold so many captive.

Psalm 119:125: I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

The faithful obedience of a servant will provide understanding and allow us to say "Amen!" to God's testimonies as we declare testimonies of our own in accordance with "it is written."

Psalm 119:144: The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

Understanding is a necessary ingredient to the fullness of life that God wants us to enjoy. So let's get it. Let's go for everything that God wants us to have. When we desire the things of God and pursue them with our whole heart, our lives will know no limits. There is no holding us back; nothing will be able to stop us when white hot desire stokes our engines.

Psalm 119:169: Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

God's Word brings understanding and allows us to live with the fullness that God designed for us. We can choose to follow the psalmist's example. Let's cry out for instruction and follow through with obedience. This can establish a cycle of gracious interaction that will result in understanding and fill our days with delight.

Affirmations: God gives me understanding. If I lack wisdom I ask God for it.

Conversation Starters: Have you ever asked God for understanding? Are you wise?

Recommended Reading: Ephesians 5 & 6

The psalmist was filled with admiration, amazement and awe when he considered God's testimonies. He marveled at its excellence and was engrossed with keeping it. It seems that those who know them best wonder at them most.

Psalms 119:129-130 PE: Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. ¹³⁰ The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

God's testimonies are wonderful; they're full of things at which to wonder. The psalmist's request of the Lord found in verse 18, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." has no doubt been answered. He has seen and spoken of many of God's wondrous works (Verse 27). Here he declares that the wonderful nature of God's testimonies is the reason he observed them. He kept them because he enjoyed and appreciated the light and understanding which they provided. As he allowed the words of God to enter his life he was so very benefitted.

Spurgeon described the effect these wonderful testimonies had on the psalmist saying:

Their wonderful character so impressed itself upon his mind that he kept them in his memory: their wonderful excellence so charmed his heart that he kept them in his life... Note that his religion was soul work; not with head and hand alone did he keep the testimonies; but his soul, his truest and most real self, held fast to them. The Psalmist was so charmed with the revealed will of God that he felt bound to exhibit its power in his daily life. His wondering and pondering produced reverential obedience.

So much did he desire their illumination and impact that he eagerly exerted himself.

Psalms 119:131-132: I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments. ¹³² Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto [in keeping with [your] judgment for] those that love thy name.

The word "open" means to open the mouth wide involuntarily, as the result of absorbed attention. It also means to stare with open mouth, as in wonder. He was enthralled with the Word. Such was the effort that he put into the scriptures that it caused him to pant. He had to work hard to catch his breath. So intense and consuming was his longing that God used a word occurring no where else in scripture. (See also Psalms 42:1)

As he stared in wonder with his mouth opened, he asked God to look upon him and be merciful to him. He requested such favorable treatment because he knew what the wonderful word of God testified of others who loved the Word as he did. Having God's attention, we can always expect His favor.

Psalms 119:133,134: Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. ¹³⁴

Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

The psalmist wanted his steps ordered (prepared and established) upon the Word. The psalmist is doing his best to direct his way, but he knew he needed God's help. In verse 107 he says he refrained his feet from every evil way, but he knew that only God could "keep the feet of His saints (II Samuel 2:9). The word "order" in Psalms 119:133 is translated directeth in Proverbs 16:9 which reminds us that "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." Even doing the best we can we still need God's help to make our steps sure.

He wanted to submit himself to God's Word and escape the dominion of sin in his life. However, there are dangers in addition to the dominion of sin. They come from men who oppose and oppress. So he prays for relief from the sins of other men so that he can devote himself to following God's precepts. These three requests are followed by a promise to obey.

Psalms 119:135,136: Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes. ¹³⁶ Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

This Hebrew word "shine" means "to give light" or "light up." The psalmist wanted God's personal involvement in his life. He knew the entrance of God's Word would give light, so also he knew living in God's presence would shine light and enlightenment upon him. Considering the impact and blessing of having God involved so intimately with him is only dampened by knowing that others would do not keep the law would not have the same. He was even brought to tears knowing the blessing that they would forsake. So we see his positive wonder displayed in the first verse of this stanza in his appreciation for God's testimonies and the keeping of them. We also see his negative wonder or dismay demonstrated in the refusal of others to do the same.

Affirmations: I run the race set before me. I look unto Jesus and get the endurance I need to carry on.

Conversation Starters: What gives you satisfaction? What do you enjoy about life?

Recommended Reading: Hebrews 12

Another mental quality it would behoove us to harness is our imagination. Every one of us has the power-packed ability to imagine. The human imagination is an inspiring and motivating force.

Psalm 119:59,60a: I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.⁶⁰ I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

The Hebrew word for “thought” can also be translated, “count,” “devise,” or “imagine.” Having evaluated his ways the psalmist decided to turn his feet unto God’s testimonies. He ran the way of God’s commandments (Psalms 119:32) and thus changed the course of his life. He decided to go the way of the Word. That takes imagineering. The psalmist used his imagination. He got a picture from the Word of what he wanted. Before he actually did it he saw himself do it. He thought ahead, pictured what he wanted in all its details and then pursued it vigorously. Furthermore, once he made the decision he got on it right away.

With our imagination we are capable of getting a picture of the Word of God working on our behalf before it actually manifests outwardly, and that is exactly what God designed our imaginations to do. If we can picture it in our minds, it can eventually manifest outwardly. As we meditate on God’s promises, we will begin to see ourselves living in the fulfillment of them.

Many Christians have not used their imagination thinking it was wrong because II Corinthians 10:5 says, “Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” That’s not proper thinking. According to II Corinthians 10:5 we are not instructed to cast down all imaginations, but rather only those that are “against” the knowledge of God. Those imaginations must be taken captive.

How do we take a thought captive? The same way a thief is taken captive, by arresting it. Putting a stop to it. Then transform those thoughts until they are in harmony with the Word of God. Wrong thoughts are thieves, they will steal the promise of God from us; they will steal our joy, our families, our finances, our health, and our lives if we allow it. We are to control our thinking. We must stop thinking wrongly and start thinking rightly. A person of integrity is concerned not only with doing the right thing, but also with maintaining right motives and right thinking. Romans 12:3 shows the commitment to sound thinking we should maintain.

Romans 12:3: For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, [How does one think soberly? By thinking...] according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

A literal translation of this verse according to usage is:

Romans 12:3: For I say unto you, because of the grace that was given unto me for all of you, control your thinking not to get out of bounds by feeding your mind [thinking, *phronēma*] with respect only to the measure of faith God has given to every man.

We must see ourselves as the psalmist, interacting with God using His Word to determine our course and serve Him. We exercise our imagination in order to exalt the knowledge of God. Imagine ourselves desiring what the psalmist desired, loving and delighting in the wonderful matchless Word of God as he did, meditating on the Word of God, declaring our resolve and promising our allegiance.

Picture yourselves healthy and prosperous. Picture yourselves favored and happily married. Envision your children and their children after them serving the Lord. As we activate our imagination it won’t be long before we possess what God has promised.

When God speaks to us, don’t look for a sign because God doesn’t lead us through signs. Believers are not expected to follow signs; signs are to follow believers! God leads us by holy spirit. He will speak to us through His gift; then if a confirming sign comes by the Holy Spirit, we can receive it with joy. Believe the promise of God today!

Affirmations: I control my thinking. I lead every thought captive to Christ.

Conversation Starters: How do you use your imagination? Are you healthy and prosperous?

Recommended Reading: 2 Corinthians 5 & 6

Righteousness is the theme of this section being used six times in eight verses. One of the synonyms for God's Word is *tsedeq*, which means righteousness. God's Word is called His righteousness, because it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard for righteous living. Hebrews also calls God's Word "the word of righteousness" (Hebrews 5:13).

Psalms 119:137-138: TZADDI: Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright [also translated right and righteous] are thy judgments.¹³⁸ Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.

The Word of God reflects the character of God. The psalmist speaks of both as righteous. The written Word is righteous; the Author of the Word is righteous. That theme pervades this entire stanza of Psalm 119.

God's Word is marked by justice and faithfulness. All that God has testified in His Word is right and truthful altogether. They are like the Lord who has proclaimed them. They are the core of justice and the center of truth. God's Word is righteous, and may be relied upon for the present; it is faithful, and may be trusted in for the future.

Psalms 119:139-140: My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.¹⁴⁰ Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

The Psalmist wore himself out trying to convince people of the righteous and faithful character of God's Word. However they forgot the Word, abandoned God and became his enemies. The purity of the Word evoked such love for it. The purity of the Word reflects the purity of its author. We must guard its message with integrity by "rightly dividing the Word of truth" (II Timothy 2: 15). We must respect its every word. To take Scripture out of context or twist its meaning to serve our purposes or justify our own opinions is to dishonor God's Word and His name. We must always handle the Word of God with the due diligence its purity demands.

Psalms 119:141-142: I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.¹⁴² Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

The Psalmist determined in verse 141 that no matter how the world treated him, he would hold tight to God's Word. Although he is "small and despised," insignificant and rejected by men, he does not capitulate to man's pressures. He knows that God's word is changing him, purifying him so he will "not forget" God's "precepts." Even though he felt "small and despised" and trouble and anguish surrounded him, he still delighted in understanding God's righteous commandments. Verse 142 tells us why the psalmist strives to remember God Word. Its righteous truth endures, and we must look to the Scriptures to discover what God's moral laws say. Then we must obey them. They are never up for a vote. God, not the majority is our authority.

Psalms 119:143-144: Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.¹⁴³ The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

God's Word not only consoles us in trouble, it can delight us. As he completes this section, the psalmist proclaims the Word's eternality. God's Word is eternal, and if we are to understand it, God must open it to us (Luke 24:27). The psalmist shows us how to ask for understanding. As we receive and understand the Word, we live. It is not the length of life, but the depth of life that counts. Depth of life comes from laying hold of God's Word and obeying it.

This section is bound together by the theme of righteousness. A righteous God who reveals Himself in truth is true to Himself and to His people. Since God is eternally righteous, His Word is as righteous (v. 138) and eternal as He is (v. 144). Life comes in understanding and living out His Word. Life comes in connecting to the covenant keeping God. All else is fleeting and uncertain.

Affirmations: I am righteous now. I have great zeal for God.

Conversation Starters: What comforts you in trouble? Have you ever wanted a drastic change in your life?

Recommended Reading: Luke 24

Charles Spurgeon in his introduction to Psalm 119 in The Treasury of David comments on the distain some have for this psalm saying:

Many superficial readers have imagined that it harps upon one string, and abounds in pious repetitions and redundancies; but this arises from the shallowness of the reader's own mind: those who have studied this divine hymn, and carefully noted each line of it, are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought.

Although each verse vibrates with a chord that includes God, God's Word, and the psalmist himself, the frequent repetitions arrange themselves into refrains designed to impress important truths upon the mind much like waves upon the seashore. Rather than boring redundancies, the repetitions impress the mind and form a *tupos* which should long be remembered.

Although repeated more than 200 times in 176 verses, references to the Word of God, instead of being mundane and boring are full of vitality and fervor. Indeed the psalmist had great respect and awe for it. It acted as a point of contact between the psalmist and God, the psalmist uses God's Word to understand God's love for him and demonstrate his love for God. He used God's Word in a variety of ways with profundity of thought. It was his comfort, his source of strength, his standard for life, his love and delight. His interaction with God around the magnificence of His Word rewarded him with even greater desire and appreciation for it than he had before.

Frequent pleas like: Teach me! Quicken me! Deliver me! Give me understanding! Forsake me not! Shows how he longed for a relationship with the Almighty which he knew was available. He so wanted God to help him and work with him. As you read through this magnificent psalm you should see the psalmist's great desire to know God and His Word? Desire makes one relentless. Paul J. Meyer wrote something he called, "The Desire of a Champion." I'd like to adapt it for this occasion and share portions of it with you.

Intense burning desire can be developed. It is infinitely more than wanting or wishing... more than compulsion or stimulation. Desire is an overwhelming demand to obtain what's available. There is a certain restlessness, recklessness and aggressiveness about desire. Desire brings forward people with insatiable appetites for God's Word and all He has to offer.

There is active self-awareness in desire. It gives its possessors the feeling that they have a mission to perform, a destiny to meet and feats over which they can be superconquerors. I've never known anyone with intense desire who didn't work harder than those without it. People who lack desire are always too busy to do what needs to be done. When desire is lacking, nothing is worth fighting for, but when it's present there's no fight too big.

Burning desire gives one a thirst to be one's best, and the drive to make one's best, better. No longer satisfied with average living and mediocre accomplishments desire requires that we push self imposed limits. Desire ignites when we challenge ourselves, and challenges arise when we look at what's available from God's Word and decide that with God's help we are going to go for it! The way we react to these challenges determines how far and how fast we go with God. I sincerely believe that the desire with which we meet these challenges forms an essential part of our souls.

Desire is indeed an unlimited force, but its possession doesn't mean that we still won't have to work hard, to face life's trials and to make a few mistakes. We must strive continually to activate, stimulate, and maintain the kind of desire that will make us a winner... the desire of a champion... the desire of a son of God with all power.

Everything in Psalm 119 leads to this conclusion. When you are tempted to run from the Word, run to it instead! Jump into the Bible. Read it more, not less. Let your troubles drive you deep into the Word. If you can't read a whole book, read a chapter. If not a chapter, then just a few verses. Or just one verse. Read it. Pray over it. Cling to it. Recite God's promises back to him. Let his Word be the foundation of your prayers. Determine to obey the Word no matter what happens to you or around you. If you do that, you will emerge from your troubles with a faith much stronger than before your troubles started.

Affirmations: I am my best for God. I run the way of God's commandments.

Conversation Starters: What do you desire most out of life? Do you know why you were created?

Recommended Reading: 2 Corinthians 7 & 8

In this section we find passionate prayer as its first three verses record his cries to God. Passion in prayer isn't captured heaping up grand sounding words and phrases. Jesus reminds us that we will not be heard for our many words (Matthew 6:7). Rather, passionate prayer is built on permanent promises. The psalmist rose before dawn and cried for help because he hoped in God's words. His eyes were awake before the night watches so that he might meditate on God's promise. His prayers were built on God's word and promise.

However, prayer can be passionate and still pointless. Remember the showdown on Mount Carmel from I Kings 18? The prophet Elijah confronts the prophets of Baal and set up two sacrifices with the challenge – the God who answers by fire, let Him be God. The prophets of Baal show plenty of passion; crying out until they're hoarse; dancing around the altar; cutting themselves even, yet it was pointless.

The psalmist's prayers were anything but pointless. He relished the privilege of speaking directly to his El Shaddai, the Creator of the universe!

Psalms 119:145-146: KOPH: I cried with *my* whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.¹⁴⁶ I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

This section contains the only three uses of "cried" in Psalm 119, although "cry" is used once in verse 169. The psalmist cried with his whole heart. Perhaps he was following the example of Hannah when she knelt in the house of the Lord at Shiloh, weeping for she had no son? Or of Job, when he came before the Lord, as it says in 16:20, "My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God. The intensity and earnestness of his prayer has been established in these first two verses.

Psalms 119:147-148: I prevented [preceded] the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

¹⁴⁸ Mine eyes prevent [precede] the *night* watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

A third use of "cried" completes the picture. His prayer was not mundane. His hope was sure. ("Hope" occurs eight times in Psalm 119 using 3 synonyms. This is the seventh.) We see him going to God before dawn and in the middle of the night. The matters that drove him to his knees often kept him awake at night. We see here that the passion in his prayer proceeds from his hope in God's Word.

The period between sunset and sunrise was divided into watches rather than hours. This was primarily for military proposes. So in Old Testament times there were three watches during the course of a night, each lasting about four hours, thus marking time through the night in a general way. The first watch was approximately from sunset to about 10 p.m., another from 10 p.m. until about 2 a.m., and another from 2 a.m. until sunrise. The psalmist didn't just wake before dawn to pray; he woke before the changing of the guard and took those opportunities to pray and meditate on God's Word, too.

Psalms 119:149-150: Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me [make me to live] according to thy judgment.¹⁵⁰ They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

The psalmist doesn't plead for life based on his own merit or the quality of his prayers. Rather, he pleads for life on the grounds of God's steadfast love—this is that wonderful word *chesed* again, the word that refers to the everlasting, steadfast, and never-ending love and mercy and kindness of God. God hears our voice because of His steadfast love. He responds to us according to His Word. The psalmist's request to be heard comes out of the earnestness of his cry. Two of the three uses of "hear" occur in this section of Psalm 119 also. The fact that we "cry" and God "hears" are both emphasized in this section. God hears our cries.

In verse 150 we see some of the background to this prayer. Part of the reason his prayer was so earnest here is because his enemies were drawing near, but notice what verse 151 says.

Psalms 119:151-152: Thou *art* near, O LORD; and all thy commandments *are* truth.¹⁵² Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

His enemies were drawing near, but God was *already* near to him and the truth of His presence gave him strength. The section closes with a great encouragement to us to pray passionately based on God's promises, precisely because they are permanent. Verse 152 says, "Long have I known from your testimonies that you have founded them forever." The word of our God endures forever - what God has said, he continues to say. So we can build our life on it; we can pray according to it. We can place our hope for the future on it. What a delight to come boldly to your Heavenly Father in passionate prayer based on His permanent promises.

Affirmations: I remember God's mercy. I go boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Conversation Starter: Do you know what mercy is? When is the last time you received mercy or extended it to someone else?

Recommended Reading: Matthew 9

Many people think they have God basically “figured out.” They don’t arrogantly think that they fully comprehended God or know everything there was to know about Him. They just work on a *quid pro quo* basis, one thing in return for another. They think that if they do their part, do the best they can, seek the will of God, dream big, do the work of the ministry then God would do His part. That is, He would bless their plans, dreams, and goals. God would be “good” to them because they were “good” to Him. Therefore they could avoid all negatives which are not part of the deal.

Their understanding of God is rather mechanistic. They do their part... they work the plan, and God does His part... He blesses the work of their hands. It’s a rather impersonal understanding of God; non-relational at its core. It was as if God had worked out a deal with humanity, and them in particular. God and they had a pact, a contract, a covenant.

That is a very nice and simplistic understanding, and simple is generally good. But what happens when it appears that God does not keep His end of the bargain? What happens when our plans are derailed? What happens when our goals, dreams, and hopes are not realized? What happens when God does not do as we expects? What happens when negatives do occur?

A mechanical understanding of God cannot replace relationship. It may take them many months or even years to work through what went on in their heads, what exactly shifted in their thinking, as a result of having the rug pulled out from underneath them. One way or another they have to come to grips with the devastating and often overwhelming hurt.

They may lament, rebel, and endure frustration trying to figure out God again. They may abandon their beliefs or at least shift their thinking about Him. They may refuse to even speak to Him. But eventually, somewhere along the way, they have to switch from a neat mechanical understanding of God to a messy relational one. As their orientation to God shifts, they realize that one cannot put God or the things of God into a box. If they ever make it back to real relationship with God instead of the performance pleasing pact they were used to, they will be grateful. They may even confess with the Psalmist that “it was good for me to be afflicted” (Psalm 119:71).

God was not seeking a *pact or contract* with them, but engaging them in a relationship. Trust is built through relationship, and relationships are always dynamic and growing. There are surprises in relationships, and the best long-term relationships stay fresh and unregimented.

When we ground ourselves in a relational understanding about God it will give us the propensity to be relational with others. If Jesus learned obedience through the things that he suffered (Hebrews 5:8), why are we surprised when are called upon to do the same? Though we may all struggle, we will be transformed in the process. Growth requires change, and change may be uncomfortable. That’s one way trust is built. When we live outside our comfort zone, we invite opportunities to grow and see relationships develop in a godly manner.

I do think it’s important to note that the Greek word for “suffered” in Hebrews 5:8 is *paschō* which means to undergo or experience. It encompasses both positive and negative experiences. In a good sense it means “to be well off, in good situation, and in a bad sense it means “to suffer sadly, be in a bad plight.”

Negative things are not just the consequence of sin. Sometimes we endure grief precisely because we are godly and are doing the right thing.

I Peter 2:19-23: For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.²⁰ For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.²¹ For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

²² Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:²³ Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

I Peter 5:10-11: But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.¹¹ To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Let's always expect the best, but not faint when adversity comes our way. We can overcome. God will help,

Affirmations:

Conversation Starters: Do you know what God calls His masterpiece?

Recommended Reading:

In the resh strophe the psalmist three times asks God to “quicken” him-and twice he asks God to “deliver” him. He also pleads for God to plead his cause in the manner of an advocate in a court of law. (Compare 1 Samuel 24:15; Psalms 35:1; 43:1). His adversaries’ case against him was without evidence; they lacked a valid or logical basis for their charges. Indeed their persecution had no legitimate reason. They were lawbreakers themselves who had no one to stand for them, help them and save them. The psalmist felt sorry for them, but since they were not interested in keeping God’s Word They was nothing he could do for them.

Psalms 119:153-154: RESH: Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.¹⁵⁴

Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

We see here the psalmist is pleading with God to act because God has promised to, because this is what God’s own laws demand and because God, in His care for His people, cannot fail to be moved by their plight with love and compassion to help them. In the first verse the psalmist asks God to consider his affliction and in verse 159 he asks God to consider how he loves His precepts. This Hebrew word also occurs in verse 158 where it is translated “beheld.” His request happens twice but with two different Hebrew synonyms. The first is used of armed military rescues, and the second of redemption by a kinsman redeemer. This second word means to “redeem.” “buy back” or “deliver by paying a price.”

The law stated that a kinsman could buy back the property a poor relative had sold (Leviticus 25:25-28), as Boaz did on behalf of Naomi and Ruth. The language here is interesting in light of the psalmist’s earlier request that God stand as surety for him (verse 122). Yet this goes even further. While the terminology of redemption often takes on in the Old Testament a general sense of deliverance from some overpowering circumstance, there is behind all this the legal foundation. There was a price for God to pay to redeem His people from the consequences of sin-a price paid through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The psalmist was ultimately reliant on this same redemption, which in his day was yet to come. Whether this was in his mind at the time or not, it was no doubt in the mind of the One who inspired the psalm. Jesus Christ would be our kinsman redeemer. He would be our surety (Psalms 119:122 and Hebrews 7:22).

Psalms 119:155-156: Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.¹⁵⁶ Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

The psalmist realizes that the deliverance he seeks is denied to the wicked for they seek not the Word by which it would surely come. The psalmist acknowledges God’s great mercies and repeats the cry to be quickened. This request for quickening means more than just to lift his spirits or see to his needs-met; he wants to be revived in the very depth of his being.

Psalms 119:157-158: Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.¹⁵⁸ I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

Although the psalmist spoke of his many “persecutors and enemies,” his desire was fixed directly on the faithfulness of God’s promises. In verses 153 and 160 the psalmist asked God to consider things and in verse 158 he tells God what he considers. He beholds or considers his accusers and is utterly disgusted by their treachery against God in the way they have rejected God’s Word. The key to the prayer in this section is his grief over those who don’t keep God’s Word. Throughout this stanza the psalmist continues to assert his reliance on the truth of what God has said:

Psalms 119:159-160: Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.¹⁶⁰ Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

The poet ends the stanza with another declaration that God’s Word is truth. The Hebrew word rendered “beginning” here is *rosh*, which typically means “head.” The focus here would be that God’s Word has always been true and, as the rest of the verse maintains, it always will be. This is the third declaration of the truth of God’s Word in close proximity-the other two occurring in each of the two previous stanzas (verses 142, 151). Jesus Christ confirmed this when He prayed, “Your word is truth” (John 17:17). It’s clear that the certainty of His Word and its righteous judgments apply forever. This should be a cause of concern to those who choose to reject God and His laws-and a cause of great hope to us who strive to follow God in keeping His Word.

Affirmations: I hear God’s voice when he speaks to me. God quickens and delivers me.

Conversation Starters: Did you just tell God you wanted to know more about Him? What kind of sacrifices do you make?

Recommended Reading: 2 Corinthians 9 & 10

Psalms 119 is about meditation in the Word of God and the fruits of that meditation as the Word of God is internalized and made the pattern for a man's thoughts. That comes to pass through constant reading and reflection on the Word of God, the application of it in one's mind to the daily circumstances of life and prolonged reflection on its meaning. This psalm is an example of what it recommends. It is a pondering of the Word of God in one's mind over and over again displaying both a thanksgiving for and celebration of the manifold excellencies of the Word of God showing us how to make the Word of God our daily companion.

While some Eastern religions teach that meditation is allowing our minds to become completely blank and empty, the true meaning of meditation from God's Word is quite the opposite. God's definition of meditation is to fill our minds with the thoughts of God, to allow ourselves to be consumed with the things God has said. To deliberately and intentionally interact with God repeating and pondering what He has declared in His Word. God never intended for meditation to merely produce more knowledge; He wanted us to receive a greater understanding of Himself, His ways, and how His Word will benefit us.

Keep in mind that meditation is not just reading your Bible. However, in order to meditate, we must have a time to read and study. Everything we meditate on must originate from the Word of God. Yet it's not the quantity of scripture we read daily, instead it's the quality of time we spend when we read that's important. How many times have you read something and when you get to the bottom of the page you ask yourself, "What did I just read?" Words merely read have little value. Words read and understood are pure potential. However words meditated upon until they bring us to a point of action are words of life. The choices we make to act provides direction and the forward motion of life.

We must think often, hard, carefully, reflectively, intentionally about what God has told us in His Word, about what it means for our living each day, about what it means both to believe this truth and to practice and obey it. Doing so results in us glorying in the truth and loving it as we should. It can then become the power in our lives that we want it to be and know it ought to be. Time and time again the Bible lays this obligation to think, to ponder upon us and here in this long psalm it reminds us of what blessings will be ours if we meditate faithfully and often on the Word of God.

We should stop after reading a compelling verse and make a note of what it means to us and how we can apply it to our everyday lives. Then, we should purposely think about it throughout the day making every effort to remember what we read in the morning looking for people with whom to share it. It will make a difference in the way our day unfolds.

Any time we read a particular scripture, we should ask ourselves, How does this golden nugget of truth work for me? How can I apply this scripture to my life? Why has God given these instructions to me? What benefits does obeying this scripture offer? When can I do this? How soon can I apply what I've learned?

This type of meditation will bring the greatest discovery of revelation knowledge we have ever known. As we meditate in the promises of God, we will receive fresh revelation for ourselves. There is no substitute for knowing we have heard from the Holy Spirit. There is no replacement for time spent in meditation and fellowship with God.

God's greatest desire is to have an intimate relationship with His children. Our time of daily meditation with the Lord will foster a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him. We will begin to understand His ways, His thoughts, and His desires until they will become our thoughts, our ways, and our desires.

The Apostle James said, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). Make a fresh commitment today to draw closer to the Lord through daily meditation. It will pay big dividends in your life. The Word of God deserves to be meditated upon and thought about, all the time, and over and over again. The man or woman who does that will not long remain the same person!

Affirmations: I think about the Word and how to apply it. I love my intimate relationship with my heavenly Father.

Conversation Starters: Do you think about what you are thinking about? Do you meditate?

Recommended Reading: 2 Corinthians 11 & 12

In this section the psalmist declares his awe for Word of God he had come to love. It doesn't matter what people do or what circumstances are, nothing should alter our reverence for God and His Word. While most people stand in awe of powerful people, our heart is awed by God's Word. After seeing the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar was humbled, realizing that God "changed the king's word." God can still "change the king's word today." When we esteem it like Job did, above all our necessary food, (Job 23:12) it can become the joy and rejoicing of our hearts like it was for Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:16).

Psalm 161,162: SCHIN: Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.¹⁶² I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

The more reverence we have for the word of God the more joy we shall find in it. The psalmist found joy and rejoicing in the wonderful Word of God, and describes the degree of that pleasure as great spoil. This alludes to victory over the enemy. One doesn't get "spoil" without facing the enemy. Not only is there pleasure and honor in a conquest, but the "spoil" is the great advantage realized afterward. The plunder adds much to the joy. By the word of God we become more than conquerors.

It is comforting to experience His love and His life in deeper and more meaningful ways. That's the spoil I take from life. Do you take spoil from the battles you fight? I want God working in me to will and to do of His good pleasure. My greatest reward is to enjoy the pleasure of His company.

Psalm 163,164: I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

The psalmist uses a double expression, hate and abhor, to express indescribable loathing. How can one stand in awe of God's word or rejoice at it, without despising every way contrary to it. Love for the Word of God causes the godly to "hate and abhor lying" and begin to recognize the way that God exercises His "righteous judgments" on those who dare to flaunt their wickedness. Perfect praise erupts from a heart that recognizes the righteous character of God's judgments.

Psalm 165,166: Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.¹⁶⁶ LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

Loving the Word of God and walking in obedience to it brings great peace, peace with God, peace within yourself and peace with others. Notice that it doesn't say "Great peace have they which keep thy law." It says those who love it. The psalmist never seems to run out of reasons to profess his love for God's law. Great peace and freedom from offense are certainly wonderful benefits of that love. The psalmist's hope for and expectation of salvation is bolstered as he does as God commands him.

Psalm 167,168: My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.¹⁶⁸ I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

Reveling in the wonder and awe of the Scriptures brings a stable "hope for our salvation." This fosters a love for the scriptures which encourages obedience. Those who understand that "all our ways are before Him" are more likely to the precepts and testimonies of the Lord. The psalmist understood the conclusion of the whole matter of which Ecclesiastes reminds us.

Ecclesiastes 12:13: Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear [reverence] God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

What would you think of someone who had a priceless treasure but treated it as something of little value? The Bible is such a neglected priceless treasure. Unfortunately people don't study it, meditate on it, or even spend a few minutes a day to hear what the Lord has to say to them. They have no awe or reverence for it. It is obvious that the psalmist loved God's Word and treasured it highly. It would behoove us to follow his lead.

Affirmations: God doesn't give up on me. When God talks to me through other people, I'm so very grateful

Conversation Starters: Would you like to hear God's voice? Has anyone ever confirmed what God had already told you?

Recommended Reading: 2 Corinthians 13

Choices abound. We all have to make hundreds of decisions that determine the outcome of our lives. Whether major or minor they all add up and shape our lives. Following the Way of God instead of our own way. We all need to evaluate options and make up our minds. The more resolute our decisions the easier they are to maintain. God has declared his ways and will help us walk the way of His Word. Our freewill choice to do as He says is always before us.

Psalm 119:30: I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me*.³¹ I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.³² I will run the way of thy commandments, when [for] thou shalt enlarge my heart.

What better way to choose, than a way of truth. Because we know it is God's Word, we know it is the truth for He is true and righteous altogether (Psalms 19:9). Following the way of truth requires keeping God's commandments. The psalmist says he has laid or set God's judgments before him. When you choose the way of truth you think it through and lay out your plans before you. Then you stick to them. That means continuing to choose and rechoose the right way as decisions need to be made. "Stuck" is the Hebrew word translated "cleave" in Genesis 2:24 where it describes a marriage commitment.

The workman of God's Word we have no need to be ashamed. When we choose the way of truth, lay it out before us and stick to the plan we will not be put to shame. Then we can run the way that has been laid before us. As we do so God will enlarge our heart. Just like when we run physically we build our endurance and get better as we stay faithful and continue to run. We can build our conditioning spiritually as we run to do God's Word. As we do, God will enlarge our hearts. The more we run, the larger our hearts can get. We should condition ourselves and think about the long haul.

Then before the psalm closes the psalmist repeats his declaration and asks for God's help.

Psalm 119:173: Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

Perhaps the words of Moses and Joshua rang in the psalmist's ears when he declared the way he had chosen.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20: See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;¹⁶ In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.¹⁷ But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;¹⁸ I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:²⁰ That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Moses set God's Word before them and commanded them to walk in His ways to keep His commandments. He challenged them to decide and implored them to choose life. Joshua also repeated a similar challenge.

Joshua 24:14-15: Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.¹⁵ And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Joshua declared his choice. He and his house would serve the Lord. He also set up a stone of witness as a perpetual reminder of the choice and commitment they made. We, too, must take the challenge and chose the way of truth, set it before ourselves, stick to it and run to serve the Lord our God.

Affirmations: I choose life. I am what God says I am, and I can do what He says I can do.

Conversation Starters: What do you see when you look in the mirror? Are things getting better every day?

Recommended Reading: Joshua 24

We have now come to the final section of Psalm 119. We have journeyed with the psalmist through a wide variety of his personal experiences. He has focused on the Word of God and stressed his desire to obey it. With the alphabet exhausted, the poet fills his concluding strophe with repeated cries for help. In a barrage of petitions, he five times uses the word “let” along with the words “give,” “deliver” and “seek.”

Psalm 119:169-170: TAU: Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.¹⁷⁰ Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

This petition is a reminder that no believer can ever assume that he has reached a stage where he does not need to grow in understanding and spiritual perception and awareness. Prayer about this matter was instigated by the fact that he still needed deliverance. The parallelism of the structure of these first two verses suggests that the end of each is as similar as the beginning of each. In other words, the deliverance he is seeking will come with further understanding.

Psalm 119:171-172: My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.¹⁷² My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness.

The outcome of being taught of God is always resounding praise back to Him. The psalmist has discovered that all God’s commandments are right, and when they are obeyed, they provide the way for a content life.

Psalm 119:173-174: Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.¹⁷⁴ I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law *is* my delight.

The psalmist also prays for divine guidance and aid anticipating the helping hand of God. Using the imagery of the Lord having a hand shows us that He has the power to do what is needed. He can lift us when we fall, guide us when we are confused, protect us when we are in danger, console us when we are hurt, and much more besides. The psalmist knows that his deliberate choice to obey engages God Who acts according to His Word. In verse 174 the psalmist again expresses his longing for God’s salvation—which could apply to immediate rescue or ultimate deliverance in the future resurrection of the just. Perhaps both are intended. The psalmist once again declares his delight in God’s law.

Psalm 119:175-176: Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.¹⁷⁶ I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

The psalmist again asserts his resolve to praise God, and is thankful for the help His judgments provide. In closing, the writer of this psalm sees himself like a lost sheep having strayed and now in need of rescue. This may be an acknowledgment of sin (as his earlier one in verse 67), though he has not strayed in that way during his affliction (verse 110). This simile of the lost sheep is used elsewhere (See Isaiah 53:6 and 1 Peter 2:25). The psalmist goes to God as his shepherd (remember the 23rd Psalm) and asks for His attention. He needs the intervention of the Good Shepherd to come and rescue His sheep, i.e. His servant like the parable Jesus told in Luke 15:4-7. This request is made on the basis of being a faithful servant—one who remembers God’s commandments.

While he was clearly not sinless, the psalmist counted himself among the righteous. He loved God’s law and made it his chief delight (verse 174). His desire was to live and praise God (verses 171, 175). He integrated God’s Word into his life. He walked in conformity to God’s will in contrast with the unrighteous who had no desire to live obediently. God does not obligate Himself to aid the wicked. But He offers abundant help to His servants (Psalms 23; 121). The belief that he was among the righteous whom God rewards gave the writer of Psalm 119 confidence to make his requests. Although our righteousness today is based on the accomplished works of Jesus Christ and not on our own works. However, our confidence in approaching God is bolstered as we do those things which are pleasing in His sight.

1 John 3:21-22: Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.²² And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

We, too, may also stray, let’s make sure we, like the psalmist, ask for God’s assistance whenever it’s needed.

Affirmations: I go boldly to the throne of grace. My lips utter praise.

Conversation Starters: Have you seen God’s grace on your life? Why do you work so hard? Are you really a hard worker?

Recommended Reading: 1 John 3

As we come to the end of this magnificent psalm we meet with a somewhat unexpected finale. There is no crescendo; it doesn't build to a climax. There is no note of assurance and confidence. Rather, it seems to fade away in a wistful, humble confession: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep."

Psalms 119:176:

I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments.

This is the crowning word of all the pleas and cries that have preceded it. The psalmist returns to the allusion of the lost sheep to close out the longest of all the psalms. In verse ten he first makes the allusion pleading, "O let me not wander from thy commandments." Then later in verse 67 he says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray." Now at the very end of the psalm returns to the motif saying, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep."

The psalmist blames no one else for what happened. He says, "I have gone astray." He doesn't use circumstances as his scapegoat, but admits his personal responsibility for having gotten out in left field. Thankfully, he knows better than to remain there. It is not just that he desires to return to the fold, but that there is One who seeks to bring him back to it. The knowledge of the scriptures that he hasn't forgotten brings him comfort for it reminds him that God is pursuing him.

His follow up cry, "Seek Thy servant!" shows the longing he had for fellowship with God Whom he had come to know and love. Even though he acknowledges that he has erred in that he has wandered away, he is still resolute in clinging to the commandments. It is what he knows of the heart, nature or character of God from His Word that allows him to make the request.

He does not implore God from the high ground of not having forgotten His Word, as if that earns him such treatment by God. Rather it is his tenacious cleaving to His commandments that give him the confidence and trust to make the request. He is not asking God to do something He is adverse to. Rather He is calling upon the Lord he knows to perform according to the promises He has made.

Although this is the only place in Psalm 119 that this particular Hebrew word for seek is used, we find a synonym used five other places. Verse two declares the blessedness of those who seek God with their whole heart. Verse ten then follows up with the psalmist testifying, "With my whole heart have I sought Thee." In verse 45 he gives the reason that he walks in liberty is because he seeks God's precepts. This is also the basis from which he asks God to save him in verse 94. He also states in verse 155 that the reason salvation is far from the wicked is that they do not seek His precepts. Psalms 107:20 tells us that God sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Therefore making the connection with God regarding His Word is vital to our wholeness.

However verse 176 is the only place where God is the subject of the seeking, in all the rest we were seeking Him and His precepts. The truth is God is always seeking us. He desires the pleasure of our company. He pointedly states this truth in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 34:12,16:

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day... ¹⁶ I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick....

Jesus established this for us. He came to declare God, and he always did His Father's will. Following his Father's example, Luke 19:10 and Matthew 18:12 say that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. We can rest assured that our loving heavenly Father is always seeking us. He has promised to work within us to will and to do of His good pleasure Philippians 2:13. The good work He has begun will not end until He sends Christ back to gather us unto Him.

Affirmations: By the grace of God I am what I am. I labor for the Lord abundantly

Conversation Starters: What's the most important thing in your life? What do you love to do?

Recommended Reading: Ezekiel 34

Using Retemories

Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 record the devil's assault on and temptation of Jesus. Both accounts highlight the victorious battle cry of our savior. "It is written!" was the standard he used against the assaults and temptations. Jesus brought the power of God to bear into the situations with a declaration of "It is written!" Not only did he use the battle cry, but he quoted God's Word following it. He used the appropriate Word of God, the sword of the spirit, to be victorious in every confrontation.

He went to the Word. That's the same privilege that we have. We go to the Word knowing that the Word will produce the same results today as it has on any day in history. The phrase, "it is written" in the Greek is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense indicates action in the past that is repeated or has its impact or completion in the present. Jesus said, "It is written," but when was it written? The verses he quoted were written many years before by Moses. It's recorded in Deuteronomy. It was written, but Jesus didn't say it **was** written. He said "It **is** written." Because it was not only written at some time in the past, but it was still written that day when he needed it. It was **still** God's Word. When he used it in that perfect tense he brought the impact of that Word to that specific situation that he was facing in life.

He spoke "It is written," and it backed down the adversary. He overcame that situation. He came out a victor, a conqueror, because of the Word that he knew. It's the Word that liveth and abideth forever. (I Peter 1:23) It is the living Word of a living God, and we live upon the firm foundation it provides. The Psalmist said in Psalm 119:93, "I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me." "Quickened me" is old English for "made me alive." He's made us alive! His words are words of life! They bring us life!

How can folks be bored when they have the Word of God? Psalm 119:92 declares, "Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." Like Jesus, the psalmist knew that the Word made him victorious in the different situations of life he faced, and that's why he swore to never forget it. Too many people think... some day. I'll be healed someday... I'll be victorious someday... I'll be able someday... Someday! Someday! Someday!

We need to change our thinking to "this day." Why wait for someday? Why not expect it and accept it today? God hasn't made "someday" yet. If you wait for some day, it's never going to get here because it's somewhere down the road. But this day is here. This day is what we have to live and enjoy, and that's what God has for us. We should be thinking that we will see the power of God right now, this day. We want to enjoy God's victory and God's power today, right now. That's why we speak the Word of God. We bring the power of God to bear upon the situations we face by boldly declaring, "It is written!"

Jesus was victorious over temptation as he declared what was written. He had hidden God's Word in his heart so he could do God's will. He could say, "It is written!" because he remembered what was written. To declare *It is written*, we, too, must remember what was written. That's why we **retain** God's word in our **memory**. A **retemory** is a verse we **retain** in our **memory**. We commit verses to memory so we can use them in situations of life that require that we wield the sword of the spirit.

Psalms 119:11:

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

We put that Word in our heart to protect us and guide our hearts in the way. Loving God with all of our hearts necessitates putting God's Word into our hearts. Putting the Word of God into our hearts begins with reading and digesting it. Does the Word automatically float up into the mind and park itself? No. God's Word must be read and applied. When we read it, does it automatically permeate the innermost part of our being? No, it takes habitual and repeated effort to get something into our heart. However, our love for and delight in it will help us focus upon it.

Our hearts should sing with the psalmist, "**O** how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." (Psalm 119:97) "I delight to do thy will, **O** my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8) The purpose of the "**O**" is to show some emotion and intensity of feeling. Sometimes we must summon the emotion, the resolve, that we want. If it is not there, we put it there. Hebrews 10:7 tells us that Psalm 40:8 was written prophetically of Jesus. He delighted to do God's will. He had a strong desire to do his Father's will. What an example to follow! Let's make "It is written" our personal motto, too. We are *Messengers For Christ* so let's live our life as he did, victoriously in service.

Twelve Reasons for Memorizing Scripture

1. **We are commanded to.** Deuteronomy 6:6; 11:18
2. **Hiding the Word in the heart helps one to obey it.** Deuteronomy 30:14; Psalms 37:31
3. **It allows for meditation, which increases our understanding of the scriptures.** Psalms 119:98-100
4. **It will prosper us.** Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1:1-3
5. **It provides both the standard to which we control our thinking and the means by which we do so.** Romans 12:3; Philippians 4:8
6. **It will cleanse and transform the mind.** Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:4
7. **It brings victory over temptation.** Psalms 119:11; Ephesians 6:17; Luke 4:1-13
8. **It aids in witnessing and teaching.** Colossians 3:16; I Peter 3:15
9. **It provides a basis for an effectual prayer life.** I John 5:14,15
10. **It provides comfort during trials and bereavement.** Psalms 119:50,52; I Thessalonians 4:13-18
11. **It provides a basis for life.** Matthew 4:4; Psalms 119:93; Proverbs 4:4
12. **It improves our every day conversation.** Matthew 12:34