

The Word on the Word

Teaching given by Peter Warren at FGPC, August - October 2014

Psalm 119

1. Introductory Thoughts on Psalm 119

In this introduction to Psalm 119 we are going to see a number of different things that make this psalm truly unique and a great blessing to us. I call this psalm “The Word on the Word” - it is what God says about His own Word.

A. The Longest Psalm

Psalm 119 stands as the giant among the Psalms, it is the longest psalm and the longest chapter in the Bible with 176 verses. But, don't let the length of the chapter hinder you. It is written in a style and format that allows us to read and study the key concepts with ease.

- Because the Book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible, it shows us the priority of praise and worship to God. The vast majority of the psalms are written as songs and prayers.
- And since Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible, it shows us the priority of God's Word to God, that is the importance that God places on His own word. David writes in Psalm 138.2b “.. *For You have magnified Your word above all Your name*“
- Not only does the Book of Psalms contain the longest chapter in the Bible it also has the shortest.

B. It's Authorship

- The author of Psalm 119 is unknown. Some scholars think it was King David. Others think it might have been Ezra, the prophet. Others think it is a compilation of the work of many writers, possibly written for a king.
- When it was written is as much a mystery as to who wrote it. Depending on who the author is, we can deduce that Psalm 119 was written somewhere between 2400 and 3000 years ago.

C. It's An Acrostic

The psalm is an acrostic or alphabetic psalm.

- It is comprised of 22 stanzas, each starting with a different letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza has 8 verses with two lines each (couplet).
- The first eight couplets begin with aleph (= A), the next eight with beth (= B), etc. Depending on how you count, only two to three of the couplets (90?, 122, and 132) lack a direct reference to the written Word of God through some synonym

such as law, testimonies, statutes, etc. (the essence of verse 90 is about God establishing the world through His Word)

- Although there are some obvious themes running through the psalm, the overall structure seems to be determined mostly by the alphabetic arrangement. It is the A to Z of God's Word. C.H Spurgeon called it the Golden Alphabet

D. It Is Used for Worship

Psalm 119 is a prayer that includes many different elements, including prayers of

- praise (vs 45-48)
- lament (vs 81-88)
- vindication (vs 132-134)
- obedience (vs 57-64)
- and petitions for wisdom (vs 33-40)

E. It's Focus is on the Word of God

- The purpose of this Psalm is to celebrate God's word and instruction to his people. In it the Psalmist beautifully expresses awe and adoration of God for His word.
- As we have seen, the focus of the entire psalm is on The Word of God. There are only two or three verses which do not make a direct reference to the Word of God (vs 90?, 122, 132). As we study Psalm 119 we will see how its' reliability, accuracy, authority, necessity and sufficiency allows us to find out what the Bible says about itself.
- It will allow us to dig deeper into the Word of God and find out how it applies to daily life.
- It will also allow us to read and pray the Word of God together.

This psalm uses 9 different words for God's law. The psalm uses the full meaning of these words to elaborate on The Word of God.

1. **Law** - Generally, refers to the first 5 books of the Old Testament – the Torah.
2. **Testimonies** - God's standard of conduct according to the 10 commandments. His testimonies are His witnesses that attest to His character and will.
3. **Way (or Ways)** - The pattern of life required by God's law – (used in vs 3, 37)
4. **Precepts** - A commandment or requirement, instructions given to men to direct their conduct.
5. **Statutes (or Ordinances)** - Enacted laws and decrees, but not confined to the written Law
6. **Commandments** - Orders; God's decrees
7. **Judgements (or Rules)** - A binding law; judicial decision
8. **Word (or Words)** – God's spoken or written utterances, His sayings, a general term of God's revelation
9. **Promise, (Promises)** – The Hebrew word '*imrah*' is used 19 times in this psalm (11, 38, 41, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 154, 158, 162, 170, 172) and means a spoken utterance, however this word is most commonly translated 'word'

Each of these words, with the exception of 'way (or ways)' is used approximately 20 times throughout the psalm, some more others slightly less.

Many of the verses mention God's Word in one line, and then in the second line of the couplet connect it to God's revelation.

Examples:

vs 11 "Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You"

vs 67 "Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word"

David Powlison observes:

"Psalm 119 is actually not about the topic of getting Scripture into your life. Instead, it is the honest words that erupt when what God says gets into you. It's not an exhortation to Bible study; it's an outcry of faith..."

(from *Speaking the Truth in Love*, pg.14, published by Evangelical Press, 2008).

2. The True and Infallible Word of God

It is clearly evident from looking at this psalm that the main theme is the Word of God. We said last time that Psalm 119 is what God says about His own word. In this brief study of the Golden Alphabet we are going to look at some key themes that can be found within its 176 verses.

We are going to begin with the fundamental theme of the Infallibility of God's Word. Before we do any studying of the Bible we have to be certain ourselves that it is true and infallible. If we think otherwise we will allow ourselves to be persuaded to follow man's teachings and be deceived – to which end some sincere Christians in Bible believing, evangelical churches have already succumbed – exchanging the truth for the lie (*Romans 1.25*)

"The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgements endures forever" Psalm 119.160

- The Bible declares that all of the Word of God is true in it's entirety, from Genesis to Revelation.
 - We cannot pick and choose what we believe – it is the inspired word of God in it's entirety (**2 Timothy 3.16-17**).
 - Settling this in our hearts right at the beginning will make it so much easier for God to speak to us whenever we read it or hear it, and because we have settled the issue we will act upon it.
 - **1 Thessalonians 2.13** – Paul gave thanks to God for the church of Thessalonika because as they heard the word, they received it as the truth, and believed it – God's word.
"....because, in receiving the teaching that you had from us, you accepted it, not as the teaching of man , but as what it really is – the teaching of God, which is even now doing its work within you who believe in Christ" (Twentieth Century NT)
- Jesus Himself declared and believed that the word is true.

- He prayed that His disciples, and those who would believe, would be sanctified by the truth – God's Word. (**John 17.17**)
- That's why Jesus put much emphasis on hearing what His Father said and doing it – He did nothing of His own volition but only those things He heard from the Father - He lived by what God said.
- God cannot lie, He cannot break His word, He has given us His promise and His oath (**Romans 3.1-4, Hebrews 6.18**). We must accept and believe His word as truth – everything else (that is contrary) is a lie
- He will not change one word that He has spoken from His mouth (**Psalms 89.34**). Men can offer their thoughts, opinions, diagnoses; governments can legislate and pass laws but that doesn't alter that God's Word is true.
 - God has bound Himself to His covenant, ie His Word. He cannot work outside of His Word. The Bible tells us that He has magnified His Word above His own name (**Psalms 138.2**).
 - That's why we can take what He says as Truth; believe it and put it into practice. Jesus said a wise man does exactly that! (see **Matthew 7.24-27**).
- God's Eternal word is forever settled in heaven (**Psalms 119.89**) that means regardless of whether we believe it or not, it is true, established and not one letter will fail of God's word (**Matthew 5.18**).
 - The truth of the matter is that men change, feelings change, circumstances change but God's Word remains.
- Believing in the infallibility of God's word means that we do not add anything to it or take anything from it. The Bible gives us a strict warning about this (**Revelation 22.18-19**).
 - Adam's wife should have stuck to what God said – **Genesis 3.1-7** she adds to what God said, '..nor shall you touch it..' (v3, compare **Genesis 2.17**). The serpent uses her disregard for the God's word and twists it further. Some old Rabbinical teaching suggests that the serpent picked the fruit and gave to her saying 'see, you will not surely die' (v4).
 - **2 Corinthians 11.3-4** – Paul warns us that as the serpent deceived Eve, we too can be deceived by the false prophets and teachers if we stray from the word.
 - **2 Timothy 1.13-14 (see Amplified)** – hold fast to the truth, guard it, keep it and follow it
 “Hold fast and follow the pattern of wholesome and sound teaching which you have heard from me, in [all] the faith and love which are [for us] in Christ Jesus. Guard and keep [with the greatest care] the precious and excellently adapted [Truth] which has been entrusted [to you], by the [help of the] Holy Spirit Who makes His home in us” (Amplified)

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138.2). That's why we can take what He says as Truth; believe it and put it into practice. Jesus said a wise man does exactly that! (see *Matthew 7.24-27*).

3. God's Word IS God's Word

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD" (v.1)

One of the starting points of our study and any study of the Word of God we looked at last time:

- we must judge God's word as true and infallible. This psalm says that the entirety of God's word is true (vs 160)

another which might sound obvious, but is the essential starting point

- before we judge the word as true and infallible is that we realise and acknowledge that it actually is God's word - It comes from God. The opening verse to the psalm states that it is the law of the LORD (*Jehovah*)

Other books are good, other books are helpful, other books give great information - but none others are from the Lord – they are only the authors thoughts and opinions about the word of God.

Divinely Inspired Words

Of course, we believe and hold to the verbal inspiration of Scripture (**2 Timothy 3.16-17**) - every single word in the original texts was inspired by God, although in a wonderful way He uses the personalities and writing styles of those He chooses to give us His word in order to convey His message.

Although God used these differing writers, their writings are not ancient historical texts that need to be academically studied - it is **HIS** word; this is the pre-requisite, without this starting point, our study is merely an academic exercise.

This thought is conveyed in verses **72** and **88** where God's word is described as being from God's mouth - these are God's words, as though God Himself actually spoke them. That's how important they are, that's how we are to treat and regard them. There can, of course, be no words more important than those of the infinite, omnipotent God.

Your..

Even taking a very brief look at this psalm we cannot help but notice the author's enthusiasm and excitement for God's written revelation.

He is not primarily a lover of books and writings, but a passionate lover of a great God. He gets excited, not out of a love for laws and commandments, but because they are "your laws" and "your commandments".

171 times in this psalm, the psalmist refers to the laws, commandments, precepts, and words etc as "Your.. (words, commandments, precepts, law)

He is not an academic believer but a relational one. He has learnt to hear God's voice through Scripture: "for You Yourself have taught me" (**vs102**).

The Scriptures are still God's primary way to communicate with His people. He speaks to us through His word, He directs us, guides us, teaches us, convicts us and chastises us all through His word

Benefiting from God's Word

We can benefit from God's word by being like the psalmist:

1. He is positive towards it:

- "I will delight myself in Your statutes, I will not forget Your word" (v16).
- "Your testimonies are wonderful" (v129).
- ".. I love them exceedingly" (v167).

Oh that we would love and value God's Word like the psalmist!

2. He is humble before it:

- "..and I am afraid [*in reverence*] of Your judgements" (v120),
- "..but my heart stands in awe of Your word" (v161).

Do we have a similar appreciation of the authority of God's revealed word?

Do we accept it humbly and reverently? or do we argue with it and seek to adjust its plain meaning to suit our likes or dislikes?

3. He expects God to speak to him through it:

Listen to the author's sense of expectation as he prepares to read and meditate on God's word:

- "I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for your commandments" (v131),
- "My soul breaks with longing for your judgements at all times" (v20).

4. He is determined to obey it:

- "So shall I keep Your law continually, for ever and ever" (v44).

Our salvation is marked by a decision to yield ourselves to God.

In the same way, our growth in the Christian life is based on conscious decisions to obey God's word, regardless of what we find.

- "I have said that I would keep Your words" (v57).
- Like a marriage vow, "I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgements" (v106).

5. He seeks help to understand and to obey it:

- "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (v18),
- "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes... Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed I shall observe it with my whole heart" (vs33, 34).

We all live under different social pressures and have our own likes and dislikes. We need a sincere heart and Holy Spirit's help to avoid arriving at wrong conclusions from Scripture.

6. He spends time with it:

For the psalmist, God's word is not just for special events, or for Sundays. During the day, his mind would go back to it

- “..It is my meditation all the day” (v97).
- “My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word” (v148).

7. He makes decisions in the light of it:

The psalmist not only views God’s word as “my counsellors” (v24) but strives to relate the principles of God’s Word to his daily living.

- “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (v105).

Do you allow the Word to shed light on your path? To what degree does it influence your decision process? Does it make a difference in your family and work life?

8. He admits to straying from it:

We usually find it difficult admit to straying from the word of God, but not the psalmist. We have no doubt as to the direction of his heart, since as he looks around him -

- “Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law” (v136).
- Yet he ends his song with a painful admission “I have gone astray like a lost sheep” (v176)
- He pleads “Let no iniquity have dominion over me” (v133).

Do we wander from the word of God and neglect it? While we try to keep up an artificial “I’m OK” image, it will be difficult to hear the Lord speaking to us.

However, we can learn like the psalmist that if we come back to Him in repentance we can find that “Great are Your tender mercies, O Lord” (v156)

4. God Reveals Himself Through This Psalm

This psalm not only shows us what God has to say about His own Word and the characteristics of it but also through it He chooses to reveal Himself and His attributes.

There is a quotation that goes something like;

“A man without his word is nothing, a real man keeps his word”

This theme is Biblical, in Psalm 15.1-4 we read

“LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbour, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honours those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change”

also in Numbers 30.2 and 1 John 2.5 we read that we are to be men and women of our word.

“If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth” Numbers 30.2

“But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him” 1 John 2.5

God is a God of His Word – He says what He means and means what He says, therefore we can believe every word that He has uttered and spoken forth from His mouth. Because of this we also understand that God and His Word cannot be separated.

Let's turn to Psalm 119 and see what the psalmist says about God's word which is also true of God

1. Righteousness (vss 7, 62, 75, 106, 123, 138, 144, 160, 164, 172)

- God is righteous and just.
- His name is Jehovah Tsidkenu (Lord our Righteousness) – Jeremiah 23.6
 - 2 Chronicles 12.6; Psalm 7.9; Psalm 116.5

2. Good (vs68)

- God is good all the time and all the time God is good.
- This one verse tells us all we need to know about the goodness of God – He does not put bad things on us like sickness and disease, He only does good for us.
 - Nehemiah 2.18; Psalm 73.1; 3 John 1.11; Romans 2.4

3. Trustworthy (vs42)

- The implication of this word in the Hebrew is that of a place of refuge and safety. We can trust God's word and God is our place of safety, we can take refuge under the shadow of His wings (Psalm 91.1-2)
- His word is totally trustworthy – we can have boldness and confidence in it so much so that we build our lives upon it.
 - 2 Samuel 22.31; Psalm 56.11; Psalm 62.8; 1 Timothy 4.10

4. True (vss 43, 142, 151, 160)

- God's Word is true – it is stable, sure and certain. The entirety of it is true
- God can be trusted – He is dependable – He will not fail (Deuteronomy 31.6-8 AV)
 - Jeremiah 10.10; John 3.33; John 17.3

5. Faithful (vs86)

- God is forever faithful to His Word. He will not allow one jot or tittle to fail, He watches over it to bring it to pass (1 Samuel 3.19; Jeremiah 1.12)
 - Deuteronomy 7.9; Hosea 11.12; 1 Corinthians 1.9; Hebrews 2.17

6. Unchangeable (v89)

- His word is settled in heaven.
- God never changes

- Psalm 89.34 ; Malachi 3.6; Hebrews 13.8; James 1.17

7. **Eternal** (vss 90,152)

- He is the eternal God – He is from 'everlasting to everlasting'
- One line in the Bible that confirms this to me is the first one - "*In the beginning God...*"
- Genesis 21.33; Deuteronomy 33.27; Isaiah 40.28; Romans 16.26; 1 Timothy 1.17

8. **Light** (vs105)

- The word is a lamp and a light – it brings illumination and revelation
- God is our light, our guide, the Captain of our lives.
- Isaiah 60.19; John 1.7; 1 John 1.5

9. **Pure** (v140)

- The word *pure* in this verse means to be 'tried, tested, proven true, and refined'
- The Lord is the Refiner – His Word is tried and tested in the crucibles of our hearts
- Malachi 3.2-3; Psalm 7.9; Psalm 105.19

5. The Limitless Nature of the Word

Psalm 119.96 (Amp)

"I have seen that everything [*human*] has its limits and end [*no matter how extensive, noble, and excellent*]; but Your commandment is exceedingly broad and extends without limits [*into eternity*]."

Everything of man has its limitations no matter how excellent and great they are.

"I have learned that everything has limits; but your commandment is perfect" (TEV)

"Everything I see has its limits, but your commands have none" (NCV)

"To all perfection I see a limit; but your commands are boundless" (NIV)

"Nothing is completely perfect, except your teachings." (CEV)

Everything in life is transient, even our natural life itself – that means it changes and comes to an end.

Technology Changes! - Listen to some changes that have occurred in recent years:

- If you are 1 in a million in China, there are 1350 people just like you
- China will soon become the #1 English speaking country in the world
- The 25% of India's population with the highest IQ's is greater than the population of USA
- The top 10 'must have' jobs in 2013 did not even exist in 2004
- We are currently preparing students for jobs that do not exist, using technologies that have not yet been invented, to solve problems we don't even know about.

- In USA, 1 in 5 couples met online, by 2025 it is estimated that this will be 1 in 2 couples.
 - WhatsApp has 600 million active users, if WhatsApp was a country it would be the third largest in the world behind China and India
 - There are 3.5 billion Google searches every day – In 2006 it was 2.7 billion per month.
 - The first commercial text (sms) message in the world was sent in 1992. Today the number of sms messages sent daily equals 7 billion, but WhatsApp users send 50 billion messages every day.
 - The amount of new technical information is doubling every two years. For students starting a four year technological degree this means that ½ of what they learn in the first year will be outdated by the third year of their course.
 - It is estimated that a week's worth of New York Times contains more information than a person would come across in their entire lifetime in 18th century.
 - By 2049, a \$1000 pc will exceed the computational capabilities of the entire human species.
- Technology and human ideas always need revision, correction, upgrading or updating.
 - Politicians, like pop stars and economic gurus become the “in thing” for a while, then they change.
 - Newspapers are reprinted daily as news changes by the minute.

...but **God's word** is perfect and cannot be improved. It is more current and up to date than tomorrow's newspapers.

Our faith rests on the eternal unchanging word of God, a secure anchor in a temporal and changing world. “Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing causes them to stumble” (vs165).

Listen to the opening thoughts and instructions of the psalmist as he contemplates the blessedness of living according to God's unchanging word (vss1-24)

- Blessed or happy are those who choose to use God's perfect word as the basis for their lifestyle (vs1-2). They can't go wrong (vs3)
- “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word” (vs9).
 - For older men and for women, the recipe is just the same, as we have read in vs 1-2
- “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (vs11)
 - God's unchanging, limitless word has power to keep us from sin.
- “Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (vs17-18)

- God's word is a treasure chest that is full of instruction for successful living in an ever changing world. Some have said foolishly, that the Bible is just an ancient manuscript of religious writings – but here the psalmist attributes his life to keeping God's word. There is power in His word.
- “Remove me from reproach and contempt, for I have kept Your testimonies” (vs22)
 - In keeping and living according to God's word we are judged in line with it. We are kept from reproach and contempt
- “Your testimonies are my delight and my counsellors” (vs24)
 - God's word gives us all the advice, guidance and instruction we need to live in this world.

Sections of the rest of this study (Lessons 6, 7 and 8) have been taken and adapted from the website of Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA. Source: <http://idcraleigh.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Psalm-119.1-24-2-2.pdf>

6. Walking In The Word

We ended the last lesson with a brief look at the opening thoughts of the psalmist as he contemplated the blessedness of living according to God's Word. These next three lessons we are going to look further and deeper at these opening verses as we explore three themes:

- i. Walking in the Word
- ii. Delighting in the Word
- iii. Meditating on the Word.

A. Know the Blessing of Walking in the Word (1-2)

I) Blessing (vs1-2). The Psalm begins **like Psalm 1**, which opens up the book of Psalms by saying, “Blessed is the man.... But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates, day and night.”

Psalm 1 is like a doorway into the book, saying that if you want blessing on your life, then delight in the law of the Lord. It doesn't mean “financial blessing” or “material blessing” (although God may do that), but ***spiritual blessing***. Spiritual satisfaction, joy, purpose, significance, hope, salvation. These are found by walking in God's word.

In Psalm 119, many blessings are listed like: guidance (105), life (73), wisdom (97), joy (111), strength (28), hope (43), and satisfaction (162), peace (165).

II) Blameless (vs1) – Notice that to be blameless means to walk in the law of the Lord. God's law teaches us to *love Him and neighbour*, to *do justly and love mercy*, and to be *holy as God is holy*.

Notice:

- The law is good. The Psalmist loves it. The Apostle Paul also said he delighted in the law of God (Romans 7:22). God's Word is the basis for living righteously.

- Yet, we are struck with a seemingly impossible standard - we don't always walk according to God's law perfectly. This leads to an important point...
 - As believers in Jesus Christ, we understand that only one lived out Psalm 119 perfectly. Through Him, in Him, because of Him, we can now live it out as well – not perfectly but faithfully.
 - The word points us to Jesus, and Jesus empowers us to keep his word; but if we fail we have an Advocate.
 - And we know that if we fail, God won't crush us, for He has already crushed His Son for us (Isaiah 53.5). Jesus fulfilled God's law for us, and now by the Spirit empowers and enables us to walk in accordance with God's word.

B. Experience the Sin-Killing Power of Walking In the Word (9, 11)

The Scriptures have the ability to change us, as Gods' Spirit works in us.

I) . Question: "How can a young man keep his way pure?" (9a)

This is not a pressing question to the world. But it is the question for this young man, and God's people, **and it is still the question**. *Let's take a look at some verses, which express this deep desire for purity:*

- "Oh let me not wander.." – (10) –
"Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love, here's my heart, take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above" (Robert Robinson hymn, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing")
- "Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to covetousness (selfish gain)" (36)
- "Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things" (37)
- "I have inclined my heart to perform your statutes" (112)
- "Let no iniquity have dominion over me" (133)

II). The Answer: By taking heed (*keep watch and guard*) according to your Word (9b)

God's word tells us what sin is. That's an important step for purity.

- Our culture is confused as to what sin is –
 - it is graded by degrees of seriousness;
 - classified with medical names; and called sickness, syndrome or condition
 - is even celebrated. "... [they]... also approve of those who practice them" (Romans 1:32)

III) God uses his word to change us from the inside out, as we read it. Verse 11 – "Your word I have hidden (*laid up or stored*) in my heart that I might not sin against You."

- Notice, who we sin against: God.
- Notice how we keep from doing it: the Word.
- Notice the place for storing it: the heart. The Scripture is inside of me, not just on a tablet (or in a book) outside of me. God's Words are to be kept on the inside.
 - Jesus said everything starts with the heart – not the physical heart but the invisible heart, the core of our being – out of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12.34)

C. We Obey by Walking in the Word (1-6, 8, 17, 21-22)

Blessed are those who keep his testimonies (2a)

Here again this point is reinforced. Blessing comes by keeping his testimonies. One can't miss the frequent emphasis on "**keeping**" or "**obeying**" God's word. (*Read verses*)

(21): Negativity is expressed from those who don't obey the word.

Again, this happens through Christ, who empowers our obedience. We obey by God's grace.

- "Deal bountifully with [me]" (17) or "be gracious to me" that I may keep your word. We pray for grace as we obey God's word.
- "I entreated your favour with my whole heart; be merciful [gracious] to me according to your word [*promise*]" (58)

It's important to remember that we express our love through obedience to God.

"If you love Me, keep my commandments" (John 14.15).

James says be a doer of the word (James 1.22).

If I told my children "go clean your room" and then later ask them "Did you clean your room?"; Then they replied – "No. I memorised what you said... I can say it in Greek – we're going to do a small group study on it." – However impressive that might be, it's just hearing and learning, but it's not doing.

The Psalmist speaks of perseverance under persecution and affliction throughout this Psalm (vss., 86-87; 157, 161). In the face of opposition, his heart is set on obeying him.

He also speaks about how God uses affliction to teach us His word. He's able to accept it because of this blessing. (God doesn't send the affliction but He uses it to teach us His word)

- "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn your statutes." (71)

D. Pray for God's Help for Understanding the Word (12, 18)

Another repeated theme in Psalm 119 is the praying for God's help in understanding the word. The Psalmist does not trust in his own ability to do this.

- "Blessed are You oh Lord, *teach me* Your statutes" (12)
- "Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (18)
- "*Make me understand the way of* Your precepts" (27)
- "*Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes*" (33)
- "Give me understanding" (34, 73, 125, 144, 169)
- "teach me your statutes" (64, 68, 124, 135, 171)

These are wonderful prayers to pray each time you open up the Scriptures.

E. Faithfully Declare the Word (13)

- The Psalmist desires to not only know it and obey it, but to speak it to others.
 - "my lips" and "Your mouth" – He says in effect "May my mouth faithfully proclaim what you have said."
 - He is not *only a learner but a teacher*.
- Later he says, "I will speak of your testimonies before kings" (46)

Application:

- Everyone is to teach in some capacity (Matthew. 28:19-20)

- Talk about the word at home and away from home. Teach it to your family, take every opportunity to declare it (Deuteronomy 6.6-7)
- Be reproducers not just receivers.
- Psalm 96.3,10 – “Declare” it among the nations

7. Delighting In The Word

Let us first look at the definition of this verb 'to delight' -

This psalm has three words translated as delight - between them they have the meaning: *see Strong's numbers - #8173 #2654 #8191*

'to have strong desire for; a bending towards or inclination for something or somebody; to have an affection for sbd or sth; take great pleasure in; to enjoy; to rejoice in, take joy'

A. Worship the Author of the Word (2b, 7)

Verse 2a points us to the author of Scripture. Notice how the switch is made “*who seek **HIM** with the whole heart.*”

We love the Scriptures because they get us to God. We worship the author of the Bible. Through the word, we meet with God. We commune with God in his word.

Consider the scene in Nehemiah 8 – the word is read, and then they worship! Why? Because when we understand the word, we are moved to worship – in repentance, confession, celebration, praise.

The connection between the word and worship gets made several times in Psalm 119: “*With my whole heart I have sought YOU*” (10).

“*I long for Your salvation, O LORD, And Your law is my delight. Let my soul live, and it shall praise YOU*” (174/175)

Virtually every verse of this Psalm refers to the author of Scripture: “Your precepts,” “Your statutes,” “Your righteous rules”

Through His Word, God reveals Himself, His character, His nature to us – we have seen this already (lesson 4).

As a response to His revelation of Himself, our hearts sing out to God:

- “*I will praise You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous judgements*”

(7)

- “*Your statutes have been my songs In the house of my pilgrimage*” (54)

- “*At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, Because of Your righteous judgements*”

(62)

- “*My lips shall utter praise, For You teach me Your statutes. My tongue shall speak of Your word, For all Your commandments are righteousness*” (171-72)

We don't worship God out of our imagination but out of revelation (who He has shown Himself to be)

B. Marvel at the Divine Nature of the Word (7b)

“*I will praise You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous judgements*”

The divine nature of Scripture is exalted in this verse and throughout the psalm:

- “righteous” (7, 75, 144, 164)
- “good” (39)
- “forever O, Lord, your word is settled (firmly fixed, established) in heaven” (89)
- “word of truth” (43) ... “The entirety of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous judgements endures forever” (160). We believe in truth, the word is truth.
- “sure” (86)
- “wonderful” (129)
- “light” (130) – for the simple! This verse highlights the clarity of Scripture. Any Christian can learn the Bible. If you have a heart of humility, then you can learn God’s word. (see Psalm 103.7)
- “Your word *is* very pure; Therefore Your servant loves it” (140)
- “...but my heart stands in awe of your word” (161b)
 - Notice where the Word should affect you: the heart.

C. Yearn for and Delight in the Word (14, 16, 19-20)

In light of the nature of God’s word, it makes sense that the Psalmist would hunger for it.

1. Yearning:

- “I *am* a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me. My soul breaks with longing For Your judgements at all times” (19-20)
- “Behold, I long for your precepts” (40)
- “I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for Your commandments” (131)
- “I rise before the dawning of the morning, And cry for help; I hope in Your word” (147)
- “I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure” (162) - metal detector

2. Delight:

- “I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As *much as* in all riches” (14)
- “I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.” (16)
- “Your testimonies also *are* my delight “ (24, cf., 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174).
- “How sweet are Your words to my taste, *Sweeter* than honey to my mouth” (103)
- “Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, For they *are* the rejoicing of my heart” (111)
- “The law of Your mouth *is* better to me Than thousands of *coins of* gold and silver” (72)
- “Therefore I love Your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold!” (127)

What do you delight in? God's Word is sweeter than honey and better than gold or _____!

Our desires change when we become Christians. Peter says that when the new birth happens we begin to crave Scripture like a baby craves milk (1 Pet. 1:22-2:2).

We don’t “have to read Scripture.” We get to read Scripture. We want to read Scripture – there’s a big difference!

No one should tell me “You have to kiss your wife, don’t you?” No. I get to. I love her.

Yes there are occasional periods in our Christian journey when our hearts grow colder, but we must repent and ask for fresh desire and delight.

D. Rest in the Truly Blessed Man of the Word

- Bible teachers have pointed out that in Psalm 1, the truly blessed man points to Jesus.
 - Psalm 1 begins like Joshua 1. Joshua is the first book of the second division of the Hebrew Bible (*History*). Psalms is the first book of the third division (*Wisdom*). Both speak of the importance and blessing of the word.
- Jesus kept the law perfectly on our behalf. That's the good news of the Bible. "Here is an Israelite in whom there is no guile." (John)

The same is true here in Psalm 119. Though perhaps not intended like Psalm 1, theologically we know this to be true.

- He kept the testimonies
- He did no wrong
- He kept the word diligently
- He kept his way pure
- He never wandered from the commandments
- He had the word stored up in his heart
- He declared the word
- He delighted in the word
- He was the sojourner on earth
- Though princes plotted, he meditated on God's word

Jesus Christ provides salvation to everyone who has fallen short of the standard of God's Word.

- God made him who knew no sin to be made sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:21)

Look at the last verse Psalm 119.176:

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Seek Your servant, For I do not forget Your commandments"

Even though the Psalmist has this determination to keep God's word, he is torn because he knows that he doesn't do it perfectly. He needs to be saved. The Psalmist is acknowledging his need.

- Though the Psalmist knows the Bible, he isn't a Pharisee. He prays like the tax collector instead, "Have mercy on me a sinner."

We need the One who never went astray, to rescue us, to change our hearts and give us power to obey.

- Know the word of Christ. Know the Christ of the Word. That is where blessing is found, in a person, Jesus Christ.

8. Meditating On The Word

In this psalm the Psalmist speaks of "fixing his eyes" on the word, and here in these verses he speaks of meditating on them. (15,23)

This is the path to experience all that we've mentioned in the previous lessons. You must meditate on Scripture. God's Word must take root in our hearts. (11)

Think of meditating on the word as the act of *reading, thinking on, praying, memorizing, discussing, hearing, or singing God's word.*

Eastern meditation is emptying the mind, but Christian meditating is filling the mind – with God’s word.

The goal is “to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (Col 3:16). That is, live in the Word, like it’s your spiritual house. Abide in it. Let it saturate your soul. Let it affect you through and through.

Jesus said, “*If you live in Me [abide vitally united to Me] and my words remain in you and continue to live in your hearts. Ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you*” (John 15.7, Amplified).

We commune with God through His word, not just a fleeting glance but by abiding in it and living in it – that is putting it in the heart.

a parrot can memorize. Every addict knows a few verses. Satan knows verses. So what's the difference? - Its not in the heart.

Click the 'save' button that takes it from our head into our heart!

A. What Psalm 119 teaches us about Meditating on the Word

- a) While others plot, mediate on God’s Word (23)
- b) When down, get up and going, by mediating on the word (25-32)
- c) Delight in God through meditation (47-48)
- d) While others make false accusations, meditate on the word (78)
- e) Meditate on it all day (97)
- f) Grow in understanding beyond your years by meditating on it (99)
- g) Rise early to mediate on the Word (148)

Do you understand your need for meditating on Scripture?

Hundreds of issues would be taken care of in our lives if God’s Word got into us richly.

“If I were the devil, one of my first aims would be to stop folk from digging into the Bible. Knowing that it is the Word of God ... I should do all I could to surround it with the spiritual equivalents of pits, thorn hedges and man traps, to frighten people off”. (Jim Packer)

B. Why Don’t People Meditate on the Word? (What traps does the devil use?)

- **Pride** – Some arrogantly think they don’t need it.
 - God looks on the one who trembles at and reverences His word (Isaiah 66:2)
 - It is an evil thing to drink from other cisterns (Jeremiah 2.13) - **Amy Carmichael** (missionary to India) writing about other good Christian books: *“Drink from the Well, not from the streams that flow from the well”* - this can be applied to every other thing.
- **Misguided Fear** – Some are intimidated by the Bible. They think only the clergy can understand it. Not so! (Psalm 119:130; Psalm 19:7).
 - Consider this - Paul wrote his letters e.g **Romans** to “laypeople,” not theologians? He **expected** farmers, blacksmiths, tent-makers, shopkeepers, market traders, mothers, and other Christians to understand his letter. God’s

people can understand God's Word if they approach it with a heart of humility, seeking to obey it.

- Theologian, **Wayne Grudem** says: "No believer should think himself or herself too foolish to read Scripture and understand it sufficiently to be made wise by it."

- **A belief that the Bible is boring.** Some find no joy in meditating on the word. Remember, the fault is not in the Bible, but in the reader.
 1. Test yourself to see if you are truly born again (1 Peter 2:1-3).
 2. Pray for God to teach you and give you a love for his word. (Psalm 95 – an everyday Psalm). Do not harden your heart.
Pray for the Spirit to illuminate God's Word so that it burns in your heart (Luke 24:32).
 3. Look for the gospel in the Bible - the good news!
Angels long to look at the gospel! (1 Peter 1:12). It never gets boring.
 4. Test your lifestyle to see if you are addicted to entertainment to the point that you can't slow down enough to read quietly and meditatively. If so, unplug from these things for a season and read. Consider '*fasting*' these things
 5. Keep it fresh! Select a good reading and study plan and constantly review it. Ask your pastor for some good study resources to recommend.

- **Busyness** - Part of the exercise of meditating on Scripture is *making time*. One must plan to spend **unhurried and unhindered** time with God. No one oozes into Christ-likeness.
 - You don't accidentally become a student of Scripture. Prioritise sitting at the feet of Jesus like Mary, who chose what was best (Luke 10:38-42).
 - **Illustration:** A doctor who is obviously hearing from his overweight patient that "he's too busy to exercise", responds: "What fits your busy schedule, exercising one hour a day or being dead twenty-four hours a day!?"
 - **William Wilberforce**, the British statesman, who was largely responsible for the abolition of slave trade throughout the empire, wrote in his diary in 1819, "*Walked from Hyde Park Corner, repeating the Psalm 119 in great comfort.*" That was a busy man.
 - **Martin Luther**, the Reformist, once said "*I have so much business I cannot get on with it without spending three hours daily in prayer (and meditating the word)*"

- **Laziness** - We fail in our duty to study God's Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, nor because it is dull and boring, or because we are busy but rather because it is work
 - We look upon it as a chore, and we would rather be doing something other than 'work'.
 - We have just said that we need to make time for meditating the word. That requires effort on our part.

- **Unbelief.** Not that we don't believe God's word but rather an unbelief in the value of Scripture will keep you from God's Word.

Do you really believe:

- its more valuable than gold?
- that faith comes from hearing it?
- that joy is derived by understanding it?
- that God transforms us through it?
- that we desperately need the gospel every day?

Do you realize how much you need it to be able to share the gospel, to counsel others and fight the good fight.

C. How to Meditate (Useful Pointers)

Think of meditating on the word as the act of *reading, thinking on, praying, memorising, discussing, hearing, or singing God's word.*

When reading the Scriptures I often put myself 'in the scene' – it brings the Bible alive to you.

Find ways to hide God's word in your heart (memorise it):

- write it
- art – draw it
- put it to music
- stick verses on the fridge
- be creative! - use of games, puzzles etc. to help you

Find suitable places that enhance your meditating:

- good place to sit or walk - countryside, beach, riverside
- quiet armchair

and finally -

Switch off the phone! - spending time meditating the word without any distractions.

Sections of this study (Lessons 6, 7 and 8) have been taken and adapted from the website of Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA. Source: <http://idcraleigh.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Psalm-119.1-24-2-2.pdf>

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