

A FREE GUIDED SELF-STUDY

Psalm 119

*Moving from duty to desire in your view of
God's Word.*

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Introduction



Before we begin our study of Psalm 119, I would like to share what prompted me to dig deeper into this passage of Scripture. It came about 21 years ago when I gave birth to my firstborn son, Ryan, and he was stillborn. This devastating loss was unfathomable and left me feeling unseen by God. I was in a dark place mentally while trying to recover physically and fighting to have victory spiritually. It was a pivotal moment where the depth of faith I thought I had was put to the test. I found my theology to be flawed in many ways during this foreign territory of grief. There is no preparation for these kinds of losses, but I did find that my foundation in Christ was more than enough to rebuild my thinking and find joy amid sorrow. During this long process, I discovered bitterness had crept into my heart and mind toward God. I had served him faithfully since the time I gave my life to Him at the age of 14, and I had expected Him to reward me with nothing but joy and peace in return. This tragedy revealed where my hope, joy, and peace were really placed and how Christians are not immune to this world's suffering, sin, and death.

It took me months and years to unearth these issues. Through the grief, I kept trying to read my Bible because I knew that I needed it. At my deepest soul level, nothing else satisfied. I was thirsty. So very thirsty. However, I was reading out of habit and ritual and not a genuine desire for His words to conform me to His will and character. Transformation hurts. There are growing pains, and I was already deeply wounded. I wanted to sit in my hurt and blame someone. This inability to accept God's plan for my life left me longing for a missing peace. This peace was only to be found in Christ through seeking Him in Scripture and prayer. Yet, I could not find it within me to spend time there. My mind was foggy, my heart was broken, and my soul was dry. I needed God to restore to me the joy of my salvation as Psalm 51:12 says.

“Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”

I needed to be upheld. And one night when my empty arms were achy, I finally submitted to God and surrendered my expectations I had of Him. He did not owe me anything. I thanked Him for the promise of Heaven and knowing my son was safer and more loved than I could have ever offered him. And I felt the Holy Spirit guide me towards Psalm 119. My resentment had stripped away the closeness I had once experienced with Christ, and I needed to be reminded of why Scripture is life-giving and not a time filler.

Now, Psalm 119 is a long chapter! It's the longest chapter in the Bible at 176 verses. Still, I began to dutifully, out of sheer obedience, read it daily. And as I did, my joy began to rise. I started noticing patterns and repetitive phrases within the passage. The whole theme stood out so profoundly to me as a celebration of the value of God's Word. God knew what I needed. I had grown tired of short devotions written by someone else to hand feed me every day. I was thirsty and in need of serious meat. I craved more than milk to soothe this ache in my life and lift me out of my dark situation.

Psalm 119:1 “Blessed are those who walk in the instruction of the Lord.”

Blessed means happy in the sense that we are in fellowship with God. True relationship and fellowship with the Father through faith in Jesus is the only path to fulfillment in life. I had pushed Him away in frustration and had lost the closeness we once had. Psalm 119 reminded me of why I so desperately needed to abide in His word.





How to Use this Study:

*For the purpose of this study, I have used the ESV. Other translations may use different forms of the words as I have studied them here.

Psalm 119 is packed full of amazing truths. This study is not meant to be done in one session. I would suggest spending a few days just reading through it and giving it a wide survey. Then you could take one benefit a day to study and search thoroughly. Pray through it and ask God to give you that benefit. Further study can be done on many other principles of Psalm 119. This is not meant to be an exhaustive study, but a tasting of how good and valuable the Bible is to our lives. I pray it is an encouragement to all who use it.

Let's get started:

Psalm 119 reminds us that the Bible is a perfect guide for life. When we sing, read, or pray it, we reflect the loveliness and goodness of His Words to us. He is glorified in this. Seeking God through His written word, His love letter to us, also moves us to seek His moral guidance.

Moral guidance = how to be like Him in holiness, righteousness, and loveliness.

The first thing I noticed while reading the psalm were the 7 different words used to describe how God communicates truth to His people. I was curious about the differences and stopped to define each term. *Look for each of these words and underline or highlight them in a different color. Or make a list of each verse that mentions the key word next to this list if you prefer not to write in your Bible. Can you see the distinctions made in each of these words?*

1. Law – His instructions.
2. Testimonies – What God testifies to be His will.
3. Precepts – What God has appointed to be done.
4. Statutes – What the divine lawgiver has laid down.
5. Commandments – What God has commanded. (Thou shalt love me and others.)
6. Rules – What the divine judge has ruled to be right.
7. Word – What God has spoken.



6 Benefits we experience when we fall in love with God’s Word.

Now that we know what terms He uses to communicate truth to us, here are 6 benefits we receive from loving, reading, memorizing, and walking in His Word.

1. We truly live!

“I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.” V. 93

I found 16 references to knowing and remembering His Word as giving life – true, abundant, redemptive life. Who doesn’t long for this?

Circle all the references you can find of the phrases *give me life* and *that I may live*. Some of them are found in verses 17, 25, 37, 40, 50, and 93.

During my grief, verse 25 spoke particularly to me. “My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word.” I can testify to the fact that God did revive my spirit and put a new song in my heart for Him.

As further study, consider cross referencing verses from the New Testament on Jesus being life: John 1:4,14:6, 10:10. What does John 1:1 say about the Word?

2. **We have great peace and security.** Look at verse 105.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” He leads us and shines a light for us to know where we are going. This gives us peace to move forward.

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

We belong to God. Our lives are hidden in Christ. But we can only experience the fullest peace and joy when we are abiding in His Word. Outside of that, we will lack peace.

Verse 1 says that to be blessed we must walk with God. Walking means we spend time with Him. Through that, we experience His peace. Peace comes from having hope in the promises of God. Hope is confidently trusting these promises to come to fruition.

Look at the following verses and underline the references to hope: 74, 81, 114, 147.

3. **He strengthens us in our sorrow and pain.**

“Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me.” Psalm 119:175

“My soul melts away for sorrow, strengthen me according to your word.” Ps. 119:28

These are beautiful passages to memorize for when we are deep in pain. I can testify to the fact that God does strengthen us in our weakness. He renews our strength when we abide in Him.

Other verses to consider: 25, 50, and 76. Do you believe God will give you strength in your weakness? Choose one of these verses to meditate on daily if you are in the pits of despair. Do not hide your weaknesses. He is waiting to strengthen and redeem them through His Word.

4. **His Word gives light and understanding.**

“The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.” v.130

When I read this verse, I think about those childhood paper crafts called a chatterbox or fortune teller where you would have hidden messages written on different flaps and you would have friends pick a random flap by choosing a color or number. As you unfolded the different flaps you would reveal the secrets. In verse 130, we are told that God unfolds His words to us. He does not just dump all wisdom at us at once. We could not handle that. Therefore, you can never exhaust your need to be in His Word. There is always something new to discover and wisdom to gain. It takes time to meditate on them and to allow them to sink down into our hearts so that our actions will be changed. God honors our efforts and unfolds the good things He has for us. He sheds light on all our dark places and gives understanding to our simple minds through the practice of Bible study. For this lesson, spend time thanking Him for teaching you something new. Then find a verse to meditate on and memorize. We will see why hiding His Word in our hearts is so important in blessing #5!

5. His Word in us guards again sin.

“Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and *let no iniquity get dominion over me.*” V.133

God’s Word breaks the power of sin over our lives!

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up our word in my heart, that *I might not sin against you.*” V.9-11

Can you find the key verbs (action words) in verses 9-11 and mark them in some distinct way? What does the verb “guarding” mean? What does His Word protect us from? Is the

purpose of Scripture to help or harm you? If it is to protect and lead us to something better, why do we begrudgingly do it? Take a moment to consider your answer.

How are we to seek Him? What is the purpose of storing/memorizing His words in our hearts and minds? Do you think this is important? Wherever we are lacking, God's mercies are new every day. We can begin anew right where we are with no condemnation. How amazing is our God to us!

6. His Word produces praise and honors God when we are joyful and glorify Him through delighting in His presence.

The word "delight" is written at least 10 times in Psalm 119. The phrase "causes praise" is mentioned over 7 times. As you read through the Psalm, put a square around each of these references or a heart above each word/phrase. Some of the verses to look for are 7,62, 162,164,171,172,175. Write out a short verse of praise of your own for God using the written word to reveal Himself to us. What a great privilege it is to have a copy of our own. Let this delight become the catalyst for spending consistent time reading and thinking on the mind of Christ!



I hope that you were encouraged by studying the 6 benefits of moving from duty to desire for God's Word. These benefits, and many more, are an outpouring of His steadfast love.

Steadfast love is mentioned 7 times in Psalm 119. My Bible commentary says, "It is the genuine experience of God's grace and mercy that inspires the faithful to seek His moral guidance."

(p.791 Crossway Student Study Bible, ESV)

Steadfast means unyielding. His love was demonstrated for us on the cross and through His inspired Word. His Word reminds us of these truths which we need to cling to on a moment by moment basis to live fully unto Him. This is how reading becomes a delight and not a chore: we realize His steadfast love and how He uses it to bless us. To bring us into closer fellowship. To comfort us. To guide us. And to protect us from sin that so easily entangles us.

One of the most transformative things you can do as a believer is to pray directly from Scripture and ask God to move you from a hearer to a doer of His word. There are many things to pray and ask God for in this Psalm:

v. 18 Open my eyes to behold wondrous things.

v. 28 Strengthen me according to your Word.

v. 32 Enlarge my heart – expand my capacity to grow and love.

v. 34 Give me understanding.

v. 37 Turn my eyes from worthless things.

v. 66 Teach me, Lord!

My prayer for us all would be found in Psalm 119:11:

“Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.”

That is my prayer and goal. I want life. And that is why I need and desire to be in His Word. I will end this study by sharing these beautiful verses:

“Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Our faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.” Psalm 119:89-90

May you revisit these truths any time you need a jumpstart to your daily discipline of Bible study and prayer. I hope it was a blessing to all who read it.