

Psalm 119: For The Love Of Scripture!

Psalm 119:1-8

*STUDY POINT: As you read through Psalm 119, keep track of every instance of the word “blessed” and write down what the psalmist desired or did to be blessed.

Psalms 119:1

(KJV) ALEPH. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

(NIV) Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.

Beloved, if you still believe that memorizing Scripture is an activity reserved for kids in Sunday School, let this teaching series on Psalm 119 rekindle your zeal for hiding God’s Word in your heart!

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

The three pillars for memorizing Scripture relate to engaging our senses so that our minds have more than one way to retrieve verses when we need them. It is true that the Holy Spirit will give us the Word in the very moment we need it, but this Word must be already hidden in our hearts for the Holy Ghost to retrieve:

Luke 12:11-12

And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Keep in mind that all through Biblical history, the Torah was memorized and transmitted orally as one person spoke it aloud repeatedly to the next. Speaking the Torah one to another is still practiced in the Holy Land today, yet in our North American church, we have wandered away from oral transmission and aural intake of Holy Scripture. Since God has brilliantly arranged Scripture for our ease of memorization, let’s honour Him by obeying His exhortation to remember Scripture:

Psalm 119:16 *I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

We now consult our dear brother and memory expert Tom Meyer, who spent much time learning memorization with teachers and lay people in the Holy Land. Very simply, we can learn and apply the *three pillars of memorization* that are rooted in three of our five senses:

VISUAL: Read the Word and take repeated mental snapshots of it.

AURAL: Hear the Word by speaking it repeatedly or listening to someone else speak it.

TACTILE: Write the Word out repeatedly.

While we *write out* the Word, we can *see it, speak it, and hear it* - all in one sitting! How exciting. Let’s get started today!

See more Bible memory resources from the Tom Meyer website:

<https://www.thebiblememoryman.com/>

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm, and longest chapter of the Bible at 176 verses long, divided into twenty-two sections of eight verses each, with each section preceded by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. These lettered annotations are significant in that they describe the contents of each section in relation to the overall theme of this psalm. And what is the theme of Psalm 119? Well, the amazing thing about Psalm 119 is that it is the only section of Scripture that exclusively celebrates Scripture!

Psalm 119:5 *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

This verse describes, with exclamation, what should be our heart cry to the Lord: *Help us, o God, to memorize and meditate upon Your Word, that we may obey it!* Dear Christian, I pray that this is our heart today, our ultimate desire - to know God better through His unchanging Word and obedience to it.

This first section of Psalm 119 is preceded by the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet ALEPH. This letter literally means “to study” which reflects, but does not altogether define, the assiduous approach to memorizing and studying Scripture in the Jewish culture. The letter ALEPH, in the Biblical context here, describes the oneness of God, or God the Father. He is the great I AM:

Exodus 3:13-14

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

The word “blessed”, though perhaps overused in secular application, is a word that holds great hope and strength for the born again Christian:

(Strong)

אַשְׁרֵי; 'esh'er; *eh'-sher*

happiness; only in masculine plural construction as interjection, how *happy!*: - blessed, happy.

Happy! Imagine that - a happy Christian! Yet happiness, or being *blessed*, is the fruit of knowing, remembering, and obeying God’s Word! Also, to be “undefiled” is not a spiritual impossibility but a glorious byproduct of walking in obedience to Scripture. Beloved, *love the Word*, for the Word washes us:

Ephesians 5:26-27

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

The idea of our sins being washed away and our being cleansed has Biblical precedent here, as we remember all that Jesus accomplished for us through His shed blood upon His cross:

1Corinthians 6:9-11

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Psalms 119:2

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

(NIV) Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—

We see here again the word “blessed” or “happy” as it relates to the person who loves God’s Word and obeys it. Throughout Psalm 119, we see God’s Word referred to as “commandments,” “testimonies,” or “precepts,” etc. All that we need to know as faithful students of God’s Word is that all of these words are descriptions of the Holy Scripture itself. Though the attributes of Scripture are lavishly exalted all through this psalm, let us remember that it is our ultimate belief in and obedience to clear Scripture that resonates with the heart of God.

According to this verse, we *keep* and we *seek*, both in the context of relationship. To keep His commandments out of raw duty might fulfill our religious conscience, but does nothing to deepen our intimacy with God the Father. Jesus truly wants us to seek Him with our whole heart, then keep His commandments out of a heart of love.

John 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

The deeper our relationship with God grows - through knowledge and trust - the more immediate will be our obedience to Him.

Psalms 34:8 *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

Isaiah 26:3-4

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

There are two very dangerous paths to travel with regards to our relationship with God. Note well that both of these paths are the result of us holding back or shutting out God from the very parts of our hearts to which He wants to bring healing.

Hebrews 3:7-19

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while

it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Here are two results of hardening parts of our heart against God:

Lukewarmness.

Revelations 3:14-22

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Apostasy.

Hebrews 6:4-8

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

So to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30) requires nothing less than our total surrender.

Psalms 119:3

(KJV) They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

(NIV) they do no wrong but follow his ways.

Far from suggesting sinless perfection in the life of our blessed recipient in Psalm 119, this verse is describing a person with a spiritual life trajectory towards loving God and His Word and obeying it. This person is focused on loving and pleasing God through obedience to His

Word. This verse runs marvellously parallel to Psalm 1, replete with the spiritual man who does not walk with the wicked, but walks with God and remains in His Word:

Psalm 1:1-6

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Presumptuous, on-purpose kind of sin is nowhere to be found in this person:

Proverbs 6:18

An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

Psalms 119:4

(KJV) Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.

(NIV) You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.

Half-hearted obedience indicates that we have a heart problem. Not a physical heart problem:

Matthew 15:8-9

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Oftentimes we wonder why our spiritual lives are feeling dry, when we have only to drop learned religious rhetoric and veiled self-righteousness in favour of returning to our First Love:

Revelation 2:4

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Beloved, if your spiritual landscape is seeming dry, simply present yourself afresh to your loving Saviour:

Matthew 6:5-6

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

God rewards humility, honesty, sincerity, and transparency in prayer. In other words, *just be you!* It is from this kind of intimacy that diligent obedience is born - never from religious effort.

Psalms 119:5

(KJV) O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

(NIV) Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!

The Psalmist here is aware that God rewards a fully obedient heart towards His Word, and is painfully aware that His ability to carry out this obedience is lacking. Remind you of Paul, in this passage?

Romans 7:15-25

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Dear brother and sister in Christ, the exclamation mark at the end of Psalm 119:5 shows the psalmist's great desire to obey God fully, but an awareness that flesh and spirit are set against one another:

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Therefore Paul is right in thanking Jesus through the Holy Ghost for the desire and strength to obey God's Word fully. Beloved, we will spend our whole earthly sojourn learning to love and surrender to God's Word more and more. Praise God!

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: When was the last time you expressed strong emotion - negative or positive - to God. How did you feel afterward? How does Psalm 119:5 encourage you today?

Psalms 119:6

(KJV) Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

(NIV) Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

John 14:26

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

News Flash: God convicts us through His Word! As we take in God's Word, He shines His holy searchlight on those areas of our lives that need correcting, forgiving, and healing. His goal is always restoration. And remember, the Evil One condemns (1 Peter 5:8) in order to destroy, but God convicts in order to restore. As we humbly confess our sins to Him, He leads us to repentance, forgiveness, and cleansing:

1John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let us never forget that this forgiveness is made possible only through Jesus, our Righteous Advocate:

1John 2:1 *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

Psalms 119:7

(KJV) I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

(NIV) I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

How would you like a Holy-Ghost inspired revival in your worship life? This verse provides the key for you! Dig into the Word of God like never before, and ask God for the illumination of the Holy Ghost to understand His Word, and the humility of Christ to obey it!

And if you sense that God is leading you to reconcile a wrong or forgive an unforgiven, take care of it straight away, so as to not block His blessing or prevent your praise!

Matthew 5:23-24

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Psalms 119:8

(KJV) I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

(NIV) I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

Simply a short prayer in a verse, dear one in Christ.

Hide it in your heart today.

Psalm 51:10-12

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

- Reverend Darren McClelland