

Psalm 119: For The Love Of Scripture! Psalm 119:97-104

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(KJV) MEM. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

(NIV) Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

The thirteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is *mem*, and simply represents *water*, from which we can derive so much spiritual application from the Bible. Upon water, God creates and sustains:

Genesis 1:2

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:6-7

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

Genesis 1:9-10

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 2:5-6

And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

Out of water springs new life in Jesus:

Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Acts 8:36-39

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip

baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Historically and presently the Jews still regard the Torah as water - their only source of essential religious drink, distinct from any other culture or religion. And similarly, for those of us born-again by the Holy Spirit and then baptized through water immersion, we regard Jesus and His Word as our Living Water, the only One Who can wash away our sins, and quench our spiritual thirst.

John 4:515

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

While it seems as though Jesus and the Samaritan woman are conversing on two different levels, Jesus speaking in the spiritual and the Samaritan woman responding in the purely physical, what really matters is that Jesus is about to open her spiritual eyes to see her need for Jesus Himself, the Living Water. Both the Jew and the born-again Christian recognize that without God's Word we render ourselves as fish out of water - and dead to God.

Matthew 4:4

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

And eternal life with God in heaven - as we see in the passage with Jesus and the Samaritan woman - is found only in our source of Living Water, Jesus Christ!

1John 5:11-12

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Acts 4:12

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

God has placed within the heart of every born-again believer the need for spiritual food and spiritual drink. While regular food and drink may keep our physical bodies alive for our earthly sojourn, our spiritual lives will need daily feeding and watering through intimacy with Jesus and His Word. How then could we stay away from our only Source of spiritual sustenance?

Psalm 119:97 *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.*

Oh, how I love your law! The exclamation mark says it all. Our psalmist is in love with God's Word. Oh, that you and I were so zealous for every word that proceeds from the mouth of God! (Matthew 4:4) Really, our apathy concerning Holy Scripture is rooted in myriad earthly distractions and ultimately in our ignorance of our desperate need for more of God and His Word, especially given the times we live in. All we can do is ask God to stir up our passion for His Word:

God in heaven, thank You for the gift of truth - the sword of the Spirit. As Your children we sometimes forget in our minds and hearts our desperate need for more of You and Your Word, and we pay a dear price when don't draw near to You, when we don't feed upon Your Word daily. Stir up in us a passion for Your living and active Word - sharper than any two-edged sword - that we may be engaged, equipped, and encouraged for the long sojourn ahead, and be vessels fit for Your use. Thank You in Jesus name. Amen.

God's Word. Beloved, when we love it, we will spend time in it. And as we spend time in it, we will grow to love it more!

Psalm 1:1-3

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.

Psalm 119:98

(KJV) *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.*

(NIV) *Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies.*

Believer in Jesus, grab your sword and put on your shield! (Ephesians 6:10-20) If there is not a person with evil intent in their heart plotting against you at this moment, the Evil One and his demon armies most certainly are. Our dear psalmist is afflicted by evil men and mockers plotting to take his life and steal his soul. To bring this point to life, let's look at the following passage from 1 Samuel which reads like a cat-and-mouse chase movie out of Hollywood - except it is reality!

1Samuel 19:1-24

Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David and warned him, "My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be

on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there. I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out." Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?" Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death." So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before. Once more war broke out, and David went out and fought the Philistines. He struck them with such force that they fled before him. But an evil spirit from the LORD came on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. While David was playing the lyre, Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape. Saul sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, warned him, "If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed." So Michal let David down through a window, and he fled and escaped. Then Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goats' hair at the head. When Saul sent the men to capture David, Michal said, "He is ill." Then Saul sent the men back to see David and told them, "Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him." But when the men entered, there was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goats' hair. Saul said to Michal, "Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so that he escaped?" Michal told him, "He said to me, 'Let me get away. Why should I kill you?'" When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there. Word came to Saul: "David is in Naioth at Ramah" so he sent men to capture him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader, the Spirit of God came on Saul's men, and they also prophesied. Saul was told about it, and he sent more men, and they prophesied too. Saul sent men a third time, and they also prophesied. Finally, he himself left for Ramah and went to the great cistern at Seku. And he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" "Over in Naioth at Ramah," they said. So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even on him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth. He stripped off his garments, and he too prophesied in Samuel's presence. He lay naked all that day and all that night. This is why people say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

So, while all the plotting is going on, while the plot is being carried out, how do we respond? How does the psalmist respond? Well, he doesn't respond. There is no need to have anything to do with evil, no need to get inside the corrupt minds of those plotting against us.

Ephesians 5:11-12

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

Like the psalmist, we are in the daily practice of staying in God's Word (Psalm 119:98). So when we are confronted with evil, what do we do? We stay in God's Word - unmoved, unshaken, mightily armed and equipped! And when God's Word is hidden in our hearts (Psalm 119:11), we stand ready to wield the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) which

exposes our enemies and their wicked plans against us, and ultimately against Jesus Himself.

Acts 9:1-5

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Psalm 119:99

(KJV) I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

(NIV) I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.

The late, great Bible teacher Vernon McGee recounts this humorous story:

“I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation [Psalm 119:99]. When I taught a course in Bible at a Bible institute, I used to tell my students, “Don’t you ever give me this verse or I’ll give you an F in the course!” Seriously, humble believers who sit at the feet of Christ are often more skilled in the Word than a man who has a D.D. or a Ph.D. after his name.”

How true Mr. McGee! And we have to point to our psalmist here, and our psalmist in Psalm 1, as evidence that spiritual understanding - being established in God’s Word and obeying it - is imparted and enabled by our Teacher the Holy Ghost Who inspired the Scriptures.

John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

1John 2:27

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

2Peter 1:19-21

We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The psalmist reveals to us that one of the keys to real Scriptural insight is *meditation*, defined in Webster's Dictionary as:

MEDITA'TION, n. [L.meditatio.] Close or continued thought; the turning or revolving of a subject in the mind; serious contemplation.

Psalm 119:100

(KJV) I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

(NIV) I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

The "elders" referred to in this verse are actually old in age, and one would expect them to possess great Scriptural insight, having studied Scripture for decades, and having walked many miles with the Lord. Many in this group of elders may even belong to the group of "teachers" referred to by the psalmist in Psalm 119:99. Accumulated knowledge of Biblical teachings is positively useless if not accompanied with obedience. In this, our psalmist excels above his elders and teachers.

Matthew 23:1-3

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

And here the psalmist reveals the second key to real Scriptural insight - *obedience*.

James 1:25

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

John 7:14-18

Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?" Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

Psalm 119:101

(KJV) I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

(NIV) I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word.

Before we endeavour to "[keep our] feet from every evil path" by our own effort and strength, let's lean into the Lord by praying His Word:

Psalm 19:12-14

Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Beloved follower of Jesus, remember that the road to moral failure is paved with good intentions! Therefore, take the advice of the psalmist and, before taking another step toward sin, *stop and pray*.

Proverbs 4:26-27

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Psalm 119:102

(KJV) I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

(NIV) I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me.

There is not a pastor, teacher or seminary professor that can take the place of the Holy Ghost. Beloved, I plead with you to first seek the illumination of the Holy Ghost when you approach Holy Scripture. Pray, and ask God to fill you afresh with the Spirit Who teaches, illuminates, exhorts, refines, refrains, chastens, and transforms.

Psalm 19:12-14

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

We all have erred at one time or another by prematurely running to commentaries, interlinears, dictionaries, and Bible teachers for Biblical understanding. And to be sure, these are all helpful secondary resources that can broaden our academic understanding of Biblical text. However, God and God alone desires first opportunity to teach us His Word through the Holy Spirit Who lives inside of us. God will exhaust the carnal efforts of the academic and the scholar. He will strip away every layer of head knowledge and religiosity until He finds the true heart of a man or a woman. He only ever desires reconciliation through the cross of Jesus, so that we may enter into a real-time intimate relationship with Him through Jesus His Son, the Holy Spirit, and His heart-changing, life-transforming Word. To bypass this relationship for which He sent His One and Only Son in favour of a shallow, intellectual acknowledgement of His goodness, is to miss out on our beloved identity as adopted sons and daughters and His heart's desire for each of us to know Him intimately.

Galatians 4:1-7

What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

First things *first*. First things *always*. We are His. Hallelujah!

*STUDY POINT: Identify three instances in the New Testament where Jesus teaches *relationship over religion*.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: As you meditate on these passages emphasizing relationship with God, how do you think this new revelation will change the way you approach God?

Psalm 119:103

(KJV) How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

(NIV) How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Eating God's Word may not be as appealing to our flesh as eating pure honey - especially when we are physically hungry - but the psalmist here understands that His spiritual hunger is only satisfied through the Word of God. He is extending an irresistible invitation to feast on God's Word. I'm joining him, and I pray you will too!

Matthew 4:1-4

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Psalm 119:104

(KJV) Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

(NIV) I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

Be sure, beloved, that God sent His Holy Spirit to convict us of sin through the clear Word of God.

John 16:7-11

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin,

because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

But His goal - and let us conclude here - is not conviction, but rather reconciliation and restoration.

1John 2:1-2

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

1John 1:9

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

Amen!

~ Reverend Darren McClelland